

The Works of John Bunyan Volume 2

John Bunyan

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THE WORKS OF JOHN BUNYAN

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WITH AN
INTRODUCTION TO EACH TREATISE, NOTES,
AND A
SKETCH OF HIS LIFE, TIMES, AND CONTEMPORARIES.
VOLUME SECOND.
EXPERIMENTAL, DOCTRINAL, AND PRACTICAL.
EDITED BY
GEORGE OFFOR, ESQ.

THE SAINTS' KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST'S LOVE; OR, THE UNSEARCHABLE
RICHES OF CHRIST.

BY JOHN BUNYAN

PREFATORY REMARKS BY THE EDITOR.

This treatise is one of those ten distinct works, which the author had prepared for the press, when he was so suddenly summoned to the Celestial City. Well did his friends in the ministry, Ebenezer Chandler and John Wilson, call it "an excellent manuscript, calculated to assist the Christian that would grow in grace, and to win others over to Jesus Christ."

It was first published, with a selection of Bunyan's Works in a folio volume, in 1692, about four years after the author's decease; and although it is a treatise exhibiting very deep research and calculated for extensive usefulness, it does not appear ever to have been published as a separate volume. Like all other of his works, it is original; no one before him treated this subject with such profound depth of thought, nor with such clear Christian philosophy.

The revered John Bunyan proves in this, as in all other of his works, that he was a real and not a pretended descendant from the apostles,--he breathes their spirit--he knew his Master's work, and faithfully discharged his solemn requirements. His object was as pure as it was apparent; to preach not himself, but Christ Jesus his Lord. One desire appears to have influenced him in writing all his works--that of shrinking back and hiding himself behind his Master, while exhibiting the unsearchable, Divine, eternal riches of His grace.

This treatise is admirably adapted to warn the thoughtless--break the stony heart--convince the wavering--cherish the young inquirer--strengthen the saint in his pilgrimage, and arm him for the good fight of faith--and comfort the dejected, doubting,

despairing Christian. It abounds with ardent sympathy for the broken-hearted, a cordial suited to every wounded conscience; while, at the same time, it thunders in awful judgment upon the impenitent and the hypocritical professor: wonders of grace to God belong, for all these blessings form but a small part of the unsearchable riches.

The reader should keep in his recollection, that this treatise was originally conceived for the pulpit; and afterwards, probably with great additions, written for the press. This will account for the divisions and sub-divisions, intended to assist a hearer's memory; or to enable a ready writer, by taking notes of each part, to digest prayerfully in private, what he had heard in the public ministry of the word,--a practice productive of great good to individuals, and by which families may be much profited while conversing upon the truths publicly taught in the church; instead of what Bunyan would have justly called, frothy conversation about the dress or appearances of their fellow-worshippers.

This discourse has been published in every edition of the works of our great author, but, most strangely, the references to Scripture are omitted in all the editions since that of 1737. Bunyan's anxiety at every step of this momentous inquiry is to shew a "thus saith the Lord," in proof of every assertion. In this treatise only, there are nearly four hundred and forty distinct references to the holy oracles. These are all carefully restored, and have been collated with the standard text, for want of which some imperfections had crept in, even to the old editions; and where the author preferred the Genevan or Puritan version, it is shewn by a note at the foot of the page.

To point out beauties in such a discourse, is to point to the whole treatise--it is all admirable; a solemn earnestness is found in every sentence; even where Bunyan modestly differs with many excellent divines, when treating upon the sufferings of the Saviour, between the period of his crucifixion and of his resurrection: this is worthy of our prayerful consideration; ever keeping in remembrance those deeply impressive--those awfully triumphant words of our Lord, "It is finished."

The catholic spirit, which so pervaded the mind of Bunyan, appears conspicuously in this discourse; and whatever bitter controversy this spirit occasioned him, it ought to be impressed upon the heart of every Christian professor. It is a liberality which shines more brightly, as reflected by one, whose religious education was drawn solely from the pure fountain of truth--the holy oracles; and however unlettered he was, as to polite literature or the learned languages, his Christian liberality can no more be enlightened by the niggard spirit of learned sectarians, than the sun could be illuminated by a rush-light. The inquiry was then, as, alas, it is too frequent now, Are there many that be saved? forgetful of the Saviour's answer and just rebuke, What is that to thee, follow thou me, seek thine own salvation. The inquiry is pursued a step farther, "Can those who differ with me be saved?" Hear the reply of one so honest and so fully imbued with the Scriptures, into the truths of which his spirit had been baptized, "A man, through unbelief, may think that Christ has no love to him; and yet Christ may love him, with a love that passeth knowledge. But when men, in the common course of their profession, will be always terminating

here, that they know how, and how far, Christ can love; and will thence be bold to conclude of their own safety, and of the loss and ruin of all that are not in the same notions, opinions, formalities, or judgment, as they. This is the worst [pride] and greatest of all [delusions]. The text, therefore, to rectify those false and erroneous conclusions, says, [the love of Christ] is a love that passeth knowledge."

Throughout the whole, there is a continued effort to comfort the sincere, but doubting, Christian. "Does Satan suggest that God will not hear your stammering and chattering prayers? Does Satan suggest that thy trials, and troubles, and afflictions, are so many that you shall never get beyond them?--relief is at hand, for Christ loves thee with a love that passeth knowledge. This is a weapon that will baffle the devil, when all other weapons fail."

The practical application of these soul-encouraging truths is, "To walk in love--filled with all the fullness of God." Bunyan has, in enforcing this duty, a very remarkable expression, "these are the men that sweeten the churches, and bring glory to God and to religion. Why should anything have my heart but God, but Christ? He loves me, he loves me with love that passeth knowledge, and I will love him. His love stripped him of all for my sake; Lord, let my love strip me of all for thy sake. I am a son of love, an object of love, a monument of love; of free love, of distinguishing love, of peculiar love, and of love that passeth knowledge: and why should not I walk in love--in love to God, in love to man, in holy love, in love unfeigned?"

And will our ministering elders bear with me in respectfully and affectionately commending to them John Bunyan, as an example of devotedness to his Master's service; of humble walking with God, of tender faithfulness to the souls of men, of holy fervour? Under such a course of sermons as this treatise would make, how attentively would our children listen with reverence to the voice of truth, and with a Divine blessing our earthen vessels would be replenished with heavenly treasure. It is delightful to read the testimony of Bunyan's ministerial friends, of various denominations, when recording his extensive usefulness. His works do follow him. And upon reading of them, we cannot wonder when we hear, that on a week-day morning, in the depth of winter, long before daylight, the inclemency of frost and snow was braved by crowded assemblies of hungry and thirsty souls, who eagerly listened to hear him proclaim "The Saints' Knowledge of Christ's Love, or the unsearchable riches of Christ--which passeth knowledge."

May the effectual blessing of the Holy Spirit attend the reading, as it did the preaching, of these soul-saving truths.

HACKNEY, Oct., 1848. GEO. OFFOR.

THE SAINTS' KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST'S LOVE.

"THAT YE--MAY BE ABLE TO COMPREHEND WITH ALL SAINTS, WHAT IS THE BREADTH, AND LENGTH, AND DEPTH, AND HEIGHT; AND TO KNOW THE LOVE OF CHRIST, WHICH PASSETH KNOWLEDGE."--EPHESIANS 3:18,19.

The Apostle having, in the first chapter, treated of the doctrine of election, and in the second, of the reconciling of the Gentiles with the Jews to the Father, by his Son, through the preaching of the gospel; comes in the third chapter to shew that that also was, as that of election, determined before the world began. Now lest the afflictions that attend the gospel should, by its raging among these Ephesians, darken the glory of these things unto them; therefore he makes here a brief repetition and explanation, to the end they might be supported and made live above them. He also joins thereto a fervent prayer for them, that God would let them see in the spirit and faith, how they, by God and by Christ, are secured from the evil of the worst that might come upon them. "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named; that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge," &c. Knowing, that their deep understanding what good by these were reserved for them, they would never be discouraged, whatever troubles should attend their profession.

BREADTH, and LENGTH, and DEPTH, and HEIGHT, are words that in themselves are both ambiguous, and to wonderment; ambiguous, because unexplained, and to wonderment, because they carry in them an unexpressible something; and that something that which far out-goes all those things that can be found in this world. The Apostle here was under a spiritual surprise, for while meditating and writing, he was caught: The strength and glory of the truths that he was endeavouring to fasten upon the people to whom he wrote, took him away into their glory, beyond what could to the full be uttered. Besides, many times things are thus expressed, on purpose to command attention, a stop and pause in the mind about them; and to divert, by their greatness, the heart from the world, unto which they naturally are so inclined. Also, truths are often delivered to us, like wheat in full ears, to the end we should rub them out before we eat them, and take pains about them, before we have the comfort of them.

BREADTH, LENGTH, DEPTH, and HEIGHT. In my attempting to open these words, I will give you, some that are of the same kind. And then show you, First, The reasons of them; and then also, Secondly, Something of their fullness.

Those of the same kind, are used sometimes to shew us the power, force, and subtilty of the enemies of God's Church, (Dan 4:11, Rom 8:38,39). But,

[Sometimes] Most properly to shew us the infinite and unsearchable greatness of God, (Job 11:7,8,9, Rom 11:33).

They are here to be taken in this second sense, that is, to suggest unto us the unsearchable and infinite greatness of God; who is a breadth, beyond all breadths; a length, beyond all lengths; a depth, beyond all depths; and a height, beyond all heights, and that in all his attributes: He is an eternal being, an everlasting being, and in that respect he is beyond all measures, whether

they be of breadth, or length, or depth, or height. In all his attributes he is beyond all measure: whether you measure by words, by thoughts, or by the most enlarged and exquisite apprehension; His greatness is unsearchable; His judgments are unsearchable (Job 5:9): He is infinite in wisdom. "O! the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" (Rom 11:33) "If I speak of strength, lo, he is strong" (Job 9:19); yea, "the thunder of his power who can understand?" (Job 26:14) "There is none holy as the Lord" (1 Sam 2:2): "and his mercy is from everlasting to everlasting, upon them that fear him" (Psa 103:17). The greatness of God, of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is that, if rightly considered, which will support the spirits of those of his people that are frightened with the greatness of their adversaries. For here is a greatness against a greatness. Pharaoh was great, but God more great, more great in power, more great in wisdom, more great every way for the help of his people; wherein they dealt proudly, he was above them. These words therefore take in for this people, the great God who in his immensity and infinite greatness is beyond all beings. But, to come

FIRST, to the reason of the words. They are made use of to shew to the Ephesians, that God with what he is in himself, and with what he hath in his power, is all for the use and profit of the believers. Else no great matter is held out to them thereby. "But this God is our God!" there is the comfort: For this cause therefore he presenteth them with this description of him. To wit, by breadth, and length, and depth, and height: As who should say, the High God is yours; the God that fills heaven and earth is yours; the God whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, is yours; yea, the God whose works are wonderful, and whose ways are past finding out, is yours. Consider therefore the greatness that is for you, that taketh part with you, and that will always come in for your help against them that contend with you. It is my support, it is my relief; it [is] my comfort in all my tribulations, and I would have it ours, and so it will when we live in the lively faith thereof. Nor should we admit of distrust in this matter from the consideration of our own unworthiness, either taken from the finiteness of our state, or the foulness of our ways (Psa 46). For now, though God's attributes, several of them in their own nature, are set against sin and sinners; yea, were we righteous, are so high that needs they must look over us, for 'tis to him a condescension to behold things in heaven: How much more then to open his eyes upon such as we: yet by the passion of Jesus Christ, they harmoniously agree in the salvation of our souls. Hence God is said to be love (1 John 4), God is love; might some say, and justice too: but his justice is turned with wisdom, power, holiness and truth, to love; yea, to love those that be found in his Son: forasmuch as there is nothing fault-worthy in his righteousness which is put upon us. So then, as there is in God's nature a length, and breadth, and depth, and height, that is beyond all that we can think: So we should conclude that all this is love to us, for Christ's sake; and then dilate with it thus in our minds, and enlarge it thus in our meditations; saying still to our low and trembling spirits: "It is high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? the measure thereof is longer than the earth, and¹ broader than the sea" (Job 11:8,9). But we will pass generals, and more particularly speak

SECONDLY, something of their fullness, as they are fitted to suit

and answer to the whole state and condition of a Christian in this life. The words are boundless; we have here a breadth, a length, a depth, and height made mention of; but what breadth, what length, what depth, what height is not so much as hinted. It is therefore infiniteness suggested to us, and that has engaged for us. For the Apostle conjoins therein, And to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. Thus therefore it suits and answers a Christian's condition, while in this world, let that be what it will. If his afflictions be broad, here is a breadth; if they be long, here is a length; and if they be deep, here is a depth; and if they be high, here is a height. And I will say, there is nothing that is more helpful, succouring, or comfortable to a Christian while in a state of trial and temptation, than to know that there is a breadth to answer a breadth, a length to answer a length, a depth to answer a depth, and a height to answer a height. Wherefore this is it that the Apostle prayeth for, namely, that the Ephesians might have understanding in these things, "That ye may know what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height."

Of the largeness of the Apostle's heart in praying for this people, to wit, "That they might be able to comprehend with all saints, what," &c. of that we shall speak afterwards.

But first, to speak to these four expressions, breadth, length, depth, and height.

First, What is the BREADTH. This word is to shew, that God is all over, everywhere, spreading of his wings, stretching out his goodness to the utmost bounds, for the good of those that are his people (Deu 32:11,12, Gen 49:26).

In the sin of his people there is a breadth; a breadth that spreadeth over all, wheresoever a man shall look. The sin of the saints is a spreading leprosy (Lev 13:12). Sin is a scab that spreadeth; it is a spreading plague; it knows no bounds (Lev 13:8, 57): or, as David saith, "I have seen the wicked spreading himself" (Psa 37:35). Hence it is compared to a cloud, to a thick cloud, that covereth or spreadeth over the face of all the sky. Wherefore here is a breadth called for, a breadth that can cover all, or else what is done is to no purpose. Therefore to answer this, here we have a breadth, a spreading breadth; "I spread my skirt over thee": But how far? Even so far as to cover all. "I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness" (Eze 16:8). Here now is a breadth according to the spreading nature of the sin of this wretched one; yea, a super-abounding spreading; a spreading beyond; a spreading to cover. "Blessed is he whose sin is covered" (Psa 32:1), whose spreading sin is covered by the mercy of God through Christ (Rom 4:4-7). This is the spreading cloud, whose spreadings none can understand (Job 36:29). "He spread a cloud for a covering, and fire to give light in the night" (Psa 105:39).

This breadth that is in God, it also overmatcheth that spreading and overspreading rage of men, that is sometimes as if it would swallow up the whole church of God. You read of the rage of the king of Assyria, that there was a breadth in it, an overflowing breadth, to the filling of "the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel" (Isa 8:8). But what follows? "Associate yourselves, O ye people, [ye Assyrians] and ye shall be broken in pieces; and give ear, all ye of far countries; gird yourselves and ye shall be broken

in pieces. Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand, for God is with us" (Isa 8:8-10); God will over-match and go beyond you.

Wherefore this word, breadth, and what is the breadth: It is here expressed on purpose to succour and relieve, or to shew what advantage, for support, the knowledge of the overspreading grace of God by Christ yieldeth unto those that have it, let their trials be what they will. Alas! the sin of God's children seemeth sometimes to overspread not only their flesh, and the face of their souls, but the whole face of heaven. And what shall he do now, that is a stranger to this breadth, made mention of in the text? Why he must despair, lie down and die, and shut up his heart against all comfort, unless he, with his fellow-christians, can, at least, apprehend what is this breadth, or the breadth of mercy intended in this place. Therefore Paul for the support of the Ephesians, prays, that they may know "what is the breadth."

This largeness of the heart and mercy of God towards his people, is also signified by the spreading out of his hand to us in the invitations of the gospel. "I said," saith he, "Behold me, behold me,--I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people.--to a people that provoketh me continually" (Isa 65:1-3).

I have spread out my hands, that is, opened my arms as a mother affectionately doth, when she stoopeth to her child in the warm workings of her bowels, and claspeth it up in them, and kisseth, and putteth it into her bosom.

For, by spreading out the hands or arms to embrace, is shewed the breadth or largeness of God's affections; as by our spreading out our hands in prayer, is signified the great sense that we have of the spreading nature of our sins, and of the great desires that are in us, that God would be merciful to us (Ezra 9:5-7).

This word also answereth to, or may fitly be set against the wiles and temptations of the devil, who is that great and dogged Leviathan, that spreadeth his "sharp-pointed things upon the mire" (Job 41:30): For, be the spreading nature of our corruptions never so broad, he will find sharp-pointed things enough to stick in the mire of them, for our affliction. These sharp-pointed things are those that in another place are called "fiery darts" (Eph 6:16), and he has abundance of them, with which he can and will sorely prick and wound our spirits: Yea, so sharp some have found these things to their souls, that they have pierced beyond expression. "When," said Job, "I say, my bed shall comfort me, my couch shall ease my complaint; then thou scarest me with dreams, and terrifiest me through visions; so that my soul chooseth strangling, and death rather than my life" (Job 7:13-15). But now, answerable to the spreading of these sharp-pointed things, there is a super-abounding breadth in the sovereign grace of God, the which whoso seeth and understandeth, as the Apostle doth pray we should, is presently helped: for he seeth that this grace spreadeth itself, and is broader than can be, either our mire, or the sharp-pointed things that he spreadeth thereupon for our vexation and affliction: "It is broader than the sea" (Job 11:9).

This therefore should be that upon which those that see the spreading nature of sin, and the leprosy and contagion thereof,

should meditate, to wit, The broadness of the grace and mercy of God in Christ. This will poise and stay the soul; this will relieve and support the soul in and under those many misgiving and desponding thoughts unto which we are subject when afflicted with the apprehensions of sin, and the abounding nature of it.

Shall another man pray for this, one that knew the goodness and benefit of it, and shall not I meditate upon it? and shall not I exercise my mind about it? Yes surely, for it is my duty, it is my privilege and mercy so to do. Let this therefore, when thou seest the spreading nature of thy sin be a memento to thee, to the end thou mayest not sink and die in thy soul.

Secondly, What is the breadth and LENGTH. As there is a breadth in this mercy and grace of God by Christ, so there is a LENGTH therein, and this length is as large as the breadth, and as much suiting the condition of the child of God, as the other is. For, though sin sometimes is most afflicting to the conscience, while the soul beholdeth the overspreading nature of it, yet here it stoppeth not, but oft-times through the power and prevalency of it, the soul is driven with it, as a ship by a mighty tempest, or as a rolling thing before the whirlwind: driven, I say, from God, and from all hopes of his mercy, as far as the east is from the west, or as the ends of the world are asunder. Hence it is supposed by the prophet, that for and by sin they may be driven from God to the utmost part of heaven (Deu 30:4); and that is a sad thing, a sad thing, I say, to a gracious man. "Why," saith the prophet to God, "Art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?" (Psa 22:1). Sometimes a man, yea, a man of God, is, as he apprehends, so far off from God, that he can neither help him, nor hear him, and this is a dismal state. "And thou hast removed my soul," said the church, "far off from peace: I forgot prosperity" (Lam 3:17). This is the state sometimes of the godly, and that not only with reference to their being removed by persecutors, from the appointments and gospel-seasons, which are their delight, and the desire of their eyes; but also with reverence to their faith and hope in their God. They think themselves beyond the reach of his mercy. Wherefore in answer to this conceit it is, that the Lord asketh, saying, "Is my hand shortened at all that it cannot redeem?" (Isa 50:2). And again, "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear" (Isa 59:1). Wherefore he saith again, "If any of them be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven, from thence will the Lord thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee" (Deu 30:4). God has a long arm, and he can reach a great way further than we can conceive he can (Neh 1:9): When we think his mercy is clean gone, and that ourselves are free among the dead, and of the number that he remembereth no more, then he can reach us, and cause that again we stand before him. He could reach Jonah, tho' in the belly of hell (Jonah 2); and reach thee, even then, when thou thinkest thy way is hid from the Lord, and thy judgment passed over from thy God. There is length to admiration, beyond apprehension or belief, in the arm of the strength of the Lord; and this is that which the Apostle intended by this word, Length; namely, To insinuate what a reach there is in the mercy of God, how far it can extend itself. "If I take the wings of the morning," said David, "and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me" (Psa 139:9,10). I will gather them from the east, and from

the west, and from the north, and from the south, saith he: That is, from the utmost corners.

This therefore should encourage them that for the present cannot stand, but that do fly before their guilt: Them that feel no help nor stay, but that go, as to their thinking, every day by the power of temptation, driven yet farther off from God, and from the hope of obtaining of his mercy to their salvation; poor creature, I will not now ask thee how thou camest into this condition, or how long this has been thy state; but I will say before thee, and I prithee hear me, O the length of the saving arm of God! As yet thou art within the reach thereof; do not thou go about to measure arms with God, as some good men are apt to do: I mean, do not thou conclude, that because thou canst not reach God by thy short stump, therefore he cannot reach thee with his long arm. Look again, "Hast thou an arm like God" (Job 40:9), an arm like his for length and strength? It becomes thee, when thou canst not perceive that God is within the reach of thy arm, then to believe that thou art within the reach of his; for it is long, and none knows how long.

Again, is there such a length? such a length in the arm of the Lord, that he can reach those that are gone away, as far as they could? then this should encourage us to pray, and hope for the salvation of any one of our backslidden relations, that God would reach out his arm after them: Saying, "Awake,--O arm of the Lord,--art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon? Art thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep, that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?" (Isa 51:9,10). Awake, O arm of the Lord, and be stretched out as far as to where my poor husband is, where my poor child, or to where my poor backslidden wife or dear relation is, and lay hold, fast hold; they are gone from thee, but, O thou the hope of Israel, fetch them again, and let them stand before thee. I say, here is in this word LENGTH matter of encouragement for us thus to pray; for if the length of the reach of mercy is so great, and if also this length is for the benefit of those that may be gone off far from God, (for they at present have no need thereof that are near) then improve this advantage at the throne of grace for such, that they may come to God again. Thirdly, As there is a breadth and length here, so there is a DEPTH. What is the breadth, and length, and depth? And this depth is also put in here, on purpose to help us under a trial that is diverse from the two former. I told you, that by the breadth the Apostle insinuates a remedy and succour to us, when we see our corruptions spread like a leprosy; and by length he would shew us, that when sin has driven God's elect to the farthest distance from him, yet his arm is long enough to reach them, and fetch them back again.

But, I say, as we have here a breadth, and a length, so we have also a depth. That ye may know what is the DEPTH. Christians have sometimes their sinking fits, and are as if they were always descending: or as Heman says, "counted with them that go down into the pit" (Psa 88:4). Now guilt is not to such so much a wind and a tempest, as a load and burden. The devil, and sin, and the curse of the law, and death, are gotten upon the shoulders of this poor man, and are treading of him down, that he may sink into, and be swallowed up of his miry place.

"I sink," says David, "in deep mire, where there is no standing.

I am come into DEEP waters, where the floods overflow me" (Psa 69:2). Yea, there is nothing more common among the saints of old, than this complaint: "Let neither the water flood overflow me, neither let the deep swallow me up, neither let the pit shut her mouth upon me" (Psa 69:14,15). Heman also saith, "Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves" (Psa 88:6,7). Hence it is again that the Psalmist says: "Deep calleth unto deep, at the noise of thy water spouts: all thy waves, and thy billows are gone over me" (Psa 42:7). Deep calleth unto deep: What's that? Why, it is expressed in the verse before: "O God," says he, "My soul is cast down within me." "Down," that is, deep into the jaws of distrust and fear. And, Lord, my soul in this depth of sorrow calls for help to thy depth of mercy. For though I am sinking and going down, yet not so low, but that thy mercy is yet underneath me: Do of thy compassions open those everlasting arms (Deu 33:27), and catch him that has no help or stay in himself: For so it is with one that is falling into a well or a dungeon.

Now mark, as there is in these texts, the sinking condition of the godly man set forth, of a man whom sin and Satan is treading down into the deep; so in our text which I am speaking to at this time, we have a depth that can more than counterpoise these deeps, set forth with a hearty prayer, that we may know it. And although the deeps, or depths of calamity into which the godly may fall, may be as deep as Hell, and methinks they should be no deeper: yet this is the comfort, and for the comfort of them of the godly that are thus a sinking: The mercy of God for them lies deeper "It is deeper than hell, what canst thou know?" (Job 11:8). And this is that which made Paul that he was not afraid of this depth, "I am persuaded," saith he, "that neither--height nor depth shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 8:38,39). But of this he could by no means have been persuaded, had he not believed that mercy lieth deeper for the godly to help them, than can all other depths be to destroy them: This is it at which he stands and wonders, saying, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God" (Rom 11:33), that is to find out a way to save his people, notwithstanding all the deep contrivances that the enemy hath, and may invent to make us come short [of] home.

This is also that, as I take it, which is wrapped up in the blessing, wherewith Jacob blessed his son Joseph. "God shall bless thee," saith he, "with blessings of heaven above," and with the "blessings of the deep that lieth under" (Gen 49:25). A blessing which he had ground to pronounce, as well from his observation of God's good dealing with Joseph, as in a spirit of prophecy: For he saw that he lived and was become a flourishing bough, by a wall, after that the archers had done their worst to him (Gen 49:22-24). Moses also blesseth God for blessing of Joseph thus, and blessed his portion to him, as counting of it sufficient for his help in all afflictions. "Blessed," saith he, "of the Lord, be his land, for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep that coucheth beneath" (Deu 33:13).

I am not of belief that these blessings are confined to things temporal, or carnal, but to things spiritual and divine; and that they have most chiefly respect to soul, and eternal good. Now mark, he tells us here, that the blessings of the deep, do couch

beneath. Couch, that is, lie close, so as hardly to be discerned by him that willingly would see that himself is not below these arms that are beneath him. But that as I said, is hard to be discerned by him that thus is sinking, and that has as he now smartingly feels, all God's waves, and his billows rolling over him. However, whether he sees or not, for this blessing lieth couched; yet there it is, and there will be, though one should sink as deep as hell: And hence they are said to be "everlasting arms" that are "underneath" (Deu 33:27): That is, arms that are long and strong, and that can reach to the bottom, and also beyond, of all misery and distress, that Christians are subject to in this life. Indeed mercy seems to be asleep, when we are sinking: for then we are as if all things were careless of us, but it is but as a lion couchant, it will awake in time for our help (Psa 44:22,26, Mark 4:36-39). And forasmuch as this term is it, which is applicable to the lion in his den; it may be to shew that as a lion, so will God at the fittest season, arise for the help and deliverance of a sinking people. Hence when he is said to address himself to the delivering of his people, it is that he comes as a roaring lion. "The Lord shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war: he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies" (Isa 42:13). However here is a depth against the depth that's against us, let that depth be what it will. As let it be the depth of misery, the depth of mercy is sufficient. If it be the depth of hellish policy, the depth both of the wisdom and knowledge of God shall go beyond it, and prevail.

This therefore is worthy of the consideration of all sinking souls; of the souls that feel themselves descending into the pit. There is such a thing as this experienced among the godly. Some come to them (when tempted) when you will, they will tell you, they have no ground to stand on, their feet have slipped, their foundation is removed, and they fell themselves sinking, as into a pit that has no bottom (Psa 11:3). They inwardly sink, not for want of something to relieve the body, but for want of some spiritual cordial to support the mind. "I went down to the bottoms of the mountains," said Jonah, "the earth with her bars was about me for ever;--my soul fainted within me" (Jonah 2:6,7).

Now for such to consider that underneath them, even at the bottom there lieth a blessing, or that in this deep whereinto they are descending, there lieth a delivering mercy couching to catch them, and to save them from sinking for ever, this would be relief unto them, and help them to hope for good.

Again, As this, were it well considered by the sinking ones, would yield them stay and relief, so this is it by the virtue whereof, they that have been sinking heretofore, have been lifted up, and above their castings down again. There are of those that have been in the pit, now upon mount Sion, with the harps of God in their hands, and with the song of the Lamb in their mouths. But how is it that they are there? why, David, by his own deliverance shews you the reason. "For great is thy mercy towards me," saith he, "and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell" (Psa 86:13). And again, "He brought me up also out of an horrible pit," (a pit of noise, a pit wherein was the noise of devils, and of my heart answering them with distrust and fear) "out of the miry clay," (into which I did not only sink, but was by it held from getting up: but he brought me up) "and set my feet upon a rock, and

established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise to our God" (Psa 40:2,3).

But let me here give, if it may be, a timely caution to them that think they stand upon their feet. Give not way to falling because everlasting arms are underneath, take heed of that: God can let thee fall into mischief, he can let thee fall, and not help thee up. Tempt not God, lest he cast thee away indeed. I doubt there are many that have presumed upon this mercy, that thus do couch beneath, and have cast themselves down from their pinnacles into vanity, of a vain conceit that they shall be lifted up again: whom yet God will leave to die there, because their fall was rather of willfulness, than weakness, and of stubbornness, and desperate resolutions, than for want of means and helps to preserve them from it.

Fourthly, As there is a breadth, and length, and depth, in this mercy and grace of God through Christ towards his people: So there is also a HEIGHT, "That ye may comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth and length, and depth, and HEIGHT." There are things that are high, as well as things that are low; things that are above us, as well as things that are under, that are distressing to God's people. It is said when Noah was a preacher of righteousness, there were giants in the earth in those days (Gen 6:4). And these, as I conceive, were some of the heights that were set against Noah; yea, they were the very dads and fathers of all that monstrous brood that followed in the world in that day. Of this sort were they who so frightened, and terrified Israel, when they were to go to inherit the land of promise. The men that were tall as cedars, and strong as the oaks, frightened them: they were in their own sight, when compared with these high ones, but as grasshoppers. This therefore was their discouragement (Num 13:31-33, Deu 2:10, 9:2).

Besides, together with these, they had high walls, walls as high as heaven; and these walls were of purpose to keep Israel out of his possession. See how it is expressed: The people is greater and taller than we, the cities are great and walled up to heaven: and moreover, we have seen the sons of the Anakims there (Deu 1:28). One of these, to wit, Goliath by name, how did he fright the children of Israel in the days of Saul! How did the appearance of him, make them scuttle together on heaps before him (1 Sam 17). By these giants, and by these high walls, God's children to this day are sorely distressed, because they stand in the cross ways to cut off Israel from his possession.

But now to support us against all these, and to encourage us to take heart notwithstanding all these things; there is for us, a height in God. He hath made his Son higher than the kings of the earth (Psa 89:26-28): His word also is settled for ever in heaven, and therefore must needs be higher than their walls (Psa 119:89): He also saith in another place, "If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter; for he that is higher than the highest, regardeth, and there be higher than they" (Eccl 5:8). 'Twas this that made Paul, that he feared not the height: not things present, nor things to come (Rom 8:39).

But again, As there are these things standing, or lying in our

way: So there are another sort of heights that are more mischievous than these: And they are the fallen angels. These are called spiritual wickedness, or wicked spirits, in high places (Eph 6:12): For God has suffered them for a time to take to themselves principality and power, and so they are become the rulers of the darkness of this world. By these we are tempted, sifted, threatened, opposed, undermined: also by these there are snares, pits, holes, and what not made and laid for us, if peradventure by something we may be destroyed. Yea, and we should most certainly be so, were it not for the rock that is higher than they. "But he that cometh from heaven is above all!" (John 3:31) These are they that our king has taken captive, and hath rid (in his chariots of salvation) in triumph over their necks. These are they, together with all others, whose most devilish designs he can wield, and turn and make work together for his ransomed's advantage (Rom 8:28), There is a height, an infinitely overtopping height in the mercy and goodness of God for us, against them.

There are heights also that build up themselves in us, which are not but to be taken notice of: Yea, there are a many of them, and they place themselves directly so, that if possible they may keep the saving knowledge of God out of our hearts. These high things therefore are said to exalt themselves against the knowledge of God (2 Cor 10:5): and do oftentimes more plague, afflict, and frighten Christian men and women, than any thing besides. It is from these that our faith and spiritual understanding of God and his Christ is opposed and contradicted, and from these also that we are so inclinable to swerve from right doctrine into destructive opinions. 'Tis from these that we are so easily persuaded to call into question our former experience of the goodness of God towards us, and from these that our minds are so often clouded and darkened that we cannot see afar off. These would betray us into the hands of fallen angels, and men, nor should we by any means help or deliver ourselves, were it not for one that is higher. These are the dark mountains at which our feet would certainly stumble, and upon which we should fall, were it not for one who can leap and skip over these mountains of division, and come in to us (Song 2:8,17).

Further, There is a height also that is obvious to our senses, the which when it is dealt withal by our corrupted reason, proves a great shaking to our mind, and that is the height, and exceeding distance that heaven is off of us, and we off it. "Is not God in the height of heaven? and behold the height of the stars, how high they are?" (Job 22:12) Hence heaven is called the place for height (Prov 25:3), Also when Ahaz is bid to ask with reference to heaven, he is bid to ask it, In the height, the height above (Isa 7:11). Now saith reason, how shall I come thither? especially when a good man is at his furthest distance therefore: which is, when he is in the grave. Now I say, every height is a difficulty to him that is loaden with a burden, especially the heaven of heavens, where God is, and where is the resting-place of his, to them that are oppressed with the guilt of sin. And besides, the dispensation which happeneth to us last, to wit, death, as I said before, makes this heaven, in my thoughts while I live so much the more unaccessible. Christ indeed could mount up (Acts 1:9), but me, poor me, how shall I get thither? Elias indeed had a chariot sent him to ride in thither, and went up by it into that holy place (2 Kings 2:11): but I, poor I, how shall I get thither? Enoch is there, because

God took him (Gen 5:24), but as for me, how shall I get thither? Thus some have mourningly said. And although distrust of the power of God, as to the accomplishing of this thing, is by no means to be smiled upon, yet methinks the unconcernedness of professors thereabout, doth argue that considering thoughts about that, are wanting.

I know the answer is ready. Get Christ and go to heaven. But methinks the height of the place, and the glory of the state that we are to enjoy therein, should a little concern us, at least so as to make us wonder in our thinking, that the time is coming that we must mount up thither. And since there are so many heights between this place, between us, and that; it should make us admire at the heights of the grace and mercy of God, by which, means is provided to bring us thither. And I believe that this thing, this very thing, is included here by the Apostle when he prays for the Ephesians, that they might know the height.

Methinks, How shall we get thither will still stick in my mind. "I will ascend," says one, "above the height of the clouds, I will be like the most High" (Isa 14:14). And I, says another, will set my nest among the stars of heaven (Oba 4). Well, but what of all this? If heaven has gates, and they shall be shut, how wilt thou go in thither? Though such should climb up to heaven, from thence will God bring them down (Amos 9:2). Still I say, therefore, how shall we get in thither? Why, for them that are godly, there is the power of God, the merits of Christ, the help of angels, and the testimony of a good conscience to bring them thither; and he that has not the help of all these, let him do what he can, shall never come thither. Not that all these go to the making up of the height that is intended in the text: for the height there, is what is in God through Christ to us alone. But the angels are the servants of God for that end (Luke 16:22, Heb 1:14): and none with ill consciences enter in thither (Psa 15:1, 24:3,4). What, "know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? be not deceived" (1 Cor 6:9), such have none inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God (Eph 5:5).

This then should teach us that in God is a power that is able to subdue all things to himself. In the completing of many things, there seems to be an utter impossibility, as that a virgin should conceive in her womb, as a virgin, and bring a Son into the world; that the body that is turned into dust, should arise and ascend into the highest heaven (Phil 3:21). These things with many more seem to be utterly impossible: but there is that which is called the power of God, by the which he is able to make all things bend to his will, and to make all obstructions give place to what he pleases. God is high above all things and can do whatever it pleaseth him. But since he can do so, why doth he suffer this, and that thing to appear, to act, and do so horribly repugnant to his word? I answer, he admits of many things, to the end he may shew his wrath, and make his power known; and that all the world may see how he checks and overrules the most vile and unruly things, and can make them subservient to his holy will. And how would the breadth and the length, and the depth, and the height of the love and mercy of God in Christ to us-ward, be made to appear, so as in all things it doth, were there not admitted that there should be breadths, and lengths, and depths and heights, to oppose. Wherefore these oppositions are therefore suffered, that

the greatness of the wisdom, the power, the mercy, and grace of God to us in Christ might appear and be made manifest unto us.

This calls therefore upon Christians, wisely to consider of the doings of their God. How many opposite breadths, and lengths, and depths, and heights did Israel meet with in their journey from Egypt to Canaan, and all to convince them of their own weakness, and also of the power of their God. And they that did wisely consider of his doings there, did reap the advantage thereof. Come, behold the works of the Lord towards me, may every Christian say. He hath set a Saviour against sin; a heaven against a hell; light against darkness; good against evil, and the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the grace that is in himself, for my good, against all the power, and strength, and force, and subtilty, of every enemy.

This also, as I hinted but just before, shews both the power of them that hate us, and the inability of us to resist. The power that is set against us none can crush, and break, but God: for it is the power of devils, of sin, of death, and hell. But we for our parts are crushed before the moth: being a shadow, a vapour, and a wind that passes away (Job 4:19). Oh! how should we, and how would we, were but our eyes awake, stand and wonder at the preservations, the deliverances, the salvations and benefits with which we are surrounded daily: while so many mighty evils seek daily to swallow us up, as the grave. See how the golden psalm of David reads it. "Be merciful unto me, O God; for man would swallow me up; he fighting daily oppresses me. Mine enemies would daily swallow me up: for they be many that fight against me, O thou most high" (Psa 56:1,2). This is at the beginning of it. And he concludes it thus, "Thou hast delivered my soul from death: will not thou deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living" (verse 13).

By this also we see the reason why it is so impossible for man or angel to persuade unbelievers to come in to, and close with Christ; why there is a breadth that they cannot get over, a length that they cannot get beyond, a depth that they cannot pass, and heights that so hinder them of the prospect of glory, and the way thereto, that they cannot be allured thither. And that nothing can remove these; but those that are in God, and that are opposite thereto; even the breadth, and length, and depth and height that is in the text expressed, is to all awakened men an undoubted truth. 2

One item I would here give to him that loveth his own soul, and then we will pass on in pursuance of what is to come. Since there is an height obvious to sense, and that that height must be overcome ere a man can enter into life eternal: let thy heart be careful that thou go the right way to overpass this height, that thou mayest not miss of the delectable plains, and the pleasures that are above. Now, there is nothing so high, as to overtop this height; but Jacob's ladder, and that can do it: that ladder, when the foot thereof doth stand upon the earth, reacheth with its top to the gate of heaven. This is the ladder by which angels ascend thither: and this is the ladder by which thou mayest ascend thither. "And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it" (Gen 28:12).

This ladder is Jesus Christ, the son of man, as is clear by the evangelist John (John 1:51). And in that it is said to stand upon the earth, that is to shew that he took hold of man who is of the earth, and therein laid a foundation for his salvation: in that it is said the top reached up to heaven, that is to shew that the divine nature was joined to the human, and by that means he was every way made a Saviour complete. Now concerning this ladder, 'tis said, Heaven was open where it stood, to shew that by him there is entrance into life: 'tis said also concerning this ladder, that the Lord stood there, at the top, above it: saying, "I am the Lord God of Abraham" (Gen 28:13), to shew his hearty and willing reception of those that ascend the height of his sanctuary this way. All which Christ further explains by saying, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life, no man cometh unto the father, but by me" (John 14:6). Look to thyself then, that thou do truly and after the right manner embrace this ladder, so will he draw thee up thither after him (John 12:32). All the rounds of this ladder are sound and fitly placed, not one of them is set further than that by faith thou mayest ascend step by step unto, even until thou shalt come to the highest step thereof, from whence, or by which thou mayest step in at the celestial gate where thy soul desireth to dwell.

Take my caution then, and be wary, no man can come thither but by him. Thither I say to be accepted: thither, there to dwell, and there to abide with joy for ever.

"That ye--may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge."

Having thus spoke of the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, that is in God's mercy by Christ to us-ward; we will now come more directly to

THE PRAYER OF THE APOSTLE FOR THESE EPHESIANS, WITH REFERENCE THEREUNTO; to wit, that they might be able to comprehend with all saints what they are. And

FIRST, As to **THE ABILITY** that he prays for, to the end that they may be capable to do this thing.

First, That ye may be able. The weakness that is here supposed to hinder their thus comprehending, &c., did doubtless lie in their grace, as well as their nature: for in both, with reference to them that are Christians, there is great disability, unless they be strengthened mightily by the Holy Ghost. Nature's ability depends upon graces, and the ability of graces, depends upon the mighty help of the spirit of God. Hence as nature itself, where grace is not, sees nothing; so nature by grace sees but weakly, if that grace is not strengthened with all might by the spirit of grace. The breadths, lengths, depths and heights here made mention of, are mysteries, and in all their operations, do work wonderfully mysteriously: insomuch that many times, though they are all of them busily engaged for this and the other child of God, yet they themselves see nothing of them. As Christ said to Peter, "What I do thou knowest not now" (John 13:7); so may it be said to many where the grace and mercy of God in Christ is working: they do not know, they understand not what it is, nor what will be the end of

such dispensations of God towards them. Wherefore they also say as Peter to Christ, "Dost thou wash my feet?--thou shalt never wash my feet" (John 13:6-8); Yea, and when some light to convince of this folly breaks in upon them, yet if it be not very distinct and clear; causing the person to know the true cause, nature, and end of God's doing of this or that, they swerve with Peter, as much on the other side (John 13:9,10). They have not known my ways, and my methods with them in this world, were that that caused Israel always to err in their hearts (Heb 3:10), and lie cross to all, and each of these breadths, lengths, depths, and heights, whenever they were under the exercise of any of them in the wilderness.

And the reason is, as I said before, for that they are very mysterious in their workings. For they work by, upon, and against oppositions; for, and in order to the help and salvation of his people. Also (as was hinted a while since) that the power and glory of this breadth, and length, &c. of the mercy and grace of God, may the more shew its excellency and sufficiency as to our deliverance; we by him seem quite to be delivered up to the breadths, lengths, and depths, and heights that oppose, and that utterly seek our ruin: wherefore at such times, nothing of breadths, lengths, depths, or heights can be seen, save by those that are very well skilled in those mysterious methods of God, in his gracious actings towards his people. "Who will bring me into the strong city," and "wilt not thou, O God, which hadst cast us off? and thou, O God, which didst not go out with our armies?" (Psa 60:9,10) is a lesson too hard for every Christian man to say over believingly. And what was it that made Jonah say, when he was in the belly of hell, "Yet I will look again toward thy holy temple" (Jonah 2:4), but the good skill that he had in understanding of the mystery of these breadths, and lengths, and depths, and heights of God, and of the way of his working by them. Read the text at large. "Thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas, and the floods compassed me about. All thy billows and thy waves passed over me. Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple" (Jonah 2:3,4).

These, and such like sentences, are easily played with by a preacher, when in the pulpit, specially if he has a little of the notion of things, but of the difficulty and strait, that those are brought into, out of whose mouth such things, or words are extorted, by reason of the force of the labyrinths they are fallen into: of those they experience nothing, wherefore to those they are utterly strangers.

He then that is able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; must be a good expositor of providences, and must see the way, and the workings of God by them. Now there are providences of two sorts, seemingly good, and seemingly bad, and those do usually as Jacob did, when he blessed the sons of Joseph, cross hands; and lay the blessing where we would not. "And when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand upon the head of Ephraim, it displeased him" (Gen 48:17). I say there are providences unto which we would have the blessings entailed, but they are not. And they are providences that smile upon the flesh; to wit, such as cast into the lap, health, wealth, plenty, ease, friends, and abundance of this world's good: because these, [Manasseh, as his name doth signify,] have in them an aptness to make us forget our toil, our low estate, and from whence we

were (Gen 41:51): but the great blessing is not in them. There are providences again, that take away from us whatever is desirable to the flesh; such is the sickness, losses, crosses, persecution and affliction; and usually in these though they make us shuck 3 whenever they come upon us, blessing coucheth, and is ready to help us. For God, as the name of Ephraim signifies, makes us "fruitful in the land of our affliction" (Gen 41:52). He therefore, in blessing of his people, lays his hands across, guiding them wittingly, and laying the chiefest blessing on the head of Ephraim, or in that providence, that sanctifies affliction. Abell! what, to the reason of Eve was he, in comparison of Cain. Rachel called Benjamin the son of her sorrow: but Jacob knew how to give him a better name (Gen 35:18). Jabez also, though his mother so called him, because, as it seems, she brought him forth with more than ordinary sorrow, was yet more honourable, more godly, than his brethren (1 Chron 4:9,10). He that has skill to judge of providences aright, has a great ability in him to comprehend with other saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height: but he that has not skill as to discerning of them, is but a child in his judgment in those high and mysterious things. And hence it is, that some shall suck honey out of that, at the which others tremble for fear it should poison them, I have often been made to say, "Sorrow is better than laughter; and the house of mourning better than the house of mirth" (Eccl 7:3-5). And I have more often seen, that the afflicted are always the best sort of Christians. There is a man, never well, never prospering, never but under afflictions, disappointments and sorrows: why this man, if he be a Christian, is one of the best of men. "They that go down to the sea,--that do business in great waters, these see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep." 4 (Psa 107:23,24) And it is from hence, for aught I know, that James admonishes the brother of high degree to rejoice in that he is made low. And he renders the reason of it, to wit, for that the fashion of the world perisheth, the rich man fadeth away in his way; but the tempted, and he that endureth temptation is blessed (James 1:10-12). Now, I know these things are not excellent in themselves, nor yet to be desired for any profit that they can yield, but God doth use by these, as by a tutor or instructor, to make known to them that are exercised with them, so much of himself as to make them understand that riches of his goodness that is seldom by other means broken up to the sons of men. And hence 'tis said, that the afterwards of affliction doth yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby (Heb 12:11).

The sum is, these breadths, and lengths, and depths, and heights of God, are to be discerned; and some that are good, do more, and some do less discern them, and how they are working, and putting forth themselves in every providence, in every change, in every turn of the wheel that passeth by us in this world. I do not question but that there are some that are alive that have been able to say, the days of affliction have been the best unto them; and that could, if it were lawful, pray that they might always be in affliction, if God would but do to them as he did when his hand was last upon them. For by them he caused his light to shine: Or as Job has it, "Thou huntest me as a fierce lion: and again thou shewest thyself marvelously upon me" (Job 10:16). See also the writing of Hezekiah, and read what profit he found in afflictions (Isa 38).

But again, these breadths, lengths, depths, and heights, have in themselves naturally that glory, that cannot be so well discerned, or kept in view by weak eyes. He had need have an eye like an eagle, that can look upon the sun, that can look upon these great things, and not be stricken blind therewith. You see how Saul was served when he was going to Damascus (Acts 9): But Stephen could stand and look up steadfastly into heaven; and that too when with Jonah he was going into the deep (Acts 7). But I have done with this, and proceed.

Second--That ye may be able to comprehend. Although apprehending is included in comprehending; yet to comprehend is more. To comprehend is to know a thing fully; or, to reach it all. But here we must distinguish, and say, that there is a comprehending that is absolute, and a comprehending that is comparative. Of comprehending absolutely, or perfectly, we are not here to speak; for that the Apostle could not, in this place, as to the thing prayed for, desire: For it is utterly impossible perfectly to know whatsoever is in the breadths, lengths, depths, and heights here spoken of. Whether you call them mercies, judgments, or the ways of God with men. "How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" (Rom 11:33) Or, if you take them to signify his love, unto which you see I am inclined; why, that you read of in the same place, to be it "which passes knowledge." Wherefore should the Apostle by this term, conclude, or insinuate, that what he calls here breadths, lengths, depths, or heights, might be fully, or perfectly understood and known, he would not only contradict other scriptures, but himself, in one and the self same breath. Wherefore it must be understood comparatively; that is, and that he says, with, or as much as others, as any, even with all saints. That ye may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height. I would ye were as able to understand, to know, and to find out these things, as ever any were; and to know with the very best of saints, The love of Christ, which passeth knowledge. There are, as has before been hinted, degrees of knowledge of these things; some know more, some less; but the Apostle prays that these Ephesians might see, know, and understand as much thereof as the best, or as any under heaven.

1. And this, in the first place, shews us the love of a minister of Jesus Christ. A minister's love to his flock is seen in his praying for them: wherefore Paul, commonly, by his epistles, either first or last, or both, gives the churches to understand, That he did often heartily pray to God for them (Rom 16:20,24, 1 Cor 16:23, Gal 6:18, Eph 1:16, Phil 1:4, Col 1:3, 1 Thess 1:2, 1 Tim 6:21, 2 Tim 4:22): And not only so, but also specifies the mercies, and blessings, and benefits which he earnestly begged for them of God (2 Cor 13:7, 2 Thess 1:11).

2. But, secondly, This implies that there are great benefits accrued to Christians by the comprehending of these things: Yea, it implies that something very special is ministered to us by this knowledge of these; and here to touch upon a few of them.

(1.) He that shall arrive to some competent knowledge of these things, shall understand more thoroughly the greatness, the wisdom, the power, &c. of the God that is above. For by these expressions are the attributes of God set forth unto us: And although I have

discoursed of them hitherto under the notion of grace and mercy, yet it was not for that I concluded, they excluded the expressing of his other attributes, but because they all, as it were, turn into loving methods in the wheel of their heavenly motion towards the children of God. Hence it is said, "God is love" (1 John 4:16), "God is light" (1 John 1:5), God is what He is for His own glory, and the good of them that fear Him. God! Why God in the breadth, length, depth, height, that is here intended, comprehends the whole world (Col 1:17). The whole world is in him: for he is before, above, beyond, and round about all things. Hence it is said, The heavens for breadth, are but his span: That he gathereth the wind in his fists (Prov 30:4): measureth the waters in the hollow of his hand, weigheth the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance (Isa 40:12). Yea, that "all nations before him are as nothing, and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity" (verse 17). Hence we are said to live and move in him (Acts 17:28), and that He is beyond all search.

I will add one word more, notwithstanding there is such a revelation of Him in his word, in the book of creatures, and in the book of providences; yet the scripture says, "Lo, these are parts of his ways: but how little a portion is heard of him?" (Job 26:14) So great is God above all that we have read, heard, or seen of Him, either in the bible, in heaven, or earth, the sea, or what else is to be understood. But now, That a poor mortal, a lump of sinful flesh, or, as the scripture-phrase is, poor dust and ashes, should be in the favour, in the heart, and wrapped up in the compassions of SUCH a God! O amazing! O astonishing consideration! And yet "This God is our God for ever and ever; and He will be our guide even unto death" (Psa 48:14).

It is said of our God, "That he humbleth himself when he beholds things in heaven." How much more then when he openeth his eyes upon man; but most of all when he makes it, as one may say, his business to visit him every morning, and to try him every moment, having set His heart upon him, being determined to set him also among his princes. "The Lord is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens. Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high, Who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth! He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people" (Psa 113:3-8).

(2.) IF this God be our God; or if our God be such a God, and could we but attain to that knowledge of the breadth, and length, and depth, and height that is in him, as the Apostle here prays, and desires we may, we should never be afraid of anything we shall meet with, or that shall assault us in this world. The great God, the former of all things, taketh part with them that fear Him, and that engage themselves to walk in His ways, of love, and respect, they bear unto him; so that such may boldly say, "The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me" (Heb 13:6). Would it not be amazing, should you see a man encompassed with chariots and horses, and weapons for his defence, yet afraid of being sparrow blasted, or over-run by a grasshopper! Why "It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and" to whom "the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers" (Isa 40:22): that is the God of the people that are lovers of Jesus Christ; therefore we

should not fear them. To fear man, is to forget God; and to be careless in a time of danger, is to forget God's ordinance. What is it then? Why, let us fear God, and diligently keep his way, with what prudence and regard to our preservation, and also the preservation of what we have, we may: And if, we doing this, our God shall deliver us, and what we have, into the hands of them that hate us, let us laugh, be fearless and careless, not minding now to do anything else but to stand up for Him against the workers of iniquity; fully concluding, that both we, and our enemies, are in the hand of him that loveth his people, and that will certainly render a reward to the wicked, after that he has sufficiently tried us by their means. "The great God that formed all things, both rewardeth the fool, and rewardeth transgressors" (Prov 26:10).5

(3.) Another thing that the knowledge of what is prayed for of the Apostle, if we attain it, will minister to us, is, An holy fear and reverence of this great God in our souls; both because he is great, and because he is wise and good (Jer 10:7). "Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name?" (Rev 15:4)

Greatness should beget fear, greatness should beget reverence: Now who so great as our God; and so, who to be feared like him! He also is wise, and will not be deceived by any. "He will bring evil, and not call back his words, but will rise against the house of evil-doers, and against the help of them that work iniquity" (Isa 31:2). Most men deal with God as if he were not wise; as if he either knew not the wickedness of their hearts and ways, or else knew not how to be even with them for it: When, alas! he is wise in heart, and mighty in power; and although he will not, without cause, afflict, yet he will not let wickedness go unpunished. This therefore should make us fear. He also is good, and this should make us serve him with fear. Oh! that a great God should be a good God; a good God to an unworthy, to an undeserving, and to a people that continually do what they can to provoke the eyes of his glory; this should make us tremble. He is fearful in service, fearful in praises.

The breadth, and length, and depth, and height of his out-going towards the children of men, should also beget in us a very great fear and dread of his majesty. When the prophet saw the height of the wheels, he said they were dreadful (Eze 1:18), and cried out unto them, O wheel! (10:13). His judgments also are a great deep (Psa 36:6); nor is there any "searching of his understanding" (Isa 40:28). He can tell how to bring his wheel upon us; and to make our table a snare, a trap, and a stumbling-block unto us (Isa 8:14, Rom 11:8-10). He can tell how to make his Son to us a rock of offence, and his gospel to be a savour of death unto death, unto us (2 Cor 2:15,16). He can tell how to choose delusions for us (Isa 66:4, 2 Thess 2:11,12), and to lead us forth with the workers of iniquity (Psa 125:5), He can out-wit, and out-do us, and prevail against us for ever (Job 14:20); and therefore we should be afraid and fear before Him, for our good, and the good of ours for ever: Yea, it is for these purposes, with others, that the Apostle prayeth thus for this people: For the comprehending of these things, do poise and keep the heart in an even course. This yields comfort; this gives encouragement; this begets fear and reverence in our hearts of God.

(4.) This knowledge will make us willing that he should be our

God; yea, will also make us abide by that willingness. Jacob said with a vow, "If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God: And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee" (Gen 28:20-22). Thus he considered the greatness of God, and from a supposition that he was what he had heard him, of his father, to be; he concluded to choose him for his God, and that he would worship him, and give him that honour that was due to him as God. How did the king of Babylon set him above all gods, when but some sparkling rays from him did light upon him: he calls him "a God of gods" (Dan 2:47), prefers him above all gods, charges all people and nations that they do nothing amiss against him (Dan 3:28,29): he calls him "the most high" God, the God "that liveth for ever"; and confesses, that he doth whatsoever he will in heaven and earth; and concludes with praising and extolling of him (Dan 4). We naturally love greatness; and when the glorious beauty of the King of glory shall be manifest to us, and we shall behold it, we shall say as Joshua did; Let all men do as seems them good; but I, and my house will serve the Lord (Josh 24:15).

When the Apostle Paul sought to win the Athenians to him, he sets Him forth before them with such terms as bespeaks his greatness; calling of him (and that rightly) "God that made the world, and all things:--the Lord of heaven and earth;--One that giveth to all life and breath, and all things"; One that is nigh to every one; "he in whom we live, and move, and have our being": God that hath made of one blood all nations of men, and that hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation, &c. (Acts 17:24-28) These things bespeak the greatness of God, and are taking to considering men. Yea, these very Athenians, while ignorant of him, from those dark hints that they had by natural light concerning him, erected an altar to him, and put this singular inscription upon it, "To the unknown God": to shew, that according to their mode, they had some kind of reverence for him: but how much more when they came to know him? and to believe that God, in all his greatness, had engaged himself to be theirs; and to bring them to himself, that they might in time be partakers of his glory.

(5.) The more a man knows, or understands of the greatness of God towards him, expressed here by the terms of unsearchable breadth, length, depth, and height; the better will he be able in his heart to conceive of the excellent glory and greatness of the things that are laid up in the heavens for them that fear him. They that know nothing of this greatness, know nothing of them; they that think amiss of this greatness, think amiss of them; they that know but little of this greatness, know but little of them: But he that is able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; he is best able to conceive of, and, consequently to make a judgment concerning the due worth, and blessed glory of them.

This is both evident to reason; also experience confirmeth the same. For, as for those dark souls that know nothing of his greatness, they have in derision those who are, through the splendor of the glory, captivated and carried away after God. Also, those whose

judgments are corrupted, and themselves thereby made as drunkards, to judge of things foolishly, they, as it were, step in the same steps with the other, and vainly imagine thereabout. Moreover, we shall see those little spirited Christians, though Christians indeed, that are but in a small measure acquainted with this God, with the breadths, and lengths, and depths, and heights that are in him, taken but little with the glory and blessedness that they are to go to when they die: wherefore they are neither so mortified to this world, so dead to sin, so self-denying, so delighted in the book of God, nor so earnest in desires to be acquainted with the heights, and depths that are therein. No, this is reserved only for those who are devoted thereto: who have been acquainted with God in a measure beyond that which your narrow-spirited Christians understand. There doth want as to these things, enlargings in the hearts of the most of saints, as there did in those of Corinth, and also in those at Ephesus: Wherefore, as Paul bids the one, and prays that the other may be enlarged, and have great knowledge thereabout: so we should, to answer such love, through desire, separate ourselves from terrene things that we may seek and intermeddle with all wisdom (Prov 18:1). Christ says, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine" (John 7:17, Isa 28:9). Oh! that we were indeed enlarged as to these breadths, and lengths, and depths, and heights of God, as the Apostle desired the Ephesians might.

(6.) Then those great truths; the coming of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment, would neither seem so like fables, nor be so much off our hearts as they do, and are (1 Cor 15:35). For the thorough belief of them depends upon the knowledge of the abilities that are in God to perform what he has said thereabout: And hence it is that your inferiour sort of Christians live so like, as if none of these things were at hand; and hence it is again, that they so soon are shaken in mind about them, when tempted of the devil, or briskly assaulted by deceivers. But this cometh to pass that there may be fulfilled what is written: "And while the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept" (Matt 25:1-7). Surely, the meaning is, they were asleep about his coming, the resurrection and the judgment; and, consequently had lost much of that knowledge of God, the which if they had retained; these truths, with power, would have been upon their hearts. The Corinthians were horribly decayed here, though some more than others: Hence Paul, when he treats of this doctrine, bids them "awake to righteousness," and not sin, telling them, that some among them had not the knowledge of God (1 Cor 15:34). To be sure, they had not such a knowledge of God as would keep them steady in the faith of these things (verse 51).

Now, the knowledge of the things above-mentioned, to wit, "this comprehending knowledge"; will greaten these things, bring them near, and make them to be credited as are the greatest of God's truth: and the virtue of the faith of them is, to make one die daily. Therefore,

(7.) Another advantage that floweth from this knowledge, is, that it makes the next world desirable, not simply as it is with those lean souls, that desire it only as the thief desireth the judge's favour, that he may be saved from the halter; but out of love such have to God and to the beauties of the house he dwells in; and that they may be rid of this world, which is to such as a dark

dungeon. The knowledge of God that men pretend they have, may easily be judged of, by the answerable or unanswerableness of their hearts and lives thereto. Where is the man that groans earnestly to be gone to God, that counts this life a strait unto him: that saith as a sick man of my acquaintance did, when his friend at his bed-side prayed to God to spare his life, No, no, said he, pray not so; for it is better to be dissolved and be gone. Christians should shew the world how they believe; not by words on paper, not by gay and flourishing notions (James 2:18): but by those desires they have to be gone, and the proof that these desires are true, is a life in heaven while we are on earth (Phil 3:20,21). I know words are cheap, but a dram of grace is worth all the world. But where, as I said, shall it be found, not among carnal men, not among weak Christians, but among those, and those only, that enjoy a great measure of Paul's wish here. But to come to the

SECOND PART OF THE TEXT.

AND TO KNOW THE LOVE OF CHRIST WHICH PASSETH KNOWLEDGE. These words are the second part of the text, and they deal mainly about the love of Christ, who is the Son of God. We have spoken already briefly of God, and therefore now we shall speak also of his Son. These words are a part of the prayer afore-mentioned, and have something of the same strain in them. In the first part, he prays that they might comprehend that which cannot absolutely by any means be comprehended: and here he prays that that might be known, which yet in the same breath he saith, passeth knowledge, to wit, the love of Christ. And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge. In the words we are to take notice of three things:

FIRST, Of the love of Christ.

SECOND, Of the exceeding greatness of it.

THIRD, Of the knowledge of it.

FIRST, We will begin with the first of these, to wit, Of the love of Christ. Now for the explication of this we must inquire into three things, First, Who Christ is. Second, What love is. Third, What the love of Christ is.

First, Christ is a person of no less quality than he is of whom we treated before: to wit, very God. So I say, not titulary, not nominally, not so counterfeitedly, but the self-same in nature with the Father (John 1:1,2, 1 John 5:7, Phil 2:6). Wherefore what we have under consideration, is so much the more to be taken notice of; namely, that a person so great, so high, so glorious, as this Jesus Christ was, should have love for us, that passes knowledge. It is common for equals to love, and for superiors to be beloved; but for the King of princes, for the Son of God, for Jesus Christ to love man thus: this is amazing, and that so much the more, for that man the object of this love, is so low, so mean, so vile, so undeserving, and so inconsiderable, as by the scriptures, everywhere he is described to be.

But to speak a little more particularly of this person. He is called God (John 1:1). The King of glory (Psa 24:10), and Lord of glory (1 Cor 2:8). The brightness of the glory of his Father (Heb 1:3). The head over all things (Eph 1:22). The Prince of life (Acts

3:15). The Creator of all things (Col 1:16). The upholder of all things (Heb 1:3). The disposer of all things (Matt 28:18). The only beloved of the Father (Matt 11).

But the persons of him beloved, are called transgressors, sinners, enemies, dust and ashes, fleas (1 Sam 24:14), worms, shadows, vapours: vile, sinful, filthy, unclean, ungodly fools, madmen. And now is it not to be wondered at, and are we not to be affected herewith, saying, And wilt thou set thine eye upon such an one? But how much more when He will set his heart upon us. And yet this great, this high, this glorious person, verily, verily loveth such.

Second, We now come to the second thing, namely, to shew what is love; not in a way of nice distinction of words, but in a plain and familiar discourse, yet respecting the love of the person under consideration.

Love ought to be considered with reference to the subject as well as to the object of it.

The subject of love in the text, is Christ; but forasmuch as love in him is diverse from the love that is in us; therefore it will not be amiss, if a little [of] the difference be made appear.

Love in us is a passion of the soul, and being such, is subject to ebb and flow, and to be extreme both ways. For whatever is a passion of the soul, whether love or hatred, joy or fear, is more apt to exceed, or come short, than to keep within its due bounds. Hence, oft-times that which is loved today is hated tomorrow (2 Sam 13:15); yea, and that which should be loved with bounds of moderation, is loved to the drowning of both soul and body in perdition and destruction (1 Tim 6:9,10).

Besides, love in us is apt to choose to itself undue and unlawful objects, and to reject those, that with leave of God, we may embrace and enjoy; so unruly, as to the laws and rules of divine government, oft-times is this passion of love in us.

Love in us, requires, that something pleasing and delightful be in the object loved, at least, so it must appear to the lust and fancy of the person loving, or else love cannot act; for the love that is in us, is not of power to set itself on work, where no allurement is in the thing to be beloved.

Love in us decays, though once never so warm and strongly fixed, if the object falls off, as to its first alluring provocation; or disappointeth our expectation with some unexpected reluctancy to our fancy or our mind.

All this we know to be true from nature, for every one of us are thus; nor can we refuse, or choose as to love, but upon, and after the rate, and the working thus of our passions. Wherefore our love, as we are natural, is weak, unorderedly, fails and miscarries, either by being too much or too little; yea, though the thing which is beloved be allowed for an object of love, both by the law of nature and grace. We therefore must put a vast difference betwixt love, as found in us, and love as found in Christ, and that, both as to the nature, principle, or object of love.

Love in Christ is not love of the same nature, as is love in us; love in him is essential to his being (1 John 4:16); but in us it is not so, as has been already shewed. God is love; Christ is God; therefore Christ is love, love naturally. Love therefore is essential to His being. He may as well cease to be, as cease to love. Hence therefore it follows, that love in Christ floweth not from so low and beggarly a principle, as doth love in man; and consequently is not, nor can be attended with those infirmities or defects, that the love of man is attended with.

It is not attended with those unruly or uncertain motions that ours is attended with: here is no ebbing, no flowing, no going beyond, no coming short; and so nothing of uncertainty. "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end" (John 13:1).

True, there is a way of manifesting of this love, which is suited to our capacities, as men, and by that we see it sometimes more, sometimes less (Song 7:11,12): also it is manifested to us as we do, or do not walk with God in this world (John 14:23). I speak now of saints.

Love in Christ pitcheth not itself upon undue or unlawful objects; nor refuseth to embrace what by the eternal covenant is made capable thereof. It always acteth according to God; nor is there at any time the least shadow of swerving as to this.

Love in Christ requireth no taking beauteousness in the object to be beloved, as not being able to put forth itself without such attracting allurements (Eze 16:6-8). It can act of and from itself, without all such kind of dependencies. This is manifest to all who have the least true knowledge of what that object is in itself, on which the Lord Jesus has set his heart to love them.

Love in Christ decays not, nor can be tempted so to do by anything that happens, or that shall happen hereafter, in the object so beloved. But as this love at first acts by, and from itself, so it continueth to do until all things that are imperfections, are completely and everlastingly subdued. The reason is, because Christ loves to make us comely, not because we are so (Eze 16:9-14).

Object. But all along Christ compareth his love to ours; now, why doth he so, if they be so much alike?

Answer. Because we know not love but by the passions of love that work in our hearts; wherefore he condescends to our capacities, and speaketh of His love to us, according as we find love to work in ourselves to others. Hence he sets forth his love to us, by borrowing from us instances of our love to wife and children (Eph 5:25). Yea, he sometimes sets forth his love to us, by calling to our mind how sometimes a man loves a woman that is a whore, "Go," (saith God to the prophet) "love a woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress, according to the word of the Lord toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods, and love flagons of wine." (Hosea 3:1) But then, these things must not be understood with respect to the nature, but the dispensations and manifestations of love; no, nor with reference to these neither, any further than by making use of such suitable similitudes, thereby to commend his

love to us, and thereby to beget in us affections to him for the love bestowed upon us. Wherefore Christ's love must be considered both with respect to the essence, and also as to the divers workings of it. For the essence thereof, it is as I said, natural with himself, and as such, it is the root and ground of all those actions of his, whereby he hath shewed that himself is loving to sinful man. But now, though the love that is in him is essential to his nature, and can vary no more than God himself: yet we see not this love but by the fruits of it, nor can it otherwise be discerned. "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us" (1 John 3:16). We must then betake ourselves to the discoveries of this love, of which there are two sorts; [namely,] such as are the foundations, and such as are the consequences of those fundamental acts. Those which I call the foundations, are they upon which all other discoveries of his goodness depend, and they are two. 1. His dying for us. 2. His improving of his death for us at the right hand of God.

Third, And this leads me to the third particular, to wit, to shew you what the love of Christ is; namely, in the discovery of it. And to know the love of Christ.

The love of Christ is made known unto us, as I said, First, By his dying for us. Second, By his improving of his dying for us.

1. His dying for us appears, (1.) To be wonderful in itself. (2.) In his preparations for that work.

(1.) It appears to be wonderful in itself, and that both with respect to the nature of that death, as also, with respect to the persons for whom he so died.

The love of Christ appears to be wonderful by the death he died: In that he died, in that he died such a death. 'Twas strange love in Christ that moved him to die for us: strange, because not according to the custom of the world. Men do not use, in cool blood, deliberately to come upon the stage or ladder, to lay down their lives for others; but this did Jesus Christ, and that too for such, whose qualification, if it be duly considered, will make this act of his, far more amazing, He laid down his life for his enemies (Rom 5), and for those that could not abide him; yea, for those, even for those that brought him to the cross: not accidentally, or because it happened so, but knowingly, designedly, (Zech 12:10), he knew it was for those he died, and yet his love led him to lay down his life for them. I will add, That those very people for whom he laid down his life, though they by all sorts of carriages did what they could to provoke him to pray to God his Father, that he would send and cut them off by the flaming sword of angels (Matt 26:53), would not be provoked, but would lay down his life for them. Nor must I leave off here: We never read that Jesus Christ was more cheerful in all his life on earth, than when he was going to lay down his life for them, now he thanked God (Luke 22:19), now he sang (Matt 26:30).

But this is not all. He did not only die, but died such a death, as indeed cannot be expressed. He was content to be counted the sinner: yea, to be counted the sin of the sinner, nor could this but be odious to so holy a Lamb as he was, yet willing to be this and thus for that love that he bare to men.

This being thus, it follows, that his sufferings must be inconceivable; for that, what in justice was the proper wages of sin and sinners, he must undergo; and what that was can no man so well know as he himself and damned spirits; for the proper wages of sin, and of sinners for their sin, is that death which layeth pains, such pains which it deserveth upon the man that dieth so: But Christ died so, and consequently was seized by those pains not only in body but in soul. His tears, his cries, his bloody sweat (Luke 22:44), the hiding of his Father's face; yea, God's forsaking of him in his extremity (Matt 27:46), plainly enough declares the nature of the death he died (Mark 15:39). For my part, I stand amazed at those that would not have the world believe, that the death of Jesus Christ was, in itself, so terrible as it was.

I will not stand here to discourse of the place called Hell, where the spirits of the damned are, we are discoursing of the nature of Christ's sufferings: and I say, if Christ was put into the very capacity of one that must suffer what in justice ought to be inflicted for sin; then, how we can so diminish the greatness of his sufferings, as some do, without undervaluing of the greatness of his love, I know not; and how they will answer it, I know not. And on the contrary, what if I should say, that the soul of Christ suffered as long as his body lay in the grave, and that God's loosing of the pains of death at Christ's resurrection, must not so much be made mention of with reference to his body, as to his soul, if to his body at all. For what pain of death was his body capable of, when his soul was separate from it? (Acts 2:24) And yet God's loosing the pains of death, seems to be but an immediate antecedent to his rising from the dead. And this sense Peter doth indeed seem to pursue, saying, "For David speaketh concerning him; I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved. Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope, because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption" (Acts 2:25-27). This, saith Peter, was not spoken of David, but he being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath, that of the fruit of his loins according to the flesh he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne (verse 29,30): He seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither did his flesh see corruption (verse 31). "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell"; his soul was not left in hell. Of what use are these expressions, if the soul of Christ suffered not, if it suffered not when separated from the body? for of that time the Apostle Peter seems to treat. Besides, if it be not improper to say, that soul was not left there, that never was there, I am at a loss. Thou wilt not leave, his soul was not left there; ergo, It was there, seems to be the natural conclusion. If it be objected, that by hell is meant the grave, 'tis foolish to think that the soul of Christ lay there while his body lay dead therein. But again, the Apostle seems clearly to distinguish between the places where the soul and body of Christ was; counting his body to be in the grave, and his soul, for the time, in hell. If there be objected what was said by him to the thief upon the cross (Luke 23:43), I can answer, Christ might speak that with reference to his God-head, and if so, that lies as no objection to what hath been insinuated. And why may not that be so understood, as well as where he said, when on earth, "The Son of man which is in heaven" (John 3:13),

meaning himself. For the personality of the Son of God, call him Son of man, or what other term is fitting, resideth not in the human, but divine nature of Jesus Christ. However, since hell is sometimes taken for the place (Acts 1:25), sometimes for the grave, sometimes for the state (Psa 116:3), and sometimes but for a figure of the place where the damned are tormented (Jonah 2:2); I will not strictly assign to Christ the place, the prison where the damned spirits are (1 Peter 3:19), but will say, as I said before, that he was put into the place of sinners, into the sins of sinners, and received what by justice was the proper wages of sin both in body and soul: As is evident from that 53rd of Isaiah (verse 10,11). This soul of his I take to be that which the inwards and the fat of the burnt sacrifices was a figure, or shadow of. "And the fat and the inwards were burnt upon the altar, whilst the body was burned for sin without the camp" (Exo 29:13,14, Lev 8:14-17).

And now having said this much, wherein have I derogated from the glory and holiness of Christ? Yea, I have endeavoured to set forth something of the greatness of his sorrows, the odiousness of sin, the nature of justice, and the love of Christ. And be sure, by how much the sufferings of the Son of God abounded for us, by so much was this unsearchable love of Christ made manifest. Nor can they that would, before the people, pare away, and make but little these infinite sufferings of our Lord, make his love to be so great as they ought, let them use what rhetoric they can. For their objecting the odious names and place of hell, accounting it not to be fit to say, That so holy a person as the Son of God was there. I answer, though I have not asserted it, yet let me ask, which is more odious, hell or sin? Or whether such think that Christ Jesus was subject to be tainted by the badness of the place, had he been there? Or whether, when the scripture says, God is in hell, it is any disparagement to him? (Psa 139:8) Or if a man should be so bold as to say so, Whether by so saying, he confineth Christ to that place for ever? And whether by so thinking he has contradicted that called the Apostles' creed?6

(2.) Having thus spoken of the death and sufferings of Christ, I shall in the next place speak of his preparations for his so suffering for us; and by so doing, yet shew you something more of the greatness of his love.

Christ, as I have told you, was even before his sufferings, a person of no mean generation, being the Son of the eternal God: Neither had his Father any more such sons but he; consequently he of right was heir of all things, and so to have dominion over all worlds. For, "for him were all things created" (Col 1:16). And hence all creatures are subject to him; yea the angels of God worship him (Heb 1). Wherefore as so considered, he augmented not his state by becoming lower than the angels for us, for what can be added to him, that is naturally God. Indeed he did take, for our sakes, the human nature into union with himself, and so began to manifest his glory; and the kindness that he had for us before all worlds, began now eminently to shew itself. Had this Christ of God, our friend, given all he had to save us, had not his love been wonderful? But when he shall give for us himself, this is more wonderful. But this is not all, the case was so betwixt God and man, that this Son of God could not, as he was before the world was, give himself a ransom for us, he being altogether incapable so to do, being

such an one as could not be subject to death, the condition that we by sin had put ourselves into.

Wherefore that which would have been a death to some, to wit, the laying aside of glory and becoming, of the King of princes, a servant of the meanest form; this he of his own good-will, was heartily content to do. Wherefore, he that once was the object of the fear of angels, is now become a little creature, a worm, an inferior one (Psa 22:6), born of a woman, brought forth in a stable, laid in a manger (Luke 2:7), scorned of men, tempted of devils (Luke 4:2), was beholden to his creatures for food, for raiment, for harbour, and a place wherein to lay his head when dead. In a word, he "made himself of no reputation, took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men" (Phil 2:7), that he might become capable to do this kindness for us. And it is worth your noting, that all the while that he was in the world, putting himself upon those other preparations which were to be antecedent to his being made a sacrifice for us, no man, though he told what he came about to many, had, as we read of, an heart once to thank him for what he came about (Isa 53:3). No, they railed on him, they degraded him, they called him devil, they said he was mad, and a deceiver, a blasphemer of God, and a rebel against the state: They accused him to the governor; yea, one of his disciples sold him, another denied him, and they all forsook him, and left him to shift for himself in the hands of his horrible enemies; who beat him with their fists, spat on him, mocked him, crowned him with thorns, scourged him, made a gazing stock of him, and finally, hanged him up by the hands and the feet alive, and gave him vinegar to increase his affliction, when he complained that his anguish had made him thirsty. And yet all this could not take his heart off the work of our redemption. To die he came, die he would, and die he did before he made his return to the Father, for our sins, that we might live through him.

7 Nor may what we read of in the word concerning those temporal sufferings that he underwent be over-looked, and passed by without serious consideration; they being a part of the curse that our sin had deserved! For all temporal plagues are due to our sin while we live, as well as the curse of God to everlasting perdition, when we die. Wherefore this is the reason why the whole life of the Lord Jesus was such a life of affliction and sorrow, he therein bare our sicknesses, and took upon him our deserts: So that now the curse in temporals, as well as the curse in spirituals, and of everlasting malediction, is removed by him away from God's people; and since he overcame them, and got to the cross, it was by reason of the worthiness of the humble obedience that he yielded to his Father's law in our flesh. For his whole life (as well as his death) was a life of merit and purchase, and desert. Hence it is said, "he increased in favour with God" (Luke 2:52). For his works made him still more acceptable to him: For he standing in the room of man, and becoming our reconciler to God; by the heavenly majesty he was counted as such, and so got for us what he earned by his mediatory works; and also partook thereof as he was our head himself. And was there not in all these things love, and love that was infinite? Love which was not essential to his divine nature, could never have carried him through so great a work as this: Passions here would have failed, would have retreated, and have given the recoil; yea, his very humanity would here have flagged and fainted, had it not been managed, governed, and strengthened by his eternal Spirit. Wherefore it is said, that "through the

eternal Spirit he offered himself without spot to God" (Heb 9:14). And that he was declared to be the Son of God, with so doing, and by the resurrection from the dead (Rom 1:4).

2. We come now to the second thing propounded, and by which his love is discovered, and that is his improving of his dying for us. But I must crave pardon of my reader, if he thinks that I can discover the ten hundred thousandth part thereof, for it is impossible; but my meaning is, to give a few hints what beginnings of improvement he made thereof, in order to his further progress therein.

(1.) Therefore, This his death for us, was so virtuous, that in the space of three days and three nights, it reconciled to God in the body of his flesh as a common person, all, and every one of God's elect. Christ, when he addressed himself to die, presented himself to the justice of the law, as a common person; standing in the sted, place, and room of all that he undertook for; He gave "his life a ransom for many" (Matt 20:28). "He came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim 1:15). And as he thus presented himself, so God, his Father, admitted him to this work; and therefore it is said, "The Lord laid upon him the iniquity of us all": And again, "surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows" (Isa 53:4,6,12). Hence it unavoidably follows, that whatever he felt, and underwent in the manner, or nature, or horribleness of the death he died, he felt and underwent all as a common person; that is, as he stood in the sted of others: Therefore it is said, "He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities"; and that "the chastisement of our peace was upon him" (Isa 53:5). And again "the just died for the unjust" (1 Peter 3:18).

Now then, if he presented himself as a common person to justice, if God so admitted and accounted him, if also he laid the sins of the people, whose persons he represented, upon him, and under that consideration punishes him with those punishments and death, that he died. Then Christ in life and death is concluded by the Father to live and die as a common or public person, representing all in this life and death, for whom he undertook thus to live, and thus to die. So then, it must needs be, that what next befalls this common person, it befalls him with respect to them in whose room and place he stood and suffered. Now, the next that follows, is, "that he is justified of God": That is, acquitted and discharged from this punishment, for the sake of the worthiness of his death and merits; for that must be before he could be raised from the dead (Acts 2:24): God raised him not up as guilty, to justify him afterwards: His resurrection was the declaration of his precedent justification. He was raised from the dead, because it was neither in equity or justice possible that he should be holden longer there, his merits procured the contrary.

Now he was condemned of God's law, and died by the hand of justice, he was acquitted by God's law, and justified of justice; and all as a common person; so then, in his acquitting, we are acquitted, in his justification we are justified; and therefore the Apostle applieth God's justifying of Christ to himself; and that rightly (Isa 50:8, Rom 8:33,34). For if Christ be my undertaker, will stand in my place, and do for me, 'tis but reasonable that I should be a partaker: Wherefore we are also said to be "quickened together with him" (Eph 2:5): That is, when he was quickened in the grave;

raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Therefore another scripture saith, "Hath He quickened you--together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses" (Col 2:13). This quickening, must not be understood of the renovation of our hearts, but of the restoring of Jesus Christ to life after he was crucified; and we are said to be quickened together with him, because we were quickened in him at his death, and were to fall or stand by him quite through the three days and three nights work; and were to take therefore our lot with him: Wherefore it is said again, That his resurrection is our justification (Rom 4:25). That by one offering he has purged our sins for ever (Heb 10:12); and that by his death he hath "delivered us from the wrath to come" (1 Thess 1:10). But I say, I would be understood aright: This life resideth yet in the Son, and is communicated from him to us, as we are called to believe his word; mean while we are secured from wrath and hell, being justified in his justification, quickened in his quickening, raised up in his resurrection; and made to sit already together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus! 8 And is not this a glorious improvement of his death, that after two days the whole body of the elect, in him, should be revived, and that in the third day we should live in the sight of God, in and by him (Heb 6:18-20).

(2.) Another improvement of his death for us, was this, By that he slew for us, our infernal foes; by it he abolished death (2 Tim 1:1); by death he destroyed him that had the power of death (Heb 2:14): By death he took away the sting of death (1 Cor 15:55,56); by death he made death a pleasant sleep to saints, and the grave for a while, an easy house and home for the body. By death he made death such an advantage to us, that it is become a means of translating of the souls of them that believe in him, to life. And all this is manifest, for that death is ours, a blessing to us, as well as Paul and Apollos, the world and life itself (1 Cor 3:22). And that all this is done for us by his death, is apparent, for that his person is where it is, and that by himself as a common person he has got the victory for us. For though as yet all things are not put under our feet, yet we see Jesus crowned with honour and glory, who by the grace of God tasteth death for every man. "For it became God, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings" (Heb 2:7-10). It became him; that is, it was but just and right, he should do so, if there was enough in the virtuousness of his death and blood to require such a thing. But there was so. Wherefore God has exalted him, and us in him, above these infernal foes. Let us therefore see ourselves delivered from death first, by the exaltation of our Jesus, let us behold him I say as crowned with glory and honour, as, or because, he tasted death for us. And then we shall see ourselves already in heaven by our head, our undertaker, our Jesus, our Saviour.

(3.) Another improvement that has already been made of his death for us, is thus, he hath at his entrance into the presence of God, for his worthiness sake, obtained that the Holy Ghost should be given unto him for us, that we by that might in all things, yet to be done, be made meet to be partakers personally, in ourselves, as well as virtually by our head and forerunner, of the inheritance of the saints in light. Wherefore the abundant pourings out of that was forborn until the resurrection, and glorification of our Lord Jesus. "For the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that

Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:39). Nor was it given so soon as received: for he received it upon his entering into the holy place, when he had sprinkled the mercy seat with the blood of sprinkling, but it was not given out to us till sometimes after (Acts 4): however it was obtained before (Acts 2:32,33). And it was meet that it should in that infinite immeasurableness in which he received it, first abide upon him, that his human nature, which was the first fruits of the election of God, might receive by its abidings upon him, that glory for which it was ordained; and that we might receive, as we receive all other things, first by our head and undertaker, sanctification in the fullness of it. Hence it is written, that as he is made unto us of God, wisdom, and righteousness, and redemption, so sanctification too (1 Cor 1:30): For first we are sanctified in his flesh, as we are justified by his righteousness. Wherefore he is that holy one that setteth us, in himself, a holy lump before God, not only with reference to justification and life, but with reference to sanctification and holiness: For we that are elect, are all considered in him as he has received that, as well as in that he has taken possession of the heaven for us. I count not this all the benefit that accrueth to us by Jesus his receiving the Holy Ghost, at his entrance into the presence of God for us: For we also are to receive it ourselves from him, according as by God we are placed in the body at the times appointed of the Father. That we, as was said, may receive personal quickening, personal renovation, personal sanctification; and in conclusion, glory. But I say, for that he hath received this holy Spirit to himself, he received it as the effect of his ascension, which was the effect of his resurrection, and of the merit of his death and passion. And he received it as a common person, as a head and undertaker for the people.

(4.) Another improvement that has been made of his death, and of the merits thereof for us, is that he has obtained to be made of God, the chief and high Lord of heaven and earth, for us, (All this while we speak of the exaltation of the human nature, in, by, and with which, the Son of God became capable to be our reconciler unto God). "All things," saith he, "are delivered unto me of my Father. And all power in heaven and earth is given unto me"; and all this because he died. "He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, of things in earth, or things under the earth: and that every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil 2). And all this is, as was said afore, for our sakes. He has given him to be head over all things to the church (Eph 1:22).

Wherefore, whoever is set up on earth, they are set up by our Lord. "By me," saith he, "kings reign, and princes decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth" (Prov 8:15,16). Nor are they when set up, left to do, though they should desire it, their own will and pleasure. The Metheg-Ammah,⁹ the bridle, is in his own hand, and he giveth reins, or check, even as it pleaseth him (2 Sam 8:1), He has this power, for the well-being of his people. Nor are the fallen angels exempted from being put under his rebuke: He is the "only potentate" (1 Tim 6:15), and in his times will shew it, Peter tells us, he "is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels, and authorities, and powers being made subject unto him" (1 Peter 3:22).

This power, as I said, he has received for the sake of his church on earth, and for her conduct and well-being among the sons of men. Hence, as he is called the king of nations, in general (Jer 10:7); so the King of saints, in special (Rev 15:3): and as he is said to be head over all things in general; so to his church in special.

(5.) Another improvement that he hath made of his death for us, is, he hath obtained, and received into his own hand sufficiency of gifts to make ministers for his church withal. I say, to make and maintain, in opposition to all that would hinder, a sufficient ministry (1 Cor 12:28-30). Wherefore he saith, "When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. And he gave some Apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for edifying of the body of Christ. Until we all come in the unity of the faith, and knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph 4:8-14). Many ways has Satan devised to bring into contempt this blessed advantage that Christ has received of God for the benefit of his church; partly while he stirs up persons to revile the sufficiency of the Holy Ghost, as to this thing: partly, while he stirs up his own limbs and members, to broach his delusions in the world, in the name of Christ, and as they blasphemously call it by the assistance of the Holy Ghost;10 partly while he tempteth novices in their faith, to study and labour in nice distinctions, and the affecting of uncouth expressions, that vary from the form of sound words, thereby to get applause, and a name, a forerunner of their own destruction (John 3:6).

But, notwithstanding all this, "Wisdom is justified of her children" (Matt 11:19): and at the last day, when the outside, and inside of all things shall be seen and compared, it will appear that the Son of God has so managed his own servants in the ministry of his word, and so managed his word, while they have been labouring in it, as to put in his blessing by that, upon the souls of sinners, and has blown away all other things as chaff (James 1:18).

(6.) Another improvement that the Lord Christ has made of his death, for his, is the obtaining, and taking possession of heaven for them. "By his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (Heb 9:12). This heaven! who knows what it is? (Matt 22:23) This glory! who knows what it is? It is called God's throne, God's house (John 14:2), God's habitation; paradise (2 Cor 12:4), the kingdom of God, the high and holy place (Isa 57:15). Abraham's bosom (Luke 16:22), and the place of heavenly pleasures (Psa 16:11); in this heaven is to be found, the face of God for ever (Psa 41:12): Immortality, the person of Christ, the prophets, the angels, the revelation of all mysteries, the knowledge of all the elect, ETERNITY.

Of this heaven, as was said afore, we are possessed already, we are in it, we are set down in it, and partake already of the benefits thereof, but all by our head and undertaker; and 'tis fit that we should believe this, rejoice in this, talk of this, tell one another of this, and live in the expectation of our own personal enjoyment of it. And as we should do all this, so we should bless and praise the name of God who has put over this house, this

kingdom, and inheritance into the hand of so faithful a friend. Yea, a brother, a Saviour and blessed undertaker for us. And lastly, since all these things already mentioned, are the fruit of the sufferings of our Jesus, and his sufferings the fruit of that love of his that passeth knowledge: how should we bow the knee before him, and call him tender Father; yea, how should we love and obey him, and devote ourselves unto his service, and be willing to be also sufferers for his sake, to whom be honour and glory for ever. And thus much of the love of Christ in general.

I might here add many other things, but as I told you before, we would under the head but now touched upon, treat about the fundamentals or great and chief parts thereof, [Christ's love] and then.

SECOND, Of the exceeding greatness of it more particularly: Wherefore of that we must say something now.

And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge. In that it is said to pass knowledge, 'tis manifest it is exceeding great, or greatly going beyond what can be known; for to exceed, is to go beyond, be above, or to be out of the reach of what would comprehend that which is so. And since the expression is absolutely indefinite, and respecteth not the knowledge of this or the other creature only: it is manifest, that Paul by his thus saying, challengeth all creatures in heaven and earth to find out the bottom of this love if they can. The love of Christ which passeth knowledge. I will add, that forasmuch as he is indefinite also about the knowledge, as well as about the persons knowing, it is out of doubt that he here engageth all knowledge, in what enlargements, attainments, improvements, and heights soever it hath, or may for ever attain unto. It passeth knowledge (Eph 3:19).

Of the same import also is that other passage of the Apostle a little above in the self-same chapter. I preach, saith he, among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ: or those riches of Christ that cannot by searching, be found out in the all of them: The riches, the riches of his love and grace. The riches of his love and grace towards us. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be made 11 rich" (2 Cor 8:9). Ye know the grace, that is so far, and so far every believer knows it: for that his leaving heaven and taking upon him flesh, that he might bring us thither, is manifest to all. But yet, all the grace that was wrapped up in that amazing condescension, knoweth none, nor can know: for if that might be, that possibility would be a flat contradiction to the text: "The love of Christ which passeth knowledge." Wherefore the riches of this love in the utmost of it, is not, cannot be known by any: let their understanding and knowledge, be heightened and improved what it may. Yea, and being heightened and improved, let what search there can by it be made into this love and grace. "That which is afar off, and exceeding deep, who can find out?" (Eccl 7:24) And that this love of Christ is so, shall anon be made more apparent. But at present we will proceed to particular challenges for the making out of this, and then we will urge those reasons that will be for the further confirmation of the whole.

First, This love passes the knowledge of the wisest saint, we now

single out the greatest proficient in this knowledge; and to confirm this, I need go no further than to the man that spake these words; to wit, Paul, for in his conclusion he includes himself. The love of Christ which passeth knowledge, even my knowledge. As who should say; though I have waded a great way in the grace of Christ, and have as much experience of his love as any he in all the world, yet I confess myself short, as to the fullness that is therein, nor will I stick to conclude of any other, That "he knows nothing yet as he ought to know" (1 Cor 8:2, 13:12).

Second, This love passeth the knowledge of all the saints, were it all put together, we, we all, and every one, did we each of us contribute for the manifesting of this love, what it is, the whole of what we know, it would amount but to a broken knowledge; we know but in part, we see darkly (1 Cor 13:9-12), we walk not by sight, but faith (2 Cor 5:7). True, now we speak of saints on earth.

Third, But we will speak of saints in heaven; they cannot to the utmost, know this love of Christ. For though they know more thereof than saints on earth, because they are more in the open visions of it, and also are more enlarged, being spirits perfect, than we on earth. Yet, to say no more now, they do not see the rich and unsearchable runnings out thereof unto sinners here on earth. Nor may they there measure that, to others, by what they themselves knew of it here. For sins, and times and persons and other circumstances, may much alter the case, but were all the saints on earth, and all the saints in heaven to contribute all that they know of this love of Christ, and to put it into one sum of knowledge, they would greatly come short of knowing the utmost of this love, for that there is an infinite deal of this love, yet unknown by them. 'Tis said plainly, that they on earth do not yet know what they shall be (1 John 3:2). And as for them in heaven, they are not yet made perfect as they shall be (Heb 11:39,40). Besides, we find the souls under the altar, how perfect now soever, when compared with that state they were in when with the body (Isa 63:16); yet are not able in all points, though in glory, to know, and so to govern themselves there without directions (Rev 6:9-11). I say, they are not able, without directions and instructions, to know the kinds and manner of workings of the love of Christ towards us that dwell on earth.

Fourth, We will join with these, the angels, and when all of them, with men, have put all and every whit of what they know of this love of Christ together, they must come far short of reaching to, or of understanding the utmost bound thereof. I grant, that angels do know, in some certain parts of knowledge of the love of Christ, more than saints on earth can know while here; but then again, I know that even they do also learn many things of saints on earth, which shews that themselves know also but in part (Eph 3:10); so then, all, as yet, as to this love of Christ, and the utmost knowledge of it, are but as so many imperfects (1 Peter 1:12), nor can they all, put all their imperfects together, make up a perfect knowledge of this love of Christ; for the texts do yet stand where they did, and say, his riches are unsearchable, and his love that which passeth knowledge. We will come now to shew you, besides what has been already touched on.

THE REASON why this riches is unsearchable, and that love such as passeth knowledge; and the

Reason First is, Because It is eternal. All that is eternal, has attending of it, as to the utmost knowledge of it, a fourfold impossibility. 1. It is without beginning. 2. It is without end. 3. It is infinite. 4. It is incomprehensible.

1. It is without beginning: That which was before the world was, is without a beginning, but the love of Christ was before the world.

This is evident from Proverbs the eighth, "his delights," before God had made the world, are there said to be, "with the sons of men." Not that we then had being, for we were as yet uncreated; but though we had not beings created, we had being in the love and affections of Jesus Christ. Now this love of Christ must needs, as to the fullness of it, as to the utmost of it, be absolutely unknown to man. Who can tell how many heart-pleasing thoughts Christ had of us before the world began? Who can tell how much he then was delighted in that being we had in his affections; as also, in the consideration of our beings, believings, and being with him afterwards.

In general we may conclude, it was great; for there seems to be a parallel betwixt his Father's delights in him, and his delights in us. "I was daily his delight,--any my delights were with the sons of men" (Prov 8:22,30,31). But I say, who can tell, who can tell altogether, what and how much the Father delighted in his Son before the world began? Who can tell what kind of delight the Father had in the Son before the world began? Why there seems to be a parallel betwixt the Father's love to Christ, and Christ's love to us; the Father's delight in Christ, and his delight in us. Yea, Christ confirms it, saying, "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you, continue ye in my love" (John 15:9). I know that I am not yet upon the nature of the word eternal; yet since, by eternal, we understand, before the world began, as well as forward, to an endless forever: We may a little enquire of folks as they may read, if they can tell the kind or measure of the love wherewith Christ then loved us. I remember the question that God asked Job, "Where," saith he, "wast thou when I laid the foundation of the earth? declare if thou hast understanding" (Job 38:4): Thereby insinuating that because it was done before he had his being, therefore he could not tell how it was done. Now, if a work so visible, as the creation is, is yet as to the manner of the workmanship thereof wholly unknown to them that commenced in their beings afterwards: How shall that which has, in all the circumstances of it, been more hidden and inward, be found out by them that have intelligence thereof by the ear, and but in part, and that in a mystery, and long afterwards. But to conclude this, That which is eternal is without all beginning. This was presented to consideration before, and therefore it cannot to perfection be known.

2. That which is eternal is without end, and how can an endless thing be known, that which has no end has no middle, wherefore it is impossible that the one half of the love that Christ has for his church should ever by them be known. I know that those visions that the saved shall have in heaven of this love, will far transcend our utmost knowledge here, even as far as the light of the sun at noon, goes beyond the light of a blinking candle at midnight; and hence it is, that when the days of those visions

are come, the knowledge that we now have, shall be swallowed up. "When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away" (1 Cor 13:10). And although he speaks here of perfections, "when that which is perfect is come," &c., yet even that perfection must not be thought to be such as is the perfection of God; for then should all that are saved be so many externals and so many infinites, as he is infinite. But the meaning is, we shall then be with the eternal, shall immediately enjoy him with all the perfection of knowledge, as far as is possible for a creature, when he is wrought up to the utmost height that his created substance will bear to be capable of. But for all that, this perfection will yet come short of the perfection of him that made him, and consequently, short of knowing the utmost of his love; since that in the root is his very essence and nature. I know it says also, that we shall know even as we are known. But yet this must not be understood, as if we should know God as fully as he knows us. It would be folly and madness so to conclude; but the meaning is, we are known for happiness; we are known of God, for heaven and felicity; and when that which is perfect is come, then shall we perfectly know, and enjoy that for which we are now known of God. And this is that which the Apostle longed for, namely, If by any means, he might apprehend that for which he was also apprehended of Christ Jesus (Phil 3:12). That is, know, and see that, unto the which he was appointed of God and apprehended of Christ Jesus. 'Tis said again, "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2). This text has respect to the Son, as to his humanity, and not as to his divinity. And not as to his divinity, simply, or distinctly considered; for as to that it is as possible for a spirit to drink up the sea, as for the most enlarged saint that is, or ever shall be in glory, so to see God as to know him altogether, to the utmost, or throughout. But the humanity of the Son of God, we shall see throughout, in all the beauty and glory that is upon him; and that was prepared for him before the foundation of the world. And Christ will that we see this glory, when he takes us up in glory to himself (John 17:24); but the utmost boundlessness of the divine majesty, the eternal deity of the Son of God, cannot be known to the utmost or altogether. I do not doubt, but that there will then in him, I mean in Christ, and in us, break forth these glorious rays and beams of the eternal majesty, as will make him in each of us admirable one to another (2 Thess 1:10); and that then, that of God shall be known of us, that now never entered into our hearts to think of. But the whole, is not, cannot, shall never be fully known of any. And therefore the love of Christ, it being essential to himself, cannot be known because of the endlessness that is in it. I said before, that which has no end, has no middle, how then shall those that shall be in heaven eternally, ever pass over half the breadth of eternity. True, I know that all enjoyments there will be enjoyments eternal. Yea, that whatever we shall there embrace, or what embraces we shall be embraced with, shall be eternal; but I put a difference betwixt that which is eternal, as to the nature, and that which is so as to the durableness thereof. The nature of eternal things we shall enjoy, so soon as ever we come to heaven, but the duration of eternal things, them we shall never be able to pass through, for they are endless. So then, the eternal love of Christ, as to the nature of it, will be perfectly known of saints, when they shall dwell in heaven; but the endlessness thereof they shall never attain unto. And this will be their happiness. For could it be, that we should in heaven ever reach

the end of our blessedness: (as we should, could we reach to the end of this love of Christ) why then, as the saying is, We should be at the land's end, and feel the bottom of all our enjoyments. Besides, whatsoever has an end, has a time to decay, and to cease to be, as well as to have a time to shew forth its highest excellencies. Wherefore, from all these considerations it is most manifest, that the love of Christ is unsearchable, and that it passes knowledge.

3. and 4. Now the other two things follow of course, to wit, That this love is infinite and incomprehensible. Wherefore here is that that still is above and beyond even those that are arrived to the utmost of their perfections. And this, if I may so say, will keep them in an employ, even when they are in heaven; though not an employ that is laboursome, tiresome, burdensome, yet an employ that is dutiful, delightful and profitable; for although the work and worship of saints in heaven is not particularly revealed as yet, and so "it doth not yet appear what we shall be," yet in the general we may say, there will be that for them to do, that has not yet by them been done, and by that work which they shall do there, their delight will be delight unto them. The law was the shadow and not the very image of heavenly things (Heb 10:1). The image is an image, and not the heavenly things themselves (the heavenly things they are saints) there shall be worship in the heavens (Heb 9:23). Nor will this at all derogate from their glory. The angels now wait upon God and serve him (Psa 103:20); the Son of God, is now a minister, and waiteth upon his service in heaven (Heb 8:1,2); some saints have been employed about service for God after they have been in heaven (Luke 9:29-32); and why we should be idle spectators, when we come thither, I see not reason to believe. It may be said, "They there rest from their labours." True, but not from their delights. All things then that once were burdensome, whether in suffering or service, shall be done away, and that which is delightful and pleasurable shall remain. But then will be a time to receive, and not to work. True, if by work you mean such as we now count work; but what if our work be there, to receive and bless. The fishes in the sea do drink, swim and drink. But for a further discourse of this, let that alone till we come thither. But to come down again into the world, for now we are talking of things aloft:

Reason Second, This love of Christ must needs be beyond our knowledge, because we cannot possibly know the utmost of our sin. Sin is that which sets out, and off, the knowledge of the love of Christ. There are four things that must be spoken to for the clearing of this. 1. The nature of sin. 2. The aggravations of sin. 3. The utmost tendencies of sin. 4. And the perfect knowledge of all this.

1. Before we can know this love of Christ, as afore, we must necessarily know the nature of sin, that is, what sin is, what sin is in itself. But no man knows the nature of sin to the full; not what sin in itself is to the full. The Apostle saith, "That sin, [that is in itself] is exceeding sinful" (Rom 7:13). That is, exceeding it as to its filthiness, goes beyond our knowledge: But this is seen by the commandment. Now the reason why none can, to the full, know the horrible nature of sin, is because none, to the full, can know the blessed nature of the blessed God. For sin is the opposite to God. There is nothing that seeketh absolutely,

and in its own nature to overcome, and to annihilate God, but sin, and sin doth so. Sin is worse than the devil; he therefore that is more afraid of the devil than of sin, knows not the badness of sin as he ought; nor but little of the love of Jesus Christ. He that knows not what sin would have done to the world, had not Christ stepped betwixt those harms and it. How can he know so much as the extent of the love of Christ in common? And he that knows not what sin would have done to him in particular, had not Christ the Lord, stepped in and saved, cannot know the utmost of the love of Christ to him in particular. Sin therefore in the utmost evil of it, cannot be known of us: so consequently the love of Christ in the utmost goodness of it, cannot be known of us.

Besides, there are many sins committed by us, dropping from us, and that pollute us, that we are not at all aware of; how then should we know that love of Christ by which we are delivered from them? Lord, "who can understand his errors?" said David (Psa 19:12). Consequently, who can understand the love that saves him from them? moreover, he that knows the love of Christ to the full, must also know to the full that wrath and anger of God, that like hell itself, burneth against sinners for the sake of sin: but this knows none. Lord, "who knoweth the power of thine anger?" said Moses (Psa 90:11). Therefore none knows this love of Christ to the full. The nature of sin is to get into our good, to mix itself with our good, to lie lurking many times under the formality and shew of good; and that so close, so cunningly, and invisibly, that the party concerned, embraces it for virtue, and knows not otherwise to do; and yet from this he is saved by the love of Christ; and therefore, as was hinted but now, if a man doth not know the nature of his wound, how should he know the nature and excellency of the balsam that hath cured him of his wound.

2. There are the due aggravations that belong to sin, which men are unacquainted with; it was one of the great things that the prophets were concerned with from God towards the people, (as to shew them their sins, so) to shew them what aggravations did belong thereto (Jer 2, Jer 3, Eze 16).

There are sins against light, sins against knowledge, sins against love, sins against learning, sins against threatenings, sins against promises, vows and resolutions, sins against experience, sins against examples of anger, and sins that have great, and high, and strange aggravations attending of them; the which we are ignorant of, though not altogether, yet in too great a measure. Now if these things be so, how can the love that saveth us from them be known or understood to the full?

Alas! our ignorance of these things is manifest by our unwillingness to abide affliction, by our secret murmuring under the hand of God; by our wondering why we are so chastised as we are, by our thinking long that the affliction is no sooner removed.

Or, if our ignorance of the vileness of our actions is not manifest this way, yet it is in our lightness under our guilt, our slight thoughts of our doings, our slovenly doing of duties, and asking of forgiveness after some evil or unbecoming actions. 'Tis to no boot to be particular, the whole course of our lives doth too fully make it manifest, that we are wonderful short in knowing both the nature, and also the aggravations of our sins: and how

then should we know that love of Christ in its full dimensions, by which we are saved and delivered therefrom?

3. Who knows the utmost tendencies of sin? I mean, what the least sin driveth at, and what it would unavoidably run the sinner into. There is not a plague, a judgment, an affliction, an evil under heaven, that the least of our transgressions has not called for at the hands of the great God! nay, the least sin calleth for all the distresses that are under heaven, to fall upon the soul and body of the sinner at once. This is plain, for that the least sin deserveth hell; which is worse than all the plagues that are on earth. But I say, who understandeth this? And I say again, if one sin, the least sin deserveth all these things, what thinkest thou do all thy sins deserve? how many judgments! how many plagues! how many lashes with God's iron whip dost thou deserve? besides there is hell itself, the place itself, the fire itself, the nature of the torments, and the durableness of them, who can understand?

But this is not all, the tendencies of thy sins are to kill others. Men, good men little think how many of their neighbours one of their sins may kill. As, how many good men and good women do unawares, through their uncircumspectness, drive their own children down into the deep? (Psa 106:6,7) We will easily count them very hardhearted sinners, that used to offer their children in sacrifice to devils; when 'tis easy to do worse ourselves: they did but kill the body, but we body and soul in hell, if we have not a care.

Do we know how our sins provoke God? how they grieve the Holy Ghost? how they weaken our graces? how they spoil our prayers? how they weaken faith? how they tempt Christ to be ashamed of us? and how they hold back good from us? And if we know not every one of all these things to the full, how shall we know to the full the love of Christ which saveth us from them all?

4. Again, But who has the perfect knowledge of all these things? I will grant that some good souls may have waded a great way in some one, or more of them; but I know that there is not any that thoroughly know them all. And yet the love of Christ doth save us from all, notwithstanding all the vileness and soul-damning virtue¹² that is in them. Alas! how short are we of the knowledge of ourselves, and of what is in us. How many are there that do not know that man consisteth of a body made of dust, and of an immortal soul? Yea, and how many be there of those that confess it, that know not the constitution of either. I will add, how many are there that profess themselves to be students of those two parts of man, that have oftentimes proved themselves to be but fools as to both? and I will conclude that there is not a man under heaven that knoweth it all together: For man is "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psa 139:14): nor can the manner of the union of these two parts be perfectly found out. How much more then must we needs be at loss as to the fullness of the knowledge of the love of Christ? But,

Reason Third, He that altogether knoweth the love of Christ, must, precedent to that, know not only all the wiles of the devil; but also all the plottings, contrivings and designs and attempts of that wicked one; yea, he must know, all the times that he hath been with God, together with all the motions that he has made that he might have leave to fall upon us, as upon Job and Peter, to try

if he might swallow us up (Job 1 and 2, Luke 22:31). But who knows all this? no man, no angel. For, if the heart of man be so deep, that none, by all his actions, save God, can tell the utmost secrets that are therein; how should the heart of angels, which in all likelihood are deeper, be found out by any mortal man. And yet this must be found out before we can find out the utmost of the love of Christ to us. I conclude therefore from all these things, that the love of Christ passeth knowledge: or that by no means, the bottom, the utmost bounds thereof can be understood.

Reason Fourth, He that will presume to say, this love of Christ can be to the utmost known by us, must presume to say that he knoweth the utmost of the merits of his blood, the utmost exercise of his patience, the utmost of his intercession, the utmost of the glory that he has prepared and taken possession of for us. But I presume that there is none that can know all this, therefore I may without any fear assert, there is none that knows, that is, that knows to the full, the other.

We come now more particularly to speak of the knowledge of the love of Christ; we have spoken of the love of Christ; and of the exceeding greatness of it: and now we come,

THIRD, To speak of the knowledge of it; that is to say, we will shew

WHAT KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST'S LOVE IS ATTAINABLE IN THIS WORLD,

under these three heads. As to this, First, It may be known as to the nature of it. Second, It may be known in many of the degrees of it. Third, But the greatest knowledge that we can have of it here, is to know that it passes knowledge.

First, We may know it in the nature of it. That is, that it is love free, divine, heavenly, everlasting, incorruptible. And this no love is but the love of Christ; all other love is either love corruptible, transient, mixed, or earthly. It is divine, for 'tis the love of the holy nature of God. It is heavenly, for that it is from above: it is everlasting, for that it has no end: it is immortal, for that there is not the appearance of corruptibleness in it, or likelihood of decay.

This is general knowledge, and this is common among the saints, at leastwise in the notion of it. Though I confess, it is hard in time of temptation, practically to hold fast the soul to all these things. But, as I have said already, this love of Christ must be such, because love in the root of it, is essential to his nature, as also I have proved now, as is the root, such are the branches; and as is the spring, such are the streams, unless the channels in which those streams do run, should be corrupted, and so defile it; but I know no channels through which this love of Christ is conveyed unto us, but those made in his side, his hands, and his feet, &c. Or those gracious promises that dropped like honey from his holy lips, in the day of his love, in which he spake them: and seeing his love is conveyed to us, as through those channels, and so by the conduit of the holy and blessed spirit of God, to our hearts, it cannot be that it should hitherto be corrupted. I know the cisterns, to wit, our hearts, into which it is conveyed, are unclean, and may take away much, through the damp that they

may put upon it, of the native savour and sweetness thereof. I know also, that there are those that tread down, and muddy those streams with their feet (Eze 34:18,19); but yet neither the love nor the channels in which it runs, should bear the blame of this. And I hope those that are saints indeed, will not only be preserved to eternal life, but nourished with this that is incorruptible unto the day of Christ. I told you before, that in the hour of temptation, it will be hard for the soul to hold fast to these things; that is, to the true definition of this love; for then, or at such seasons, it will not be admitted that the love of Christ is either transient, or mixed; but we count that we cannot be loved long, unless something better than yet we see in us, be found there, as an inducement to Christ to love, and to continue to love our poor souls (Isa 64:6). But these the Christian at length gets over; for he sees, by experience, he hath no such inducement (Deu 9:5); also, that Christ loves freely, and not for, or because of such poor, silly, imaginary enticements (Eze 16:60-62). Thus therefore the love of Christ may be known, that is, in the nature of it: it may, I say, but not easily (Eze 36:25-33). For this knowledge is neither easily got, though got, nor easily retained, though retained. There is nothing that Satan setteth himself more against, than the breaking forth of the love of Christ in its own proper native lustre. For he knows it destroys his kingdom, which standeth in profaneness, in errors and delusions, the only destruction of which is the knowledge of this love of Christ (2 Cor 5:14). What mean those swarms of opinions that are in the world? what is the reason that some are carried about as clouds, with a tempest? what mean men's waverings, men's changing, and interchanging truth for error, and one error for another? why, this is the thing, the devil is in it. This work is his, and he makes this ado, to make a dust; and a dust to darken the light of the gospel withal. And if he once attaineth to that, then farewell the true knowledge of the love of Christ.

Also he will assault the spirits of Christians with divers and sundry cogitations, such as shall have in them a tendency to darken the judgment, delude the fancy, to abuse the conscience. He has an art to metamorphose all things. He can make God seem to be to us, a most fierce and terrible destroyer; and Christ a terrible exactor of obedience, and most amazingly pinching of his love. He can make supposed sins unpardonable; and unpardonable ones, appear as virtues. He can make the law to be received for gospel, and cause that the gospel shall be thrown away as a fable. He can persuade, that faith is fancy, and that fancy is the best faith in the world. Besides, he can tickle the heart with false hope of a better life hereafter, even as if the love of Christ were there. But, as I said before, from all these things the true love of Christ in the right knowledge of it, delivereth those that have it shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost that he hath given (Rom 5). Wherefore it is for this purpose that Christ biddeth us to continue in his love (John 15:9); because the right knowledge, and faith of that to the soul, disperseth and driveth away all such fogs, and mists of darkness; and makes the soul to sit fast in the promise of eternal life by him; yea, and to grow up into him who is the head, "in all things."

Before I leave this head, I will present my reader with these things, as helps to the knowledge of the love of Christ. I mean the knowledge of the nature of it, and as HELPS to retain it.

Help First, Know thy self, what a vile, horrible, abominable sinner thou art: For thou canst not know the love of Christ, before thou knowest the badness of thy nature. "O wretched man that I am" (Rom 7:24), must be, before a man can perceive the nature of the love of Christ. He that sees himself but little, will hardly know much of the love of Christ: he that sees of himself nothing at all, will hardly ever see anything of the love of Christ. But he that sees most of what an abominable wretch he is, he is like to see most of what is the love of Christ. All errors in doctrine take their rise from the want of this (I mean errors in doctrine as to justification). All the idolizing of men's virtues, and human inventions, riseth also from the want of this. So then if a man would be kept sure and stedfast, let him labour before all things to know his own wretchedness. People naturally think that the knowledge of their sins is the way to destroy them; when in very deed, it is the first step to salvation. Now if thou wouldest know the badness of thy self, begin in the first place to study the law, then thy heart, and so thy life. The law thou must look into, for that's the glass; thy heart thou must look upon, for that's the face; thy life thou must look upon, for that's the body of a man, as to religion (James 1:25). And without the wary consideration of these three, 'tis not to be thought that a man can come at the knowledge of himself, and consequently to the knowledge of the love of Christ (James 1:26,27).

Help Second, Labour to see the emptiness, shortness, and the pollution that cleaveth to a man's own righteousness. This also must in some measure be known, before a man can know the nature of the love of Christ. They that see nothing of the loathsomeness of man's best things, will think, that the love of Christ is of that nature as to be procured, or won, obtained or purchased by man's good deeds. And although so much gospel light is broke forth as to stop men's mouths from saying this, yet 'tis nothing else but sound conviction of the vileness of man's righteousness, that will enable men to see that the love of Christ is of that nature, as to save a man without it; as to see that it is of that nature as to justify him without it: I say, without it, or not at all. There is shortness, there is hypocrisy, there is a desire of vain glory, there is pride, there is presumption in man's own righteousness: nor can it be without these wickednesses, when men know not the nature of the love of Christ. Now these defile it, and make it abominable. Yea, if there were no imperfection in it, but that which I first did mention, to wit, shortness; how could it cover the nakedness of him that hath it, or obtain for the man, in whole or in part, that Christ should love, and have respect unto him.

Occasions many thou hast given thee to see the emptiness of man's own righteousness, but all will not do unless thou hast help from heaven: wherefore thy wisdom will be, if thou canst tell where to find it, to lie in the way of God, that when he comes to visit the men that wait upon him in the means of his own appointing, thou mayest be there; if perhaps he may cast an eye of pity upon thy desolate soul, and make thee see the things above mentioned. That thou mayest know the nature of the love of Christ.

Help Third, If thou wouldest know the nature of this love, be much in acquainting of thy soul with the nature of the law, and the nature of the gospel (Gal 3:21). The which though they are not

diametrically opposite one to another, yet do propound things so differently to man, that if he knows not where, when, and how to take them, 'tis impossible but that he should confound them, and in confounding of them, lose his own soul (Rom 9:31,32). The law is a servant, both first and last, to the gospel (Rom 10:3,4): when therefore it is made a Lord, it destroyeth: and then to be sure it is made a Lord and Saviour of, when its dictates and commands are depended upon for life.

Thy wisdom therefore will be to study these things distinctly, and thoroughly; for so far as thou art ignorant of the true knowledge of the nature of these, so far thou art ignorant of the true knowledge of the nature of the love of Christ. Read Paul to the Galatians, that epistle was indicted by the Holy Ghost, on purpose to direct the soul, in, and about this very thing.

Help Fourth, The right knowledge of the nature of the love of Christ, is obtained, and retained, by keeping of these two doctrines at an everlasting distance as to the conscience; to wit, not suffering the law to rule but over my outward man, not suffering the gospel to be removed one hair's breadth from my conscience. When Christ dwells in my heart by faith (Eph 3:17), and the moral law dwells in my members (Col 3:5), the one to keep up peace with God, the other to keep my conversation in a good decorum: then am I right, and not till then.

But this will not be done without much experience, diligence, and delight in Christ. For there is nothing that Satan more desireth, than that the law may abide in the conscience of an awakened Christian, and there take up the place of Christ, and faith; for he knows if this may be obtained, the vail is presently drawn over the face of the soul, and the heart darkened as to the knowledge of Christ; and being darkened, the man is driven into despair of mercy, or is put upon it to work for life (2 Cor 3:13-15). There is therefore, as I say, much diligence required of him that will keep these two in their places assigned them of God. I say much diligent study of the word, diligent prayer; with diligence to walk with God in the world. But we will pass this, and come to the second head.

Secondly, As the love of Christ may be known in the nature of it, so it may be known in many degrees of it. That which is knowable, admits of degrees of knowledge: the love of Christ is knowable. Again, that which is not possible to be known to the utmost, is to be known, we know not how much; and therefore they that seek to know it, should never be contented or satisfied to what degree of the knowledge of it soever they attain; but still should be reaching forward, because there is more to be known of it before them. "Brethren," said Paul, "I count not myself to have apprehended, (that is to the utmost) but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil 3:13,14). I might here discourse of many things, since I am upon this head of reaching after the knowledge of the love of Christ in many of the degrees of it. But I shall content myself with few.

1. He that would know the love of Christ in several degrees of it, must begin at his person, for in him dwells all the treasures

of wisdom and knowledge. Nay, more; In him "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col 2:3). In him, that is, in his person: For, for the godhead of Christ, and our nature to be united in one person, is the highest mystery, and the first appearance of the love of Christ by himself, to the world (1 Tim 3:16). Here I say, lie hid the treasures of wisdom, and here, to the world, springs forth the riches of his love (John 1:14). That the eternal word, for the salvation of sinners, should come down from heaven and be made flesh, is an act of such condescension, a discovery of such love, that can never to the full be found out. Only here we may see, love in him was deep, was broad, was long, and high: let us therefore first begin here to learn to know the love of Christ, in the high degrees thereof.

(1.) Here, in the first place, we perceive love, in that the human nature, the nature of man, not of angels, is taken into union with God. Who so could consider this, as it is possible for it to be considered, would stand amazed till he died with wonder. By this very act of the heavenly wisdom, we have an inconceivable pledge of the love of Christ to man: for in that he hath taken into union with himself our nature, what doth it signify, but that he intendeth to take into union with himself our person. For, for this very purpose did he assume our nature. Wherefore we read that in the flesh he took upon him, in that flesh, he died for us, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God (1 Peter 3:18).

(2.) As he was made flesh, so as was said afore, he became a public or common person for us: and hereby is perceived another degree of his love; undertaking to do for his, what was not possible they should do for themselves, perfecting of righteousness to the very end of the law, and doing for us, to the reconciling of us unto his Father, and himself (Rom 10:3,4, 3:24).

(3.) Herein also we may attain to another degree of knowledge of his love, by understanding that he has conquered, and so disabled our foes, that they cannot now accomplish their designed enmity upon us (Rom 5, Eph 5:26,27): but that when Satan, death, the grave and sin have done to his people, whatever can by them be done, we shall be still more than conquerors, (though on our side be many disadvantages), through him that has loved us, over them (Rom 8:37).

(4.) By this also we may yet see more of his love, in that as a forerunner, he is gone into heaven to take possession thereof for us (Heb 6:20): there to make ready, and to prepare for us our summer-houses, our mansion, dwelling-places. As if we were the lords, and he the servant! (John 14:2,3) Oh this love!

(5.) Also we may see another degree of his love, in this, that now in his absence, he has sent the third person in the Trinity to supply his place as another comforter of us (John 16:7, 15:26), that we may not think he has forgot us, not be left destitute of a revealer of truth unto us (John 14:16). Yea, he has sent him to fortify our spirits, and to strengthen us under all adversity; and against our enemies of what account, or degree soever (Luke 21:15).

(6.) In this also we may see yet more of the love of Christ, in that though he is in heaven and we on earth: Nothing can happen to his people to hurt them, but he feels it, is touched with it,

and counteth it as done unto himself: Yea, sympathizes with them, and is afflicted, and grieved in their griefs, and their afflictions.

(7.) Another thing by which also yet more of the love of Christ is made manifest, and so may by us be known, is this: He is now, and has been ever since his ascension into glory, laying out himself as high-priest for us (Heb 7:24-26), that by the improving¹³ of his merits before the throne of grace, in way of intercession, he might preserve us from the ruins that our daily infirmities would bring upon us (Heb 8:12): yea, and make our persons and performances acceptable in his Father's sight (Rom 5:10, 1 Peter 2:5).

(8.) We also see yet more of his love by this, that he will have us where himself is, that we may behold and be partakers of his glory (John 17:24). And in this degree of his love, there are many loves.

Then he will come for us, as a bridegroom for his bride (Matt 25:6-10). Then shall a public marriage be solemnized, and eternized betwixt him and his church (Rev 19:6,7). Then she shall be wrapped up in his mantles and robes of glory (Col 3:4). Then they shall be separated, and separated from other sinners, and all things that offend shall be taken away from among them (Matt 25:31, 13:41). Then shall they be exalted to thrones, and power of judgment; and shall also sit in judgment on sinful men and fallen angels, acquiescing, by virtue of authority, with their king and head, upon them (1 Cor 6:2,3). Then or from thenceforth for ever, there shall be no more death, sorrow, hidings of his face, or eclipsing of their glory for ever (Luke 20:36). And thus you may see what rounds this our Jacob's ladder hath, and how by them we may climb, and climb, even until we are climbed up to heaven: but now we are set again; for all the glories, all the benefits, all the blessings, and all the good things that are laid up in heaven for these; Who can understand?

2. A second thing whereby the love of Christ is some degrees of it may be known, is this: That he should pass by angels and take hold of us. Who so considereth the nature of spirits, as they are God's workmanship, must needs confess, that as such, they have a pre-eminency above that which is made of dust: This then was the disparity 'twixt us and them; they being, by birth, far more noble than we. But now, when both are fallen, and by our fall, both in a state of condemnation, that Jesus Christ should choose to take up us, the most inconsiderable, and pass by them, to their eternal perdition and destruction: O love! love in a high degree to man: For verily he took not hold of angels, but of the seed of Abraham he took hold (Heb 2:16). Yet this is not all: In all probability this Lord Jesus has ten times as much to do now he has undertaken to be our Saviour, as he would have had, had he stepped over us and taken hold on them.

(1.) He needed not to have stooped so low as to take flesh upon him; theirs being a more noble nature.

(2.) Nor would he in all likelihood, have met with those contempts, those scorns, those reproaches and undervaluings from them, as he has all-along received in this his undertaking, and met with from sinful flesh. For they were more noble than we, and would sooner have perceived the design of grace, and so one would think more

readily have fallen in therewith, than [creatures in] such darkness as we were, and still by sin are.

(3.) They would not have had those disadvantages as we, for that they would not have had a tempter, a destroyer, so strong and mighty as ours is. Alas! had God left us, and taken them, though we should have been ever so full of envy against their salvation; yet being but flesh, what could we have done to them to have laid obstacles in the way of their faith and hope, as they can and do in ours?

(4.) They, it may fairly be presumed, had they been taken, and we left, and made partakers in our sted, while we had been shut out, as they are, would not have put Christ so to it, now in heaven (pray bear with the expression, because I want a better) as we by our imperfections have done and do. Sin, methinks, would not have so hanged in their natures as it doth in ours: their reason, and sense, and apprehensions being more quick, and so more apt to have been taken with this love of Christ, and by it more easily have been sanctified.

(5.) The law which they have broken, being not so intricate, as that against which we have offended, theirs being a commandment with faithfulness to abide in the place in which their Creator had set them; methinks, considering also the aptness of their natures as angels, would not have made their complete obedience so difficult.

(6.) Nor can I imagine, but had they been taken, they, as creatures excelling in strength, would have been more capable of rendering these praises and blessings to God for eternal mercies, than such poor sorry creatures as we are, could. But! "behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God" (1 John 3:1). That we, not they, that we notwithstanding all that they have, or could have done to hinder it, should be called the children of God.

This therefore is an high degree of the love of Jesus Christ to us, that when we and they were fallen, he should stoop and take up us, the more ignoble, and leave so mighty a creature in his sins to perish.

3. A third thing whereby the love of Christ in some of the degrees of it may be known, will be to consider more particularly the way, and unwearied work that he hath with man to bring him to that kingdom, that by his blood he hath obtained for him.

(1.) Man, when the Lord Jesus takes him in hand to make him partaker of the benefit, is found an enemy to his redeemer; nor doth all the intelligence that he has had of the grace and love of Christ to such, mollify him at all, to wit, before the day of God's power comes (Rom 4:5, 5:7-10). And this is a strange thing. Had man, though he could not have come to Christ, been willing that Christ should have come to him, it had been something; it would have shewn that he had taken his grace to heart, and considered of it: yea, and that he was willing to be a sharer in it. But verily here is no such thing; man, though he has free will, yet is willing by no means to be saved God's way, to wit, by Jesus Christ, before (as was said before) the day of God's power comes upon him. When the good shepherd went to look for his sheep that was lost in the

wilderness, and had found it: did it go one step homewards upon its own legs? did not the shepherd take her and lay her upon his shoulder, and bring her home rejoicing (Luke 15). This then is not love only, but love to a degree.

(2.) When man is taken, and laid under the day of God's power: When Christ is opening his ear to discipline, and speaking to him that his heart may receive instruction; many times that poor man is, as if the devil had found him, and not God. How frenzily he imagines? how crossly he thinks? How ungainly he carries it under convictions, counsels, and his present apprehension of things? I know some are more powerfully dealt withal, and more strongly bound at first by the world; but others more in an ordinary manner, that the flesh, and reason may be seen, to the glory of Christ. Yea, and where the will is made more quickly to comply with its salvation, 'tis no thanks to the sinner at all (Job 4:18). 'Tis the day of the power of the Lord that has made the work so soon to appear. Therefore count this an act of love, in the height of love; Love in a great degree (John 15:16).

(3.) When Christ Jesus has made this mad man to come to himself, and persuaded him to be willing to accept of his salvation: yet he may not be trusted, nor left alone, for then the corruptions that still lie scattering up and down in his flesh will tempt him to it, and he will be gone; yea, so desperately wicked is the flesh of saints, that should they be left to themselves but a little while, none knows what horrible transgressions would break out. Proof of this we have to amazement, plentifully scattered here and there in the word. Hence we have the patience of God, and his gentleness so admired (2 Chron 32:21): for through that it is that they are preserved. He that keepeth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps (Psa 121:4), but watches for them, and over them every moment, for he knows else they will be hurt (Isa 27:3).

(4.) Yea, notwithstanding this, how often are saints found playing truant, and lurking like thieves in one hole or other. Now, in the guilt of backsliding by the power of this, and then in filth by the power of that corruption (Jer 2:26). Yea, and when found in such decayings, and under such revoltings from God, how commonly do they hide their sin with Adam, and David, even until their Saviour fireth out of their mouths a confession of the truth of their naughtiness. "When I keep silence," said David, (and yet he chose to keep silence after he had committed his wickedness) "my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me, my moisture is turned into the drought of summer" (Psa 32:3,4). but why didst thou not confess what thou hadst done then? So I did, saith he, at last, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin (verse 5).

(5.) When the sins of saints are so visible and apparent to others, that God for the vindication of his name and honour must punish them in the sight of others; yea, must do it, as he is just: Yet then for Christ's sake, he waveth such judgments, and refuseth to inflict such punishments as naturally tend to their destruction, and chooseth to chastise them with such rods and scourges, as may do them good in the end; and that they may not be condemned with the world (1 Cor 11:31,32). Wherefore the Lord loves them, and they are blessed, whom he chasteneth and teacheth out of his law (Heb 12:5-8, Psa 94:12). And these things are love to a degree.

(6.) That Christ should supply out of his fullness the beginnings of grace in our souls, and carry on that work of so great concern, and that which at times we have so little esteem of, is none of the least of the aggravations of the love of Christ to his people. And this work is as common as any of the works of Christ, and as necessary to our salvation, as is his righteousness, and the imputation thereof to our justification: For else how could we hold out to the end (Matt 24:13); and yet none else can be saved.

(7.) And that the love of Christ should be such to us that he will thus act, thus do to, and for us, with gladness; (as afore is manifest by the parable of the lost sheep) is another degree of his love towards us: And such an one too, as is none of the lowest rate. I have seen hot love, soon cold; and love that has continued to act, yet act towards the end, as the man that by running, and has run himself off his legs, pants, and can hardly run any longer: but I never saw love like the love of Christ, who as a giant, and bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and as a

strong man, rejoiceth to run his race (Psa 19:5). Loving higher and higher, stronger and stronger, I mean as to the lettings out of love, for he reserveth the best wine even till the last (John 2:10).

(8.) I will conclude with this, that his love may be known in many degrees of it, by that sort of sinners whose salvation he most rejoiceth in, and that is, in the salvation of the sinners that are of the biggest size: Great sinners, Jerusalem sinners, Samaritan sinners, publican sinners. I might urge moreover, how he hath proportioned invitations, promises and examples of his love, for the encouragement and support of those whose souls would trust in him: By which also great degrees of his love may be understood. But we will come now to the third thing that was propounded.

Thirdly, But the greatest attainment that as to the understanding of the love of Christ, we can arrive to here, is to know that it passeth knowledge: And to know the love of Christ that passeth knowledge. This truth discovereth itself,

1. By the text itself, for the Apostle here, in this prayer of his for the Ephesians, doth not only desire that they may know, but describeth that thing which he prays they may know, by this term, It passeth knowledge. And to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. As our reason and carnal imagination will be rudely, and unduly tampering with any thing of Christ, so more especially with the love and kindness of Christ: Judging and concluding that just such it is, and none other, as may be apprehended by them: Yea, and will have a belief that just so, and no otherwise are the dimensions of this love; nor can it save beyond our carnal conceptions of it. Saying to the soul as Pharaoh once did to Israel in another case: "Let the Lord be with you as I shall" (judge it meet he should) "let you go." We think Christ loves us no more than we do think he can, and so conclude that his love is such as may by us be comprehended, or known to the utmost bounds thereof. But these are false conceptions, and this love of Christ that we think is such, is indeed none of the love of Christ, but a false image thereof, set before our eyes. I speak not now of weak knowledge, but of foolish and bold conclusions. A man through

unbelief may think that Christ has no love for him, and yet Christ may love him with a love that passeth knowledge. But when men in the common course of their profession, will be always terminating here, that they know how, and how far Christ can love, and will thence be bold to conclude of their own safety, and of the loss and ruin of all that are not in the same notions, opinions, formalities, or judgments as they: this is the worst and greatest of all. The text therefore, to rectify those false and erroneous conclusions, says, It is a love that passeth knowledge.

And it will be worth our observation to take notice that men, erroneous men, do not put these limits so commonly to the Father and his love, as [to] the Son and his. Hence you have some that boast that God can save some who have not the knowledge of the person of the mediator Jesus Christ the righteous; as the heathens that have, and still do make a great improvement of the law and light of nature: crying out with disdain against the narrowness, rigidity, censoriousness, and pride of those that think the contrary. Being not ashamed all the while to eclipse, to degrade, to lessen and undervalue the love of Jesus Christ; making of him and his undertakings, to offer himself a sacrifice to appease the justice of God for our sins, but a thing indifferent, and in its own nature but as other smaller matters.

But all this while the devil knows full well at what game he plays, for he knows that without Christ, without faith in his blood, there is no remission of sins. Wherefore, saith he, let these men talk what they will of the greatness of the love of God as creator, so they sleight and undervalue the love of Christ as mediator. And yet it is worth our consideration, that the greatness of the love of God is most expressed in his giving of Christ to be a Saviour, and in bestowing his benefits upon us that we may be happy through him.

But to return, The love of Christ that is so indeed, is love that passeth knowledge: and the best and highest of our knowledge of it is, that we know it to be such.

2. Because I find that at this point, the great men of God, of old, were wont to stop, be set, and beyond which they could not pass. 'Twas this that made Moses wonder (Deu 4:31-34). 'Twas this that made David cry out, How great and wonderful are the works of God? "thy thoughts to usward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: If I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered" (Psa 40:5). And again, "How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand" (Psa 139:17,18). And a little before, "such knowledge is too wonderful for me" (verse 6). Isaiah saith, there hath not entered into the heart of man what God has prepared for them that wait for him (Isa 64:4). Ezekiel says, this is the river that cannot be passed over (47:5): And Micah to the sea, (7:19) and Zechariah to a fountain, hath compared this unsearchable love (13:1). Wherefore the Apostle's position, That the love of Christ is that which passeth knowledge, is a truth not to be doubted of: Consequently, to know this, and that it is such, is the farthest that we can go. This is to justify God, who has said it, and to magnify the Son, who has loved us with such a love: And the contrary is to dishonour him, to lessen him, and to make him a deficient Saviour. For suppose this should

be true, that thou couldest to the utmost comprehend this love; yet unless, by thy knowledge thou canst comprehend beyond all evil of sin, or beyond what any man sins, who shall be saved, can spread themselves or infect: Thou must leave some pardonable man in an unpardonable condition. For that thou canst comprehend this love, and yet canst not comprehend that sin. This makes Christ a deficient Saviour. Besides, if thou comprehendest truly; the word that says, it passeth knowledge, hast lost its sanctity, its truth.

It must therefore be, that this love passeth knowledge; and that the highest pitch that a man by knowledge can attain unto, as to this, is to know that it passeth knowledge. My reason is, for that all degrees of love, be they never so high, or many, and high, yet, if we can comprehend them, rest in the bowels of our knowledge, for that only which is beyond us, is that which passeth knowledge. That which we can reach, cannot be the highest: And if a man thinks there is nothing beyond what he can reach, he has no more knowledge as to that: but if he knows that together with what he hath already reached, there is that which he cannot reach, before [him]; then he has a knowledge for that also, even a knowledge, that it passeth knowledge. 'Tis true a man that thus knoweth may have divers conjectures about that thing that is beyond his knowledge. Yea, in reason it will be so, because he knows that there is something yet before him: But since the thing itself is truly beyond his knowledge, none of his conjectures about that thing may be counted knowledge. Or suppose a man that thus conjectureth, should hit right as to what he now conjectures; his right hitting about that thing may not be called knowledge: It is as yet to him but as an uncertain guess, and is still beyond this knowledge.

Quest. But, may some say, what good will it do a man to know that the love of Christ passeth knowledge? one would think that it should do one more good to believe that the knowledge of the whole love of Christ might be attainable.

Answer. That there is an advantage in knowing that the love of Christ passeth knowledge; must not be questioned, for that the Apostle saith it doth (2 Tim 3:16). For to know what the holy word affirms, is profitable: nor would he pray that we might know that which passeth knowledge, were there not by our knowing of it, some help to be administered. But to shew you some of the advantages that will come to us by knowing that the love of Christ passeth knowledge.

(1.) By knowing of this a child of God has in reserve for himself, at a day, when all that he otherwise knows, may be taken from him through the power of temptation. Sometimes a good man may be so put to it, that all that he knows comprehensively may be taken from him: to wit, the knowledge of the truth of his faith, or that he has the grace of God in him, or the like, that I say may be taken from him. Now if at this time, he knows the love of Christ that passeth knowledge, he knows a way in all probability to be recovered again. For if Christ Jesus loves with a love that passeth knowledge: then, saith the soul, that is thus in the dark, he may love me yet, for ought I know, for I know that he loves with a love that passeth knowledge; and therefore I will not utterly despond. Yea, if Satan should attempt to question whether ever Christ Jesus will look upon me or no: the answer is, if I know the love that passes knowledge: But he may look upon me, (O, Satan) yea, and love,

and save me too, for ought I poor sinner know; for he loves with a love that passeth knowledge. If I be fallen into sin that lies hard upon me, and my conscience fears, that for this there is no forgiveness. The help for a stay from utter despair is at hand: but there may, say I, for Christ loves, with a love that passeth knowledge. If Satan would dissuade me from praying to God, by suggesting as if Christ would not regard the stammering, and chattering prayer of mine. The answer is ready, but he may regard for ought I know; for he loves with a love that passeth knowledge. If the tempter doth suggest that thy trials, and troubles, and afflictions, are so many, that it is to be thought thou shall never get beyond them. The answer is near, but for ought we know, Christ may carry me through them all, for he loves with a love that passeth knowledge. Thus I say, is relief at hand, and a help in reserve for the tempted, let their temptations be what they will. This therefore is the weapon that will baffle the devil when all other weapons fail; for ought I know, Christ may save me, for he loves with a love that passeth knowledge. Yea, suppose he should drive me to the worst of fears, and that is to doubt that I neither have nor shall have for ever the grace of God in my soul. The answer is at hand, but I have or may have it, for Christ loves with a love that passeth knowledge. Thus therefore you may see that in this prayer of Paul, there is a great deal of good. He prays, when he prays that we might know the love of Christ that passeth knowledge: that we may have a help at hand, and relief against all the horrible temptations of the devil. For this is a help at hand, a help that is ready to fall in with us, if there be yet remaining with us, but the least grain of right reasoning according to the nature of things. For if it be objected against a man that he is poor, because he has but a groat in his pocket; yet if he has an unknown deal of money in his trunks, how easy is it for him to recover himself from that slander, by returning the knowledge of what he has, upon the objector. This is the case, and thus it is, and will be with them that know the love of Christ that passeth knowledge. Wherefore,

(2.) By this knowledge, room is made for a Christian, and liberty is ministered unto him, to turn himself every way in all spiritual things. This is the Christian's reboth, that well for which the Philistines have no heart to strive, and that which will cause that we be fruitful in the land (Gen 26:22).

If Christians know not with this knowledge, they walk in the world as if they were pinioned; or as if fetters were hanged on their heels. But this enlarged their steps under them (2 Sam 22:37): by the knowledge of this love they may walk at liberty, and their steps shall not be straitened. This is that which Solomon intends when he saith, "Get wisdom, and get understanding" (Prov 4:5). Then "when thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened, and when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble" (Prov 4:12). A man that has only from hand to mouth, is oft put to it to know how to use his penny, and comes off also, many times, but with an hungry belly; but he that has, not only that, but always over and to spare, he is more at liberty, and can live in fullness, and far more like a gentleman. There is a man has a cistern, and that is full of water: there is another also, that has his cistern full, and withal, his spring in his yard; but a great drought is upon the land in which they dwell: I would now know, which of these two have the most advantage to live in their own minds at liberty, without fear of

wanting water? Why this is the case in hand. There is a Christian that knows Christ in all those degrees of his love that are knowable, but he knoweth Christ nothing in his love that passeth knowledge. There is another Christian, and he knows Christ, as the first, but withal, he also knows him as to his love that passeth knowledge. Pray now tell me, which of these two are likeliest to live most like a Christian, that is, like a spiritual prince, and like him that possesseth all things? which has most advantage to live in godly largeness of heart, and is most at liberty in his mind? which of these two have the greatest advantage to believe, and the greatest engagements laid upon him to love the Lord Jesus? which of these have also most in readiness to resist the wiles of the devil, and to subdue the power and prevalency of corruptions? 'Tis this, that makes men fathers in Christianity. "I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known;--I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known" (1 John 2:13-14), why, have not others known, not so as the fathers? The fathers have known and known. They have known the love of Christ in those degrees of love which are knowable, and have also known the love of Christ to be such which passeth knowledge. In my father's house is bread enough and to spare, was that that fetched the prodigal home (Luke 15:17). And when Moses would speak an endless all to Israel, for the comfort and stay of their souls, he calls their God, "The fountain of Jacob upon a land of corn and wine" (Deu 33:28).

(3.) By this knowledge, or knowing of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, there is begot in Christians a greater desire to press forwards to that which is before them (Phil 3:12-21). What is the reason of all that sloth, carnal contentedness, and listlessness of spirit in Christians, more than the ignorance of this. For he that thinks he knows what can be known, is beyond all reason that should induce him to seek yet after more. Now the love of Christ may be said, not to be knowable, upon a threefold account: [namely]. For that my knowledge is weak. For that my knowledge is imperfect. Or for that, though my knowledge be never so perfect, because the love of Christ is eternal.

There is love that is not to be apprehended by weak knowledge. Convince a man of this, and then, if the knowledge of what he already has, be truly sweet to his soul (Prov 2:10), it will stir him up with great heartiness to desire to know what more of this is possible.

There is love beyond what he knows already, who is indued with the most perfect knowledge, that man here may have. Now if what this man knows already of this love is indeed sweet unto him; then it puts him upon hearty desires that his soul may yet know more. And because there is no bound set to man, how much he may know in this life thereof; therefore his desires, notwithstanding what he has attained, are yet kept alive, and in the pursuit after the knowledge of more of the love of Christ. And God in old time has taken it so well at the hands of some of his, that their desires have been so great, that when, as I may say, they have known as much on earth as is possible for them to know; (that is by ordinary means) he has come down to them in visions and revelations; or else taken them up to him for an hour or two into paradise, that they might know, and then let them down again.

But this is not all, There is a knowledge of the love of Christ,

that we are by no means capable of until we be possessed of the heavens. And I would know, if a man indeed loveth Christ, whether the belief of this be not one of the highest arguments that can be urged, to make such an one weary of this world, that he may be with him. To such an one, "to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil 1:21-23). And to such an one, it is difficult to bring his mind to be content to stay here a longer time; except he be satisfied that Christ has still work for him here to do.

I will yet add, There is a love of Christ, I will not say, that cannot be known, but I will say, that cannot be enjoyed; no, not by them now in heaven (in soul) until the day of judgment. And the knowledge of this, when it has possessed even men on earth, has made them choose a day of judgment, before a day of death, that they might know what is beyond that state and knowledge which even the spirits of just men made perfect, now do enjoy in heaven (2 Cor 5:4). Wherefore, as I said at first, To know the love of Christ that passeth knowledge, is advantageous upon this account; it begetteth in Christians a great desire to reach, and press forward to that which is before.

One thing more, and then, as to this reason, I have done. Even that love of Christ that is absolutely unknowable, as to the utmost bound thereof because it is eternal, will be yet in the nature of it sweet and desirable, because we shall enjoy or be possessed of it so. This therefore, if there were no more, is enough, when known, to draw away the heart from things that are below, to itself.

(4.) The love that passeth knowledge. The knowledge of that is a very fruitful knowledge. It cannot be, but it must be fruitful. Some knowledge is empty, and alone, not attended with that good, and with those blessings wherewith this knowledge is attended. Did I say, it is fruitful? I will add, it is attended with the best fruit; it yieldeth the best wine: It fills the soul with all the fullness of God. "And to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled with all the fullness of God." God is in Christ, and makes himself known to us by the love of Christ. "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God," for God is not to be found nor enjoyed, but in him, consequently, he that hath, and abideth in the doctrine of Christ, "hath both the Father and the Son" (2 John 9). Now, since there are degrees of knowledge of this doctrine, and since the highest degree of the knowledge of him, is to know that he has a Love that passeth knowledge, it follows, that if he that has the least saving knowledge of this doctrine, hath God; he that hath the largest knowledge of it, has God much more, or, according to the text, is filled with all the fullness of God. What this fullness of God should be, is best gathered from such sayings of the Holy Ghost, as come nearest to this, in language, filled,

Full of goodness (Rom 15:14).

Full of faith (Acts 6:5).

Full of the Holy Ghost (Acts 7:55).

Full of assurance of faith (Heb 10:22).

Full of assurance of hope (Heb 6:11).

Full of joy unspeakable, and full of glory (1 Peter 1:8).

Full of joy (1 John 1:4).

Full of good works (Acts 11:36).

Being filled with the knowledge of his will (Col 1:9).

Being filled with the spirit (Eph 5:18).

Filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God (Phil 4:11). These things to be sure are included either for the cause or effect of this fullness. The cause they cannot be, for that is God's, by his Holy Spirit. The effects therefore they are, for wherever God dwells in the degree intended in the text, there is shewn in an eminent manner, by these things, "what is the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints" (Eph 1:18). But these things dwell not in that measure specified by the text, in any, but those who know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.

But what a man is he that is filled with all these things! or that is, as we have it in the text, "filled with all the fullness of God!" Such men are, at this day, wanting in the churches. These are the men that sweeten churches, and that bring glory to God and to religion. And knowledge will make us such, such knowledge as the Apostle here speaketh of.¹⁴ I have now done, when I have spoken something by way of USE unto you, from what hath been said. And,

Use First, Is there such breadth, and length, and depth, and height in God, for us? And is there toward us love in Christ that passeth knowledge? Then this shews us, not only the greatness of the majesty of the Father and the Son, but the great good will that is in their heart to them that receive their word.

God has engaged the breadth, and length and depth, and height of the love, the wisdom, the power, and truth that is in himself, for us; and Christ has loved us with a love that passeth knowledge. We may well say, "Who is like thee, O Lord, among the gods?" (Exo 15:11). Or, as another prophet has it, "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever: because he delighteth in mercy" (Micah 7:18). Yea, no words can sufficiently set forth the greatness of this love of God and his Son to us poor miserable sinners.

Use Second, Is there so great a heart for love, towards us, both in the Father and in the Son? Then let us be much in the study and search after the greatness of this love. This is the sweetest study that a man can devote himself unto; because it is the study of the love of God and of Christ to man. Studies that yield far less profit than this, how close are they pursued, by some who have adapted themselves thereunto? Men do not use to count telling over of their money burdensome to them, nor yet the recounting of their grounds, their herds, and their flocks, when they increase. Why? the study of the unsearchable love of God in Christ to man,

is better in itself, and yields more sweetness to the soul of man, than can ten thousand such things as but now are mentioned. I know the wise men of this world, of whom there are many, will say as to what I now press you unto; Who can shew us any good in it? But Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increaseth (Psa 4:6,7). David also said that his meditation on the Lord should be sweet. Oh, there is in God and in his Son, that kindness for the sons of men, that, did they know it, they would like to retain the knowledge of it in their hearts. They would cry out as she did of old; "Set me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thine arm: For love is strong as death" (Song 8:6,7). Every part, crumb, grain, or scrap of this knowledge, is to a Christian, as drops of honey are to sweet-palated children, worth the gathering up, worth the putting to the taste to be relished. Yea, David says of the word which is the ground of knowledge: "It is sweeter than honey or the honey-comb. More," saith he, "to be desired are they than gold; yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey or the honey-comb" (Psa 19:10). Why then do not Christians devote themselves to the meditation of this so heavenly, so goodly, so sweet, and so comfortable a thing, that yieldeth such advantage to the soul? The reason is, these things are talked of, but not believed: did men believe what they say, when they speak so largely of the love of God, and the love of Jesus Christ, they would, they could not but meditate upon it. There are so many wonders in it, and men love to think of wonders. There is so much profit in it, and men love to think of that which yields them profit. But, as I said, the belief of things is wanting. Belief of a thing will have strong effects, whether the ground for it be true, or false. As suppose one of you should, when you are at a neighbour's house, believe that your own house is on fire, whilst your children are fast asleep in bed, though indeed there were no such thing; I will appeal to any of you if this belief would not make notable work with and upon your hearts. Let a man believe he shall be damned, though afterwards it is evident he believed a lie, yet what work did that belief make in that man's heart; even so, and much more, the belief of heavenly things will work, because true and great, and most good; also, where they are indeed believed, their evidence is managed upon their spirit, by the power and glory of the Holy Ghost itself: Wherefore let us study these things.

Use Third, Let us cast ourselves upon this love. No greater encouragement can be given us, than what is in the text and about it. It is great, it is love that passeth knowledge. Men that are sensible of danger, are glad when they hear of such helps upon which they may boldly venture for escape. Why such an help and relief, the text helpeth trembling and fearful consciences to. Fear and trembling as to misery hereafter, can flow but from what we know, feel, or imagine: but the text speaks of a love that is beyond that we can know, feel, or imagine, even of a love that passeth knowledge; consequently of a love that goes beyond all these. Besides, the Apostle's conclusion upon this subject, plainly makes it manifest that this meaning which I have put upon the text, is the mind of the Holy Ghost. "Now unto him," saith he, "that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" (Eph 3:20,21). What can be more plain? what

can be more full? What can be more suitable to the most desponding spirit in any man? He can do more than thou knowest he will. He can do more than thou thinkest he can. What dost thou think? why, I think, saith the sinner, that I am cast away. Well, but there are worse thoughts than these, therefore think again. Why, saith the sinner, I think that my sins are as many as the sins of all the world. Indeed this is a very black thought, but there are worse thoughts than this, therefore prithee think again. Why, I think, saith the sinner, that God is not able to pardon all my sins. Ay, now thou hast thought indeed. For this thought makes thee look more like a devil than a man, and yet because thou art a man and not a devil, see the condescension and the boundlessness of the love of thy God. He is able to do above all that we think! Couldst thou (sinner) if thou hadst been allowed, thyself express what thou wouldest have expressed, the greatness of the love thou wantest, with words that could have suited thee better? for 'tis not said he can do above what we think, meaning our thinking at present, but above all we can think, meaning above the worst and most soul-dejecting thoughts that we have at any time. Sometimes the dejected have worse thoughts than at other times they have. Well, take them at their worst times, at times when they think, and think, till they think themselves down into the very pangs of hell; yet this word of the grace of God, is above them, and shews that he can yet recover and save these miserable people. And now I am upon this subject, I will a little further walk and travel with the desponding ones, and will put a few words in their mouths for their help against temptations that may come upon them hereafter. For as Satan follows such now, with charges and applications of guilt, so he may follow them with interrogatories and appeals: for he can tell how by appeals, as well as by charging of sin, to sink and drown the sinner whose soul he has leave to engage. Suppose therefore that some distressed man or woman, should after this way be engaged, and Satan should with his interrogatories, and appeals be busy with them to drive them to desperation; the text last mentioned, to say nothing of the subject of our discourse, yields plenty of help for the relief of such an one. Says Satan, dost thou not know that thou hast horribly sinned? yes, says the soul, I do. Says Satan, dost thou not know, that thou art one of the vilest in all the pack of professors? yes, says the soul, I do. Says Satan, doth not thy conscience tell thee that thou art and hast been more base than any of thy fellows can imagine thee to be? Yes, says the soul; my conscience tells me so. Well, saith Satan, now will I come upon thee with my appeals. Art thou not a graceless wretch? Yes. Hast thou an heart to be sorry for this wickedness? No, not as I should. And albeit, saith Satan, thou prayest sometimes, yet is not thy heart possessed with a belief that God will not regard thee? yes, says the sinner. Why then despair, and go hang thyself, saith the devil. And now we are at the end of the thing designed and driven at by Satan. But what shall I now do, saith the sinner; I answer, take up the words of the text against him, Christ loves with a love that passeth knowledge, and answereth him farther, saying Satan, though I cannot think that God loves me; though I cannot think that God will save me; yet I will not yield to thee: for God can do more than I think he can. And whereas thou appealest unto me, if whether when I pray, my heart is not possessed with unbelief that God will not regard me; that shall not sink me neither: for God can do abundantly above what I ask or think. Thus this text helpeth, where obstructions are put in against our believing, and thereby casting ourselves

upon the love of God in Christ for salvation.

And yet this is not all, for the text is yet more full: "He is able to do abundantly more," yea, "exceeding abundantly more," or "above all that we ask or think." It is a text made up of words picked and packed together by the wisdom of God, picked and packed together on purpose for the succour and relief of the tempted, that they may when in the midst of their distresses, cast themselves upon the Lord their God. He can do abundantly more than we ask. Oh! says the soul, that he would but do so much for me as I could ask him to do! How happy a man should I then be. Why, what wouldst thou ask for, sinner? you may be sure, says the soul, I would ask to be saved from my sins; I would ask for faith in, and love to, Christ; I would ask to be preserved in this evil world, and ask to be glorified with Christ in heaven. He that asketh of all this, doth indeed ask for much, and for more than Satan would have him believe that God is able or willing to bestow upon him; but mark, the text doth not say, that God is able to do all that we can ask or think, but that he is able to do above all, yea, abundantly above all, yea, exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. What a text is this! What a God have we! God foresaw the sins of his people, and what work the devil would make with their hearts about them, and therefore to prevent their ruin by his temptation, he has thus largely, as you see, expressed his love by his word. Let us therefore, as has been bidden us, make this good use of this doctrine of grace, as to cast ourselves upon this love of God in the times of distress and temptation.

Use Fourth, Take heed of abusing this love. This exhortation seems needless; for love is such a thing, that one would think none could find in their heart to abuse. But for all that, I am of opinion, that there is nothing that is more abused among professors this day, than is this love of God. There has of late more light about the love of Christ broke out, than formerly: every boy now can talk of the love of Christ; but this love of Christ has not been rightly applied by preachers, or else not rightly received by professors. For never was this grace of Christ so turned into lasciviousness, as now. Now it is a practice among professors to learn to be vile, of the profane. Yea, and to plead for that vileness: Nay, we will turn it the other way, now it is so that the profane do learn to be vile of those that profess (They teach the wicked ones their ways): a thing that no good man should think on but with blushing cheeks (Jer 2:33).¹⁵ Jude speaketh of these people, and tells us that they, notwithstanding their profession, deny the only Lord God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ (verse 4). "They profess," saith Paul, "that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate" (Titus 1:16).

But I say, let not this love of God and of Christ, be abused. 'Tis unnatural to abuse love, to abuse love is a villany condemned of all, yea, to abuse love, is the most inexcusable sin of all. It is next the sin of devils to abuse love, the love of God and of Christ.

And what says the Apostle? "Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved, therefore God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned, who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thess 2:10-12). And what can such an one say

for himself in the judgment, that shall be charged with the abuse of love? Christians, deny yourselves, deny your lusts, deny the vanities of this present life, devote yourselves to God; become lovers of God, lovers of his ways, and "a people zealous of good works"; then shall you show one to another, and to all men, that you have not received the grace of God in vain (2 Cor 6:1). Renounce therefore the hidden things of dishonesty, walk not in craftiness, nor handle God's word deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth, commend yourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. Do this, I say, yea, and so endeavour such a closure with this love of God in Christ, as may graciously constrain you to do it, because, when all proofs of the right receiving of this love of Christ shall be produced, none will be found of worth enough to justify the simplicity of our profession, but that which makes us "zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14). And what a thing will it be to be turned off at last, as one that abused the love of Christ! as one that presumed upon his lusts, this world, and all manner of naughtiness, because the love of Christ to pardon sins was so great! What an unthinking, what a disingenuous one wilt thou be counted at that day! yea, thou wilt be found to be the man that made a prey of love, that made a stalking-horse of love, that made of love a slave to sin, the devil and the world, and will not that be bad? (Read Eze 16)

Use Fifth, Is the love of God and of Christ so great? let us then labour to improve it to the utmost for our advantage, against all the hindrances of faith.

To what purpose else is it revealed, made mention of, and commended to us? We are environed with many enemies, and faith in the love of God and of Christ, is our only succour and shelter. Wherefore our duty and wisdom and privilege is, to improve this love for our own advantage. Improve it against daily infirmities, improve it against the wiles of the devil; improve it against the threats, rage, death, and destruction, that the men of this world continually with their terror set before you. But how must that be done? why, set this love and the safety that is in it, before thine eyes; and behold it while these things make their assaults upon thee. These words, the faith of this, God loves me, will support thee in the midst of what dangers may assault thee. And this is that which is meant, when we are exhorted to rejoice in the Lord (Phil 3:1), to make our boast in the Lord (Psa 44:8); to triumph in Christ (2 Cor 2:14); and to set the Lord always before our face (Psa 16:8). For he that can do this thing stedfastly, cannot be overcome. For in God there is more than can be in the world, either to help or hinder; wherefore if God be my helper, if God loves me, if Christ be my redeemer, and has bestowed his love that passeth knowledge upon me, who can be against me? (Heb 13:6, Rom 8:31) and if they be against me, what disadvantage reap I thereby; since even all this also, worketh for my good? This is improving the love of God and of Christ for my advantage. The same course should Christians also take with the degrees of this love, even set it against all the degrees of danger; for here deep calleth unto deep. There cannot be wickedness and rage wrought up to such or such a degree, as of which it may be said, there are not degrees in the love of God and of Christ to match it. Wherein Pharaoh dealt proudly against God's people, the Lord was above him (Exo 18:11), did match and overmatch him; he came up to him, and went beyond him; he collared with him, overcame him, and

cast him down. "The Lord is a man of war, the Lord is his name. Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea--they sank into the bottom as a stone" (Exo 15:5). There is no striving against the Lord that hath loved us; there is none that strive against him can prosper. If the shields of the earth be the Lord's (Psa 47:9), then he can wield them for the safeguard of his body the church; or if they are become incapable of being made use of any longer in that way, and for such a thing, can he not lay them aside, and make himself new ones? Men can do after this manner, much more God. But again, if the miseries, or afflictions which thou meetest with, seem to thee to overflow, and to go beyond measure, above measure, and so to be above strength, and begin to drive thee to despair of life (2 Cor 1:8); then thou hast also, in the love of God, and of Christ, that which is above, and that goes beyond all measure also, to wit, love unsearchable, unknown, and "that can do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." Now God hath set them one against the other, and 'twill be thy wisdom to do so too, for this is the way to improve this love. But, though it be easy, thus to admonish you to do, yet you shall find the practical part more difficult; wherefore, here it may not be amiss, if I add to these, another head of COUNSEL.

Counsel First, Then, Wouldest thou improve this love of God and of Christ to thy advantage, Why then thou must labour after the knowledge of it. This was it that the Apostle prayed for, for these Ephesians, as was said before, and this is that that thou must labour after, or else thy reading and my writing, will, as to thee, be fruitless. Let me then say to thee, as David to his son Solomon, "And thou Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy father" (1 Chron 28:9). Empty notions of this love will do nothing but harm, wherefore, they are not empty notions that I press thee to rest in, but that thou labour after the knowledge of the favour of this good ointment (Song 1:3), which the Apostle calleth the favour of the knowledge of this Lord Jesus (2 Cor 2:14). Know it, until it becometh sweet or pleasant to thy soul, and then it will preserve and keep thee (Prov 2:10,11). Make this love of God and of Christ thine own, and not another's. Many there are that can talk largely of the love of God to Abraham, to David, to Peter and Paul. But that is not the thing, give not over until this love be made thine own; until thou find and feel it to run warm in thy heart by the shedding of it abroad there, by the spirit that God hath given thee (Rom 5:5). Then thou wilt know it with an obliging and engaging knowledge; yea, then thou wilt know it with a soul-strengthening, and soul-encouraging knowledge.

Counsel Second, Wouldest thou improve this love? then set it against the love of all other things whatsoever, even until this love shall conquer thy soul from the love of them to itself.

This is Christian. Do it therefore, and say, why should any thing have my heart but God, but Christ? He loves me, he loves me with love that passeth knowledge. He loves me, and he shall have me: he loves me, and I will love him: his love stripped him of all for my sake; Lord let my love strip me of all for thy sake. I am a son of love, an object of love, a monument of love, of free love, of distinguishing love, of peculiar love, and of love that passeth knowledge: and why should not I walk in love? In love to God, in love to men, in holy love, in love unfeigned? This is the way to improve the love of God for thy advantage, for the subduing of

thy passions, and for sanctifying of thy nature. 'Tis an odious thing to hear men of base lives talking of the love of God, of the death of Christ, and of the glorious grace that is presented unto sinners by the word of the truth of the gospel. Praise is comely for the upright, not for the profane. Therefore let him speak of love that is taken with love, that is captivated with love, that is carried away with love. If this man speaks of it, his speaking signifies something; the powers, and bands of love are upon him, and he shews to all that he knows what he is speaking of. But the very mentioning of love, is in the mouth of the profane, like a parable in the mouth of fools, or as salt unsavory. Wherefore, Christian, improve this love of God as thou shouldest, and that will improve thee as thou wouldest. Wherefore,

Counsel Third, If thou wouldest improve this love, keep thyself in it. "Keep yourselves in the love of God" (Jude 21). This text looks as if it favoured the Socinians, but there is nothing of that in it. And so doth that, "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love: even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love" (John 15:10). The meaning then is this, that living a holy life is the way, after a man has believed unto justification, to keep himself in the savour and comfort of the love of God. And Oh, that thou wouldest indeed so do. And that because, if thou shall want the savour of it, thou will soon want tenderness to the commandment, which is the rule by which thou must walk, if thou wilt do good to thyself, or honour God in the world. "To him that ordereth his conversation aright, will I shew the salvation of God" (Psa 50:23). He that would live a sweet, comfortable, joyful life, must live a very holy life. This is the way to improve this love to thyself indeed.

Counsel Fourth, To this end, you must take root and be grounded in love; that is, you must be well settled, and stablished in this love, if indeed you would improve it. You must not be shaken as to the doctrine and grounds of it (Eph 3:17). These you must be well acquainted with: for he that is but a child in this doctrine, is not capable as yet, of falling in with these exhortations: For such waver, and fear when tempted; and "he that feareth is not made perfect in love" (1 John 4:18), nor can he so improve it for himself and soul's good as he should.

Counsel Fifth, and lastly, Keep, to this end, those grounds, and evidences that God hath given you of your call to be partakers of this love, with all clearness upon your hearts, and in your minds. For he that wants a sight of them, or a proof that they are true and good, can take but little comfort in this love. There is a great mystery in the way of God with his people. He will justify them without their works, he will pardon them for his Son's sake: but they shall have but little comfort of what he hath done, doth, and will do for them that are careless, carnal, and not holy in their lives. Nor shall they have their evidences for heaven at hand, nor out of doubt with them, yea, they shall walk without the sun, and have their comforts by bits and knocks;¹⁶ while others sit at their father's table, have liberty to go into the wine-cellar, rejoice at the sweet and pleasant face of their heavenly Father towards them; and know it shall go well with them at the end.

Something now for a conclusion should be spoken to the carnal world, who have heard me tell of all this love. But what shall

I say unto them? If I should speak to them, and they should not hear; or if I should testify unto them, and they should not believe; or intreat them, and they should scorn me; all will but aggravate, and greaten their sin, and tend to their further condemnation. And therefore I shall leave the obstinate where I found him, and shall say to him that is willing to be saved, Sinner, thou hast the advantage of thy neighbour, not only because thou art willing to live, but because there are [those] that are willing thou shouldest; to wit, those unto whom the issues from death do belong, and they are the Father and the Son, to whom be glory with the blessed Spirit of grace, world without end. Amen.

FOOTNOTES:

1 In the first edition of this treatise, which was published four years after Bunyan's death, this is quoted "deeper than the sea," probably a typographical error. It is afterwards quoted correctly.--Ed.

2 How admirably does Bunyan bring home to the Christian's heart these solemn truths. The breadth and length and depth and height of our guilt and misery, requires a remedy beyond all human power. This can only be found in the love of God in Christ: this extends beyond all bounds. It is divine, unsearchable, eternal mercy, swallowing up all our miseries.--Ed.

3 Shuck, a corruption of shrug, to express horror by motions of the body.

4 This is a very striking application of these words of David, which so fearfully describe the agitation of those who are exposed to a hurricane at sea. We too generally limit this passage to its literal sense. To Bunyan, who had passed through such a deep experience of the "terrors of the Lord," when he came out of tribulation and anguish, he must have richly enjoyed the solemn imagery of these words, depicting the inmost feelings of his soul when in the horrible deeps of doubt and despair. But young Christians must not be distressed because they have never experienced such tempests: thousands of vessels of mercy get to heaven, without meeting with hurricanes in their way.--Ed.

5 How thankful should we be, for the great spread of gospel light in this country, since Bunyan's days. He for refusing to attend, what he considered, an unscriptural church; suffered above twelve years incarceration in a miserable den; while all his friends were either imprisoned or plundered. It was a dreadful attempt to root out Christianity from this country; but was overruled to make it take deeper root. How long will Antichrist still hold up his head in this country? He has had some hard knocks of late.--Ed.

6 The descent of Christ into hell has been the subject of much controversy, and the question is as far from solution now as it was in the dark ages, when it was first propounded, and then arbitrarily decreed to be an article of faith. Those who explain hell as hades, the place of departed souls, or of the dead generally, fortify themselves with Psalm 139:8, and also Psalm 16:10; and yet the first passage may only imply the omnipresence of God, and the second, the resurrection of the incorruptible body of Christ from the grave. The descent of Christ into the place of torment is a figment, a monkish fable, in which Bible incidents and heathen

myths are woven together to delude a credulous and ignorant laity. The formulary designated the Apostles' creed, has, beyond question, a high claim to antiquity, but none whatever to be the work of the Apostles themselves. The "descent into hell" was an after interpolation, and its rejection has been suggested.--Ed.

7 This is one of those strikingly solemn passages, which abound in Bunyan's works. It almost irresistibly brings to our imagination his expressive countenance, piercing eyes and harmonious voice; pressed on by his rapid conceptions and overpowering natural eloquence. How must it have riveted the attention of a great congregation. It is a rush of words, rolling on like the waves of the sea; increasing in grandeur and in force as they multiply in number.--Ed.

8 The reader must not misunderstand the word common as here applied to the Saviour. It has the same meaning that is applied to a piece of land, to which many persons have an equal or common right; but which none but those, who have a right or title, can use. It strikingly illustrates the union of Christ and his church.--Ed.

9 There is no affectation of learning in Bunyan's giving the meaning of the Hebrew word, Metheg; it is translated in the margin of our Bibles, "the bridle" of Ammah.--Ed.

10 Bunyan seems here evidently to refer to the case of unregenerate and worldly men entering into the ministry, and making a public and solemn declaration that they "are inwardly moved thereto by the Holy Ghost," and "truly called according to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ." See form and manner of ordaining deacons and priests in the Church of England.--Ed.

11 Bunyan quotes this passage from the puritan version; vulgarly called "The Breeches Bible." The present authorized translation is "might be rich."

12 "Virtue," secret agency: efficacy without visible or material action. "Walker's Dictionary."--Ed.

13 "Improving," not in quality but by extending the benefits, employing to good purpose; turning to profitable account.--Ed.

14 How delightfully has Bunyan brought forth the marrow of this important text. He felt that those who were filled with all the fullness of God, sweetened the churches in his day; they were wanted then; are they not equally wanted now?--Ed.

15 Bunyan lived in singularly eventful times. Under the Commonwealth the strictest outward morality was enforced. But when a licentious monarch was placed upon the throne, a flood of the grossest debauchery was let loose; and those hypocrites, who had put on a cloak of religion to serve a temporary purpose, threw it off and became ringleaders in the vilest iniquities. See Matthew 12:43-45.--Ed.

16 "Bits and knocks"; this phrase is now obsolete: it alludes to a dog at table, who while picking up the crumbs, often gets a bite and a buffet or knock with it, but still perseveres.--Ed.

OF ANTICHRIST, AND HIS RUIN: AND OF THE SLAYING THE WITNESSES.

BY JOHN BUNYAN

PREFATORY REMARKS BY THE EDITOR

This important treatise was prepared for the press, and left by the author, at his decease, to the care of his surviving friend for publication. It first appeared in a collection of his works in folio, 1692; and although a subject of universal interest; most admirably elucidated; no edition has been published in a separate form.

Antichrist has agitated the Christian world from the earliest ages; and his craft has been to mislead the thoughtless, by fixing upon the humble followers of the Lamb his own opprobrious proper name. The mass of professed Christians, whose creed and mode of worship have been provided by human laws, has ever been opposed to the sincere disciples of Christ. To imbibe every principle from investigation and conviction of the holy oracles--to refuse submission to any authority in the spiritual kingdom of God, except it is to Christ, the supreme head and only lawgiver in his church--to refuse obedience to human laws in the great concern of salvation and of worship; whether those laws or decrees emanate from a Darius, a Nebuchadnezzar, a Bourbon, a Tudor, or a Stuart--to be influenced by the spirit which animated Daniel, the three Hebrew youths, and the martyrs, brought down denunciations upon them, and they were called antichristian: but alas! the sincere disciples of Jesus have ever known and FELT who and what is Antichrist. They have been in dungeons--racked and tormented--transported--drowned--hung or burned. The most frightful atrocities have been committed upon the most peaceful and valuable members of society; because they valued their soul's peace in preference to temporal advantages. These cruelties are THY cursed deeds, O Antichrist! The hand writing against thee is exhibited in blood-stained and indelible characters. The Great God has decreed thy downfall and ruin--"That wicked--whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth," (2 Thess 2:8). All who are found partakers in his community, must be consumed with an everlasting destruction. No "paper-winkers" 1 can hide this truth from the enlightened regenerated mind. "O my soul, come not thou into their secret, unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united: for in their anger they slew a man. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel!"

In Bunyan's time great cruelties were practised to compel uniformity. To that absurd shrine many thousand invaluable lives were sacrificed. Blessed be God, that happier days have dawned upon us. Antichrist can no longer put the Christian to a cruel death. It very rarely sends one to prison for refusing obedience to human laws that interfere with religious worship. "My kingdom is not of this world," said the Redeemer: and his followers dare not render unto Caesar, or temporal governments, that which belongs exclusively to God. Human coercion, in anything connected with religion, whether it imposes creeds, liturgies, or modes of worship, is Antichrist: whom to obey, is spiritual desolation, and if knowingly persevered

in, leads to death.

On the contrary, the kingdom of Christ is love, meekness, forbearance, persuasion, conviction, and holy faith. The Christian who dares not obey Antichrist may still, in some countries, suffer personal violence; but the olden cruelties have given way to the spread of the gospel. Should the wicked spirit of persecution still light its unhallowed fire in any sect; may heaven forgive and convert such misguided men, before the divine wrath shall consume all that pertains to Antichrist. "Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord."

Bunyan conceives that previous to the universal triumphs of the Saviour, Antichrist will spread his influence over the whole earth; and the church be hidden from outward observation, in the hearts of believers. This idea, which was also cherished by Dr. Gill, and others, deserves careful consideration; while we keep in mind, that leaven which must spread, however invisible in its operation, until the whole earth shall be leavened.

The dread enemy may yet appear in a different shape to any that he has hitherto assumed. When mankind, by the spread of knowledge, shall throw off the absurdities and disgraceful trammels of hypocrisy, fanaticism, and tyranny, which has so long oppressed them; there may be experienced a vast overflowing of infidelity, and perverted reason assume the place of Antichrist. Through this and all other opposing systems, Christianity must make its irresistible progress: all that opposes is doomed to ruin by the Great God. Every heart will be subdued by that blessed knowledge, which has the promise of the life that now is as well as of that which is to come. Bloodless victory! The ark being exhibited, every Dagon must fall before it, then shall be realized the heavenly anthem, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men."

GEORGE OFFOR.

A PREMONITION TO THE READER.

After that God had delivered Babylon and her king into the hands of the kings of the Medes and Persians, then began the liberty of the Jews, from their long and tedious captivity: For though Nebuchadnezzar and his sons did tyrannically enslave, and hold them under; yet so wrought God with the hearts of those kings that succeeded them, that they made proclamation to them to go home, and build their city, temple, &c., and worship their own God according to his own law (2 Chron 30:6; Ezra 1). But because I would not be tedious in enumerating instances for the clearing of this, therefore I will content myself with one, and with a brief note upon it. It is that in the seventh of Ezra 26: 'And whosoever will not do the law of thy God, and the law of the king, let judgment be executed speedily upon him, whether it be to death, or to banishment, or to confiscation of goods, or to imprisonment.' This is the conclusion of a letter that king Artaxerxes gave to Ezra the priest and scribe, when he granted his petition, and gave him leave to go to Jerusalem to build the temple, and to offer sacrifice there to the God whose house is in Jerusalem. And a conclusion it was, both comfortable and sharp; comfortable to Ezra and his companions, but sharp unto his enemies. I shall here

present you with a copy of the letter at large.

'Artaxerxes, king of kings, unto Ezra the priest, a scribe of the law of the God of heaven, perfect peace, and at such a time. I make a decree, that all they of the people of Israel, and of his priests and levites, in my realm, which are minded of their own free-will to go up to Jerusalem, go with thee. Forasmuch as thou art sent of the king, and of his seven counsellors, to inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, according to the law of thy God which is in thine hand; And to carry the silver and gold, which the king and his counsellors have freely offered unto the God of Israel, whose habitation is in Jerusalem. And all the silver and gold that thou canst find in all the province of Babylon, with the free-will-offering of the people, and of the priests, offering willingly for the house of their God which is in Jerusalem: That thou mayest buy speedily with this money bullocks, rams, lambs, with their meat-offerings and their drink-offerings, and offer them upon the altar of the house of your God which is in Jerusalem. And whatsoever shall seem good to thee, and to thy brethren, to do with the rest of the silver and the gold, that do after the will of your God. The vessels also that are given thee for the service of the house of thy God, those deliver thou before the God of Jerusalem. And whatsoever more shall be needful for the house of thy God, which thou shalt have occasion to bestow, bestow it out of the king's treasure-house. And I, even I Artaxerxes the king, do make a decree to all the treasurers which are beyond the river, that whatsoever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, shall require of you, it be done speedily. Unto an hundred talents of silver, and to an hundred measures of wheat, and to an hundred baths of wine, and to an hundred baths of oil, and salt without prescribing how much. Whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be diligently done for the house of the God of heaven: for why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons? Also we certify you, that touching any of the priests and levites, singers, porters, nethinims, or ministers of this House of God, it shall not be lawful to impose toll, tribute, or custom, upon them. And thou, Ezra, after the wisdom of thy God, that is in thine hand, set magistrates and judges, which may judge all the people that are beyond the river, all such as know the laws of thy God; and teach ye them that know them not. And whosoever will not do the law of thy God, and the law of the king, let judgment be executed speedily upon him, whether it be unto death, or to banishment, or to confiscation of goods, or to imprisonment' (Ezra 7:11-26).

This is the letter; and now for the scope thereof. First, Generally. Secondly, Particularly.

GENERALLY. The general scope of the letter is this: A grant given by the king to Ezra the scribe, to go to Jerusalem, and build there the temple of God, and offer sacrifice in it according to the law: With commissions annexed thereunto, to the king's lieutenants, treasurers and governors on that side the river, to further the work with such things as by the king was commanded they should.

PARTICULARLY. But we will consider the matter particularly. 1. As to the manner of the grant which the king gave to Ezra and his brethren to go thither. 2. As to the king's grant, with reference to their building, and way of worship. 3. With reference to the

king's liberality and gifts towards the building of the temple, and by what rules it was to be bestowed. 4. As to the way that the king concluded they should be governed in their own land. 5. With reference to the king's charge to his officers that were thereabout, not to hinder Ezra in his work. 6. And lastly, with reference to the king's threat and commandment to do judgment if they should hinder it.

First, As to the manner of the grant that the king gave to Ezra and his brethren to go to build, it was such an one as forced none, but left every Jew to his own choice, whether he would go, or forbear. The words are these: 'Artaxerxes, king of kings, unto Ezra the priest, a scribe of the law of the God of heaven, perfect peace, and at such a time. I make a decree, that all they of the people of Israel, and of his priests and levites, in my realm, which are minded of their own free-will to go up to Jerusalem, go with thee' (verse 12,13).

Thus gracious then was the king: He made a decree, That all they of the captive Jews, their priests and levites, that would return to their own land, to build their temple, and to sacrifice there, might: He would hinder none, force none, but left them free, to do as they would.

Secondly, As to the king's grant, with reference to their building, and way of worship there, nothing was to be done therein, but according to the law of the God of Ezra, which was in his hands (verse 14). Hence, when he was come to Jerusalem, he was to inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem; to wit, what was wanting in order to the temple and worship of God there, according to the law of his God, which was in his hand. Also when they went about to build, and to sacrifice, all was to be done according as was commanded by the God of heaven (verse 23): Yea, this was granted by the king, and his seven counsellors.

Thirdly, As to the king's liberality towards the building of this house, &c. it was large: He gave silver, gold, bullocks, rams, lambs; with wheat, wine, oil, and salt (verse 17,22); but would by his royal power, give no orders how in particular things should be bestowed, but left all that to Ezra the priest, to do with it according to the will, word, or law of his God (verse 18).

Fourthly, As to the way that the king concluded they should be governed in their own land, it was by their own laws; yea, he did bid Ezra the priest, after the wisdom of his God that was in his hand, set magistrates and judges, which might judge all the people, &c. only he bid him make them such, which did know the law of his God: Also the king added, That they should teach it to them that knew it not.

Fifthly, As to the king's officers, he gave them a charge not to hinder, but further this work. To further this work, not by putting their hand thereto, (that was to be left to the Jews alone, especially to Ezra, according to the law of his God,) but that they should speedily give him such things which the king had commanded, to wit, silver, and wheat, and wine, and oil, and salt, for their encouragement; and to do therewith, as by the law of their God they should. Further, That they should not impose toll, tribute, or custom, upon the priests, levites, singers, porters, nethinims,

or ministers (verse 20-22).

Sixthly, And now we come to the conclusion, to wit, the king's threat and command to do judgment on them that obeyed not the law of Ezra's God, and the king.

Considering what hath been said before, I conclude,

1. That this king imposed no law, no priest, no people upon these Jews; but left them wholly to their own law, their own ministers, and their own people: All which were the laws of God, the priests of God, the people of God, as to their building of their temple, and the worship of their God.

2. He forced not THIS people, no, not to their land, their temple, nor their worship, by his or their law; but left them free to their own mind, to do thereabout as they would.

3. He added not any law therefore of his own, either to prescribe worship, or to enforce it upon the Jews.

But you will say, upon what then was the threatening and the command to punish grounded? I answer, upon a supposed breach of two laws. He of the Jews, that in Jerusalem, rebelled against the law of the Lord, was in his own land left by the king to be punished by the same law, according to the penalties thereof: And he of the king's officers, that refused to do the king's laws, that refused to give the Jews such things as the king commanded, and that would yet exact such customs and tributes as the king forbade, should be punished by the king's laws, whether unto death or unto banishment, or unto confiscation of goods, or to imprisonment.

And if all kings would but give such liberty, to wit, that God's people should be directed in their temple-building, and temple worship, as they find it in the law of their God, without the additions of man's inventions: and if all kings did but lay the same penalty upon them of their pretended servants, that should hinder this work, which this brave king Artaxerxes laid upon his; how many of the enemies of the Jews, before this time, would have been hanged, banished, had their goods confiscated to the king, or their bodies shut up in prison! The which we desire not; we desire only that this letter of the king might be considered of, and we left to do as is there licensed and directed: And when we do the contrary, let us be punished by the law of God, as we are his servants, and by the law of the king, as we are his subjects; and we shall never complain.

Only I cannot but observe how prettily it is done of some, who urge this text to colour their malice, ignorance and revenge withal, while they cry, The law of God, and The law of the king, when they will neither let, according to this scripture, the law of God, nor the law of the king take place: Not the law of God; for that they will not leave us to that, to square and govern ourselves in temple-work, and sacrificing by. Nor will they do the law of the king, which has made void, ipso facto, whatever law is against the word of God; but because themselves can do, they will force us to do so too. 2

Before I leave this, I would touch once again upon the candour

of this king Artaxerxes, who thus did: Because he gave this leave and license to the Jews, contrary (if he had any) to his own national worship; yea, and also to the impairing of his own incomes. Methinks he should have a religion of his own; and that, not that of the Jews, because he was a Gentile; and not, as we read of, proselyted to the Jews religion. Indeed, he spake reverently of the God of Israel, and of his temple-worship, and sacrifices, as did also several other kings; but that will not prove that he was adapted to that religion.

That his incomes were impaired, 'tis evident; because he took off toll, tribute, and custom from them, of whom mention is made before; nor is it, I think, to be believed, that he did exact it of their brethren. But we may see what the Lord can do; for thus to do, was put into the heart of the king by the God of heaven (verse 27). This therefore ariseth not of nature: no more did the kindness of Cyrus or Darius, of whom we read in the beginning of this history. As God therefore did put it into the hearts of the wicked kings of Babylon, to distress his church and people for their sins; so he put it into the hearts of the kings of the Medes and Persians, who were to be, in a sense, their saviours; to ease them of those distresses, to take off the yoke, and let them go free. Indeed, there was an Artaxerxes that put a stop to this work of God (chap 4), and he also was of the kings that had destroyed the Babylonians; for it doth not follow, because God hath begun to deliver his people, that therefore their deliverance must be completed without stop or let. The protestants in France had more favour formerly, than from their prince they at this time have; yet I doubt not but that God will make that horn also one of them (in his time) that (indeed) shall hate the whore. As the sins of God's people brought them into captivity; so their sins can hold them there; yea, and when the time comes that grace must fetch them out, yet the oxen that draw this cart may stumble; and the way through roughness, may shake it sorely. However, heaven rules and over-rules; and by one means and another, as the captivity of Israel did seem to linger, so it came out at the time appointed; in the way that best pleased God, most profited them, and that most confounded those that were their implacable enemies. This therefore should instruct those that yet dwell where the woman sitteth, to quietness and patience.

To quietness: For God rules, and has the dispose of things. Besides, it is a kind of arraigning of his wisdom, to be discontent at that which at present is upon the wheel. Above all, it displeases him that any should seek, or go about to revenge their own injuries, or to work their own deliverances; for that is the work of God, and he will do it by the kings: Nor is he weak, nor has he missed the opportunity; nor doth he sleep but waketh, and waiteth to be gracious.

This also should teach them to be patient, and put them upon bearing what at present they may undergo, patiently. Let them wait upon God; patiently let them wait upon men, and patiently let them bear the fruits of their own transgressions; which though they should be none other but a deferring of the mercy wished for, is enough to try, and crack, and break their patience, if a continual supply, and a daily increase thereof be not given by the God of heaven.

And before I do conclude this, let me also add one word more; to

wit, to exhort them to look that they may see that which God at present may be doing among the Babylonians.

When God had his people into Babylon of old, he presented them with such rarities there, as he never shewed them in their own country. And is there nothing now to be seen by them that are not yet delivered from that oppression, that may give them occasion to stay themselves and wonder! What, is preservation nothing? What, is baffling and befooling the enemies of God's church nothing? In the Maryan days here at home, there was such sweet songs sung in the fire, such sweet notes answering them from prison, and such providences, that coals of burning fire still dropped here and there upon the heads of those that hated God; that it might, and doubtless did make those that did wisely consider of God's doings, to think God was yet near, with, and for, a despised and afflicted people.³

I conclude then, first with a word of counsel, and then with a word of caution.

First, Let us mend our pace in the way of reformation, that is the way to hasten the downfall of Antichrist, ministers need reforming, particular congregations need reforming, there are but few church-members but need reforming. This twenty years we have been degenerating, both as to principles, and as to practice; and have grown at last into an amazing likeness to the world, both as to religion and civil demeanour: Yea, I may say, so remiss have churches been in instructing those that they have received into fellowship with them; and so careless have the received been, of considering the grounds of their coming into churches, that most members, in some places, seem now to be at a loss; yea, and those churches stand with their fingers in their mouths, and are as if they would not, durst not, or could not help it.

My Second is, A word of caution.

1. Take heed of over-looking, or of shutting your eyes upon your own guilt: 'He that covereth his sins, shall not prosper.' It is incident to some men, when they find repentance is far from them, to shut their eyes upon their own guilt, and to please themselves with such notions of deliverance from present troubles, as will stand with that course of sin which is got into their families, persons, and professions, and with a state of impenitence: But I advise you to take heed of this.

2. Take heed in laying the cause of your troubles in the badness of the temper of governors. I speak not now with reflection upon any, excepting those concerned in this caution: God is the chief, and has the hearts of all, even of the worst of men, in his hand. Good tempered men have sometimes brought trouble; and bad tempered men have sometimes brought enlargement to the churches of God: Saul brought enlargement (1 Sam 14:28). David brought trouble (2 Sam 12:10). Ahab brought enlargement (1 Kings 21:29). Jehoshaphat and Hezekiah did both sometimes bring trouble (2 Chron 19:2; 20:35; 32:25). Therefore, the good or bad tempers of men sway nothing with God in this matter; they are the sins or repentances of his people, that make the church either happy or miserable upon earth.

Take heed, I say therefore, of laying of the trouble of the church

of God at the doors of governors; especially at the doors of kings, who seldom trouble churches of their own inclinations: (I say, seldom; for some have done so, as Pharaoh:) But I say, lay not the cause of your trouble there; for oftentimes they see with other men's eyes, hear with other men's ears, and act and do by the judgments of others: Thus did Saul, when he killed the priests of the Lord (1 Sam 22:18); and thus did Darius, when he cast Daniel into the lions' den (Dan 6:7). But rather labour to see the true cause of trouble, which is sin; and to attain to a fitness to be delivered out thence, and that is by repentance, and amendment of life. If any object, That God oft-times delivers his of mere grace: I answer, That's no thanks to them; besides, we must mind our duty. Further, When God comes to save his people, he can cut off such objectors, if they be impenitent, as the sinners of his people; and can save his church, without letting of them be sharers in that salvation: So he served many in the wilderness; and 'tis to be feared, so he will serve many at the downfall of Antichrist.

I shall say no more, but to testify my loyalty to my king, my love to my brethren, and service for my country, has been the cause of this my present scribble. Farewell.

Thine in the Lord,

J. BUNYAN.

OF ANTICHRIST.

Antichrist is the adversary of Christ; an adversary really, a friend pretendedly: So then, Antichrist is one that is against Christ; one that is for Christ, and one that is contrary to him: And this is that mystery of iniquity (2 Thess 2:7). Against him in deed; for him in word, and contrary to him in practice. Antichrist is so proud as to go before Christ; so humble as to pretend to come after him, and so audacious as to say that himself is he. Antichrist will cry up Christ; Antichrist will cry down Christ: Antichrist will proclaim that himself is one above Christ. Antichrist is the man of sin, the son of perdition; a beast, [that] hath two horns like a lamb, but speaks as a dragon (Rev 13:11).

Christ is the Son of God; Antichrist is the son of Hell.

Christ is holy, meek, and forbearing: Antichrist is wicked, outrageous, and exacting.

Christ seeketh the good of the soul: Antichrist seeks his own avarice and revenge.

Christ is content to rule by his word: Antichrist saith, The word is not sufficient.

Christ preferreth his Father's will above heaven and earth: Antichrist preferreth himself and his traditions above all that is written, or that is called God, or worshiped.

Christ has given us such laws and rules as are helpful and healthful to the soul: Antichrist seeketh to abuse those rules to our hurt

and destruction.

Antichrist may be considered either more particularly, or more generally. 1. More particularly: And so there are many Antichrists (1 John 2:18). 2. More generally: And so the many maketh but one great Antichrist, one man of sin, one enemy, one great whore, one son of perdition (2 Thess 2:3; Rev 19:2).

Again, Antichrist must be distinguished, with respect to his more internal and external parts; and so there is the spirit, soul, or

life (1 John 4:3); and also the body and flesh of Antichrist (2 Thess 2:7). The spirit, or soul, or life of Antichrist, is that spirit of error, that wicked, that mystery of iniquity, that under colour and pretence of verity, draweth men from truth to falsehood. The body or flesh of Antichrist, is that heap of men, that assembly of the wicked, that synagogue of Satan that is acted and governed by that spirit. But God will destroy both soul and body; He 'shall consume the glory of his forest, and of his fruitful field, both soul and body: [or from the soul, even to the flesh] and they shall be [both soul and body] as when a standard-bearer fainteth' (Isa 10:18).

A PARTICULAR DESCRIPTION OF ANTICHRIST.

Antichrist therefore is a mystical man, so made, or begotten of the devil, and sent into the world, himself being the chief and highest of him. Three things therefore go to the making up of Antichrist, the head, body, and soul. The devil he is the head; the synagogue of Satan, that is the body; that wicked spirit of iniquity, that is the soul of Antichrist. Christ then is the head of his church; the devil is the head of Antichrist; the elect are the body of Christ; the reprobate professors are the body of Antichrist; the Holy Ghost is the spirit of life that actuateth Christ's body; that wicked spirit of iniquity, is that which actuateth the body of Antichrist. Thus therefore are the two great mighties set forth before us, who are the heads of those two bodies; and thus are these two bodies set before us, who are to be actuated by these two spirits.

The reason why Christ came into the world, was, That he might destroy all the works of the head of Antichrist, and they which he endeavoureth to complete by his wicked spirit working in his body (1 John 3:8). And the reason why Antichrist came into the world, was, That the church, which is the body of Christ, might be tried, and made white by suffering under his tyranny, and by bearing witness against his falsehoods. For, for the trial of the faithful, and for the punishment of the world, Antichrist was admitted to come: But when he came, he first appeared there where one would have thought there had been no place nor corner for his reception.

WHERE ANTICHRIST FIRST APPEARED.

The devil then, made use of the church of God to midwife this monster into the world, as the Apostle plainly shews, there he first sat, shewing himself (2 Thess 2:4). Here therefore was his first appearance, even in the church of God: Not that the church of God did willingly admit him there to sit as such; he had covered his cloven foot; he had plumbs in his dragon's mouth, and so came

in by flatteries; promising to do for Christ and his church, that which he never meant to perform. For he shewed himself that he was God, and in appearance, set his heart to do as the heart of God (Eze 28:2-6). And who could have found in their hearts to shut the door upon such an one? True, he came, when he came thither, out of the bottomless-pit; but there came such a smoke out thence with him, and that smoke so darkened the light of the sun, of the moon, of the stars, and of the day, that had they [the church] been upon their watch, as they were not, they could not have perceived him from another man. Besides, there came with him so many locusts to usher him into the house of God (Rev 9:2,3), and they so suited the flesh and reason of the godly of that day, that with good words and fair speeches, by their crafty and cunning sleights, whereby they lay in wait to deceive, they quite got him in, and set him up, and made him a great one, even the chief, before they were aware. Further, He quickly got him a beast to ride on, far, for sumptuous glory, beyond (though as to nature, as assish a creature as) that on which Baalam was wont to ride: And by this exaltation he became not only more stately, but the horns of the beast would push for him (Rev 17:3-6).

Again, This man of sin, when he came into the world, had the art of metamorphosing, and could change himself, both in form and shape, into the likeness of a beast, a man, or woman; and the kings of the earth, with the inhabitants of the world, began then to love such women dearly; wherefore they went to her into the bed of love, and defiled themselves with the filthiness of her fornications, gave her their troth, and became her husbands, and beloved sons; took up helmet and shield, and stood to defend her; yea, though Christ himself, and some of the chief of his followers, cried out of her shame, and of the evil of their doings; yet would she be audacious.

Also this woman had now arrayed herself in flesh-taking ornaments, of the colour of purple and scarlet, and was decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls, after the manner or attire of harlots. Thus came she to them, and lay in their bosoms, and gave them out of her golden cup of the wine of her fornication; of the which they bibbed till they were drunken; and then, in requital, they also gave her of such liquors as they could, to wit, to drink of the blood of saints, and of martyrs of Jesus, till she, like these beasts, was drunken also.

Now when they were drunken, they did as drunkards do, revel, roar, and belch out their own shame, in the sight of them that were sober: Wherefore they cried out upon such doings, and chose rather to die, than to live with such company. And so 'tis still with them where she yet sitteth, and so will be till she shall fall into the hands of the strong Lord, who will judge her according to her ways. And that she must do, as is implied by this, That her fornications are in a cup; she has therefore but her cup to be drank out; wherefore when it is empty, then, whether she will or no, the Lord God will call her to such a reckoning, that all the clothes on her back, with what pearls and jewels she has, shall not be able to pay the shot.

OF THE RUIN OF ANTICHRIST.

Antichrist, as was said, had a time to come into the world, and so

must have a time to go out again: For although he saith that he is a God, yet must he be subject to the will of God, and must go as well as come according to that will. Nor can all the fallen angels, with all the members and limbs of Antichrist, cause that this their brat should abide so much as one day longer than our God's prefixed time. And this the head of Antichrist understandeth very well: Wherefore the Holy Ghost saith, 'Woe to the inhabitants of the earth, and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time' (Rev 12:12).

Besides, the text says plainly, The Lord shall destroy him (2 Thess 2:8), and that he goeth into perdition (Rev 17:11; 19:26). Also the church of God believes it, and the limbs of Antichrist fear it.

Now when, or as his time shall come to be destroyed, so he shall be made a hand of; and that with such instruments and weapons of God's indignation, as best shall be suited to his several parts.

Such weapons as are best for the destroying of his soul, shall be used for the destroying of it; and such weapons as are best for the destroying of his body, shall be made use of for the destroying of it.

THE SOUL OF IT DESTROYED, AND HOW.

And therefore, as to his soul, or that spirit of error that governs him in all his works of mischief; this must be consumed by the spirit of Christ's mouth, and be destroyed by the brightness of his coming.

This we have in the words of Paul: 'For [saith he] the mystery of iniquity [the spirit of Antichrist] doth already work: only he who now letteth, will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming' (2 Thess 2:7,8). The Apostle here treateth of Antichrist, with reference to his more subtil and spiritual part, since that indeed is the chiefest of Antichrist: Wherefore he calls it that wicked; not, that wicked one, as referring to the whole; but that wicked, as referring to the mystery or spirit of iniquity, the heart and soul of Antichrist; and tells us, that the Lord shall 'consume him with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy him with the brightness of his coming.'

Now, by the spirit of his mouth, I understand his holy word, which is called 'The word and breath of his lips' (Isa 11:4). And also, 'The sword of his mouth' (Rev 2:16). By 'the brightness of his coming,' I also understand, not only his presence, but an increase of light by his presence; not only to help Christians to begin to bear witness against some parts and pieces of the errors of Antichrist, but until the whole is rooted out of the world. By this, I say, must the soul, spirit, or life of Antichrist be taken away. But how shall Christ by this rod, sword, or spirit of his mouth, consume this wicked, this mystery of iniquity? Not by himself immediately, but by his spirit and word in his church; the which he will use, and so manage in this work, that they shall not rest till he by them has brought this beast to his grave. This

beast is compared to the wild boar, and the beast that comes out of the wood to devour the church of God, (as we read in the book of Psalms: 80:13) But Christ, with the dogs that eat the crumbs of his table, will so hunt and scour him about, that albeit he may let out some of their bowels with the tushes of his chaps, yet they will not let him alone till they have his life: For the church shall single him out from all beasts, and so follow him with cries, and pinch him with their voices, that he alone shall perish by their means.⁴ Thus shall Christ consume and wear him out by the spirit of his mouth, and destroy him with the brightness of his coming

Hence you find again, That this wicked, is to melt and consume away as grease: For the Lord Jesus shall consume him, and cause him to melt away; not all at once, but now this part, and then that; now his soul, and after that his body, even until soul and body are both destroyed.

And that you may be convinced of the truth of this thing, do but look back and compare Antichrist four or five hundred years ago, with Antichrist as he is now, and you shall see what work the Lord Jesus has begun to make with him, even with the spirit and soul, and life of Antichrist; both in confounding and blasting of it by this spirit of his mouth, as also by forcing of it to dishonourable retreats, and by making of it give up to him, as the conqueror, not only some of his superstitious and diabolical rites and ceremonies, to be destroyed, but many a goodly truth, which this vile one had taken from his church, to be renewed to them: Nay, further, he hath also already began to take from him both kingdoms and countries, though as to some not so absolutely as he shall do by and by. And in the meantime, this is the plague wherewith the Lord shall plague or smite the people that have fought against Jerusalem: 'Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth' (Zech 14:12). And how has this long ago been fulfilled here in England! as also in Scotland, Holland, Germany, France, Sweden, Denmark, Hungary, and other places! (Isa 17:4-6). Nor hath this spirit of Antichrist, with all his art and artificers, been able to reduce to Antichrist again, those people, nations, or parts of nations, that by the spirit of Christ's mouth, and 'the brightness of his coming,' have been made to forsake him, and to turn from him to Christ: The reason is, for that the Lord has not retreated, but is still going on in the spirit of his mouth, and his brightness, to make that conquest over him that is determined, in the way that is determined: Of which more shall be spoken afterward; for the path-way that he goeth, is as the shining light, which shines more and more unto noon. True, the fogs of Antichrist, and the smoke that came with him out of the bottomless-pit, has darkened and eclipsed the glorious light of the gospel: But you know, in eclipses, when they are on the recovering hand, all the creatures upon the face of the earth cannot put a stop to that course, until the sun or the moon have recovered their glory. And thus it shall be now, the Lord is returned to visit the earth, and his people with his primitive lustre; he will not go back, nor slack his hand, until he has recovered what Antichrist has darkened of his. 'The anger of the Lord shall not return, until he have executed, and till he have performed the thoughts of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly' (Jer 23:20). Therefore he saith

again, 'The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun [was in her eclipse;] and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound,' &c. as the verse before has it: 'In the day when the towers fall.' For (as was said before) as to the recovery of the light of the gospel from under antichristian mists, and fogs of darkness; Christ will do that, not by might nor power, but by the spirit of his mouth, and the brightness of his coming: Wherefore the soul of Antichrist, or that spirit of wickedness by which this gospel-light hath been diminished, must be consumed and destroyed by that spirit also. Nor can any other way of conquest over that be thorough, and lasting; because that spirit can by no other means be slain. The body of Antichrist may be destroyed by other instruments, but spirits cannot be killed but by spirits. The temporal sword then may kill the body, but after that it hath no more that it can do, wherefore, the other must be dealt with by another kind of weapon: And here is one sufficient, the spirit against the spirit; the spirit and face of Christ, against the spirit, that wicked, of Antichrist. And by this spirit of Christ's mouth, all the spirit that is in all the trinkets and wash of Antichrist shall also be destroyed; so that those trinkets, those rites, ceremonies, and ordinances of this man of sin, shall be left as carrion upon the face of the earth, and shall stink in the noses of men, as doth the corrupted blood of a dead man.

THE ORDINANCES OF ANTICHRIST.

Now therefore will the beauty of Antichrist fade like a flower, and fall as doth a leaf when the sap of the tree has left it; or as the beauty departeth from the body, when the soul, or life, or spirit is gone forth. And as the body cannot be but unpleasant and unsavoury when under such a state; so the body of Antichrist will be to beholders, when the Lord has slain the spirit thereof. It is the spirit of Antichrist that puts life into the body; and that puts lustre into the ordinances of Antichrist, as the light of the sun, and of the moon, and of the stars, do put lustre upon the things of this visible world: Wherefore, when this spirit, and soul, and life of Antichrist is slain, then it will be with him as 'twould be with the world, had it no light of the sun, of the moon, or of the stars.

And hence, as the loss of our natural life is compared to the loss of these lights (Eccl 12:2); so the loss of the life, soul and spirit of Antichrist is compared to these things also. For, the soul of Antichrist is compared to a heaven; and her ordinances and rites, to the ordinances of heaven: wherefore, when the Lord comes to fight against her with the spirit of his mouth, he saith, 'The stars of heaven [shall be darkened], and the constellations thereof shall not give their light' (Isa 13:10); because he will slay that spirit of Antichrist that is in them (Isa 34; Rev 6:13,14).

Take things therefore more distinctly, thus: The antichristians' spirit, is the heaven of antichristians; their sun, moon and stars, are their superstitious ordinances; their earth is the body or flesh of Antichrist, otherwise called the church and synagogue of Satan. Now as the earth cannot live, and be desirable, without the influences of the spirit of the heavens; so neither can Antichrist live, when the Lord shall darken the light of his heaven, and shall

slay the spirit thereof. Hence you read, as I touched before, that when his heaven shall be rolled together as a scroll, 'all the host thereof,' unto which I compare the ordinances of Antichrist, 'shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig-tree' (Isa 34:4). But how, or why doth the leaf, or the fig fall from the tree? Why, because the spirit, or sap of the tree, is gone from them.

Therefore, the first and chief proceeding of the Lord with the man of sin, is to slay his soul, that his body may also be consumed: And when the spirit of Antichrist shall be made to leave both the body and ordinances of Antichrist, 'twill be easy to deal both with the one and the other. And first, for the ordinances of Antichrist; because the spirit of error is in them, as well as in the body itself. When that spirit, as I said, has left them, they will of themselves even moulder away, and not be: As we have seen by experience here in England, as others also have seen in other countries. For as concerning his masses, prayers for the dead, images, pilgrimages, monkish vows, sinful fasts, and the beastly single life of their priests, though when the spirit of Antichrist was in them, they did bear some sway in the world; yet now, of what esteem are they? or who has reverence for them? They are now blown together under hedges, as the dry leaves, for the mice and frogs to harbour in: yea, the locusts too, camp in the hedges among the dry leaves, in the cold day, and 'when the sun ariseth they flee away' (Nahum 3:15-17). When 'tis a cold day for them in a nation, then they lurk in the hedges, though their ordinances lie there, as leaves that are dry, and fallen down from the tree; but when the sun ariseth, and waxeth warm, they abide not, but betake them to their wings, and fly away. But one would think that fallen leaves should have no great nourishment in them: True, if you have respect to men, but with vermin any thing will do: We speak then of them with reference to men, not with respect to the very members of Antichrist: And I say, as to them, when the spirit of Antichrist is gone out of these ordinances, they will be with them as dry leaves that no body seeketh after. The ordinances therefore of Antichrist are not able to bear up themselves in the world, as the ordinances of the Lord Jesus are, for even the ordinances of Christ, where the spirit of Christ is not, are yet in some esteem with men: But THESE, when the spirit of delusion has left them, are abhorred, both skin and bones: For in themselves they are without any sense, or rationality (Eze 20:25,26); yea, they look as parts of things which are used to conjure up devils with: These were prefigured by the ordinances that were NOT good, and by the judgments whereby one should not live. For what is there, or can there be of the least dram of truth or profit in the things that are without the word, that being the only stamp by which one is distinguished from the other? I say, What is there in any of them, to the man whose eyes are open, but delusion and deceit! Wherefore, as has been expressed already, when the Lord Christ, by the spirit of his mouth, &c. shall drive this mystery of iniquity from them, and strip them of that spirit of delusion that now by its craft puts bewitching excellency upon them, they will of themselves become such stinking rivers, ponds and pools, that flesh and blood will loathe to drink of them; yea, as it was with the ponds and pools of Egypt, they will be fit for nought but to breed and hatch up frogs in.

Wherefore these ordinances shall be rejected, not one of them shall

find favour with men on earth; when the Lord, 'by the spirit of his mouth, and the brightness of his coming,' shall have separated their spirit from them.

Now, by ordinances of Antichrist, I do not intend things that only respect matters of worship in Antichrist's kingdom, but those civil laws that impose and enforce them also; yea, that enforce THAT worship with pains and penalties, as in the Spanish inquisition: For these must, as the other, be overthrown by Christ, by the spirit of his mouth, and the brightness of his coming: For these laws, as the other, took their being, and have their soul and life by the spirit of Antichrist; yea, as long as there is life in them, 'tis because the spirit of that man of sin yet remaineth in them. Wherefore, these are also great ordinances, though of another nature than those mentioned before: Great, I say, are they; forasmuch as neither the church of Antichrist, nor his instruments of worship, can either live or stand without them. Wherefore, it was admitted to the image of the beast, not only to speak, but to cause. To speak out his laws of worship, 'and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast, should be killed' (Rev 13:15). And mark, This is because that the life that was communicated to the image of the beast, was by him also communicated to his word and authority. Wherefore, these laws must not be separated from those in which the spirit of Antichrist is; yea, they are the very pillars and sinews by which antichristianism remains: And were these dis-spirited, the whole building would quickly become a ruinous heap.

What could the king of Babylon's golden image have done, had it not been for the burning fiery furnace that stood within view of the worshippers? (Dan 3). Yea, what could that horrible command, to pray, for thirty days, to neither God nor man, but to the king, have done, had it not been for the dark den, and the roaring lions there in readiness to devour those that disobeyed it? (Dan 6). As therefore the burning fiery furnace, and the den of lions, were the support of the horrible religion of the Babylonians of old; so popish edicts are the support of the religion of Antichrist now; and as long as there is spirit, that is, authority, in them, they are like to those now mentioned; the spirit of such laws is that that makes them dreadful: For as the furnace would have been next to nothing, if void of fire; and the den as little frightful, if destitute of lions; so these laws will be as insignificant, when Christ has slain that spirit that is in them; that spirit that causes that as many as will not worship the image of the beast, should be killed.

Nor can any sword reach that life of Antichrist that is in these, but the sword of Christ's mouth: Therefore, as all the religious rites and ceremonies of Antichrist are overthrown by his spirit working in his, as Christians; so those antichristian laws will have their soul and their life taken from them also by this spirit of his mouth working in some of his, as magistrates, and no otherwise; for before kings and princes, &c. come to be enlightened about the evils that are in such edicts, by the spirit of the living God, they will let this image of the beast both speak and cause, &c. But when they shall see, they will say, let it be decreed that this prop of Antichrist be taken down. It was decreed by Darius, that they that prayed, for thirty days, to any God but him, should be cast into the den of lions (Dan 6:9); but this was before he

saw; but when he came to see, then he decreed again; a decree that quite took away the power of that which he had decreed before (Dan 6:26).

Nor are we without instances of this kind nearer home: who is now afraid of the act for burning of those that papists call heretics, since by the king and parliament, as by the finger of God, the life and soul is taken out of it. I bring this to shew you, that as there is life in wicked antichristian penal laws, as well as in those that are superstitiously religious; so the life of these, of all these, must be destroyed by the same spirit working in those that are Christ's, though in a diverse way.

Nor will the life of these sinews, as I have called them, be taken away; but as God shall enlighten men to see the abominable filthiness of that which is antichristian worship: as would easily be made appear, if some that dwell in those countries where the beast and his image have been worshiped, would but take the pains to inquire into antiquity about it. As the noble king, king Henry VIII did cast down the antichristian worship; so he cast down the laws that held it up: so also did the good king Edward his son. The brave queen, queen Elizabeth also, the sister to king Edward, hath left of things of this nature, to her lasting fame behind her. And if one such law of Antichrist hath escaped the hand of one, another hath taken it, and done that execution on it that their zeal and piety prompted them to.

There is yet another thing that the spirit of Antichrist is immediately concerned in; and that is, the antichristian names of the men that worship the beast: the names, I mean, that the Antichrist hath baptized them into: for those names are breathed upon them by the very spirit of Antichrist; and are such as are absolutely names of blasphemy, or such as do closely border thereupon; some such as Elihu durst not for his life give unto men, only he calls them 'flattering titles' (Job 32:21,22). Now therefore, of the danger (though not of the names themselves) you read sufficiently in the scripture; and perhaps the Holy Ghost has contented himself with giving of items that are general, that men might, as to them, be the more cautious of what names they give one to another (Rev 17:5); but this is clear, they are worn by men of spiritual employ: but since they are but mentioned, and are not distinctly nominated, how should we know which are they, and which not? Verily, by searching the word of God, and by seeing by that what names we are allowed to give unto men, with reference to their offices, dignities, and places: for God has a quarrel with the names, as well as with the persons that wear them; and when his Son shall down with Antichrist, he will slay seven thousand names of men, as well as the persons of the worshippers of the beast (Rev 11:13).

But there are things, as well as men (Job 22:28); and these also have been baptized into those names by the very spirit of Antichrist, and must be destroyed by Christ, the spirit of his mouth, and the brightness of his coming: 'The idols he shall utterly abolish' (Isa 2:18); and there are men that are idols as well as things (Zech 11:17): wherefore, let men have a care, as to shun the worship of idols, so that they bare not the name, or stand in the place of one: and the reason of this caution is, because name and thing are both abominable unto God.

To give you the number of these names that the spirit of Antichrist has baptized men into, (besides the things that do also wear such blasphemies upon them,) would be a task too great for me, and too wearisome for you. It shall satisfy then, that I give you notice that there are such things and men and names; and that I put you upon search to find out what they be. But whatsoever of the spirit, or soul, or life of Antichrist is in these names, men, or things, must be consumed by Christ, by the spirit of his mouth, and the brightness of his coming.⁵

Another thing that I would touch upon is this; to wit, The lying legends, and false miracles that Antichrist cries up: These, by the means of which such as dwell upon the earth are deceived, and made to adore and worship the beast: these have their life and soul (as had those mentioned before) from the spirit of wickedness; and must be destroyed as they, namely, by Christ, the spirit of his mouth, and the brightness of his coming: for these are not of the body of Antichrist, but rather such implements, or whatever you will call them, by which the spirit and soul of Antichrist is conveyed into, and kept also alive in the body of Antichrist, which is the church and synagogue of Satan; you may call them organs and means by which that wicked worketh in the mysteries of iniquity, for the begetting of, and maintaining a lying and false belief of the religion of the beast: nor can it be thought, but that, as the antichristian statists⁶ of Antichrist, mentioned before, do put a dread and fear upon men that are worshippers of the beast, and his image, to the holding of them still to his service; so these legends and miracles do, on the other hand, abridge and bind their consciences to that worship; but all because of that spirit of Antichrist that is in them.⁷

So then, here is the spirit of Antichrist diffusing itself into all the things pertaining to the kingdom of the beast; for it dwells in the body of Antichrist; it dwells in the matters and things of worship of Antichrist; it dwells in the titles and names that are antichristian; and it dwells in the laws, legends and miracles of Antichrist. And as it is the spirit of Antichrist, so it must be destroyed; not by sword, nor by bow, but by Christ, as fighting against it with the spirit of his mouth, and as conquering of it by the brightness of his coming.

THE BODY OF ANTICHRIST DESTROYED, AND HOW.

We come now to discourse of the body or flesh of Antichrist, and of the destruction of that; for that must be destroyed also. Now the body of Antichrist, is that church or synagogue in which the spirit of Antichrist dwells, or unto which the spirit of Antichrist is become a soul and life.

And this is to be destroyed, either as it is a body mystical, or under the more gross consideration.

First, As it is a body mystical, and so it is to be destroyed absolutely.

Secondly, As it is to be considered more grossly, and so it is to be destroyed conditionally. That is, if repentance doth not save the men that have gone to the making up of this body, and to the

rejoicing in it.

As she is a body mystical, so she is to be destroyed the same way that the things of Antichrist, of which we discoursed before, were to be destroyed; to wit, by Christ, the spirit of his mouth, and the brightness of his coming.

This then is the sum, as to this: That the church of Antichrist, as a church, shall be destroyed by the word and spirit of Christ. Nor can anything in heaven prevent it, because the strong God has decreed it: 'and a mighty angel took up a stone, like a great mill-stone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all' (Rev 18:21). This city, Babylon, is here sometimes considered in the whole, and sometimes as to the parts of it; but always, whether in whole, or in part, as some, or else as the whole of the antichristian church; and as such, it must not be destroyed, but by the means aforesaid. By which means her witchcrafts, spiritual whoredoms, spiritual murders, thefts, and blasphemies, shall be so detected and made manifest, so laid open, and so discovered, that the nations shall abhor her, flee from her, and buy her merchandise no more (Rev 18:11). Hence her tempting things rot, and moulder away; for these will not keep, they are things not lasting, but that perish in the using: what then will they do when they are laid by? Therefore it follows, 'All things which were [thy] dainty and goodly [ones] are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all' (Rev 18:14). Now, if when she had things to trade with, her dealers left her; how shall she think of a trade, when she has nothing to traffic with? Her things are slain, and stink already, by the weapons that are made mention of before; what then will her carcase do? It follows then, that as to her church-state, she must of necessity tumble: wherefore, from Revelation 18:22 to 24, you have the manner of her total ruin as a church, and something of the cause thereof.

But as she must, with reference to her body, be considered mystically as a church; so also she must be considered as a body of men, (this is that which I called more grossly,) and as such, against whom the wrath of God will burn, and against whom, if repentance prevent not, he will have indignation for ever. These, I saw are them; to wit, as they are the body of the people, that have been seduced by this spirit of Antichrist, that have been made use of to do all the mischiefs that have been done both to true religion, and to the professors of it, for this many hundred years, wherefore these must not escape. Wherefore you find, that after Antichrist, as to the spirit and mystery of Antichrist, is slain, that the body of Antichrist, or the heap of people that became her vassals, come next to be dealt withal.

Therefore, the angel that standeth in the sun, makes a proclamation to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, to gather themselves, and to come unto the supper of the great God; that they may eat the flesh of the several sorts of the men that have been the lovers, the countenancers, the upholders and defenders of her antichristian state, worship, and falsehoods (Rev 19:17,18): for abundance of their hearts shall be hardened, and made yet more obdurate, that they may be destroyed for the wickedness that they have done.

Wherefore, you find (as did the enemies of the church of old,) that they might revenge themselves for the loss of their idol, or antichristian state, begin a new war with the king, whose name is the Lord of hosts: 'And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army' (Rev 19:19).

Their implacable malice remained when their church-state was gone; wherefore they will now at last make another attempt upon the men that had been the instruments in Christ's hand to torment them that dwelt on the earth; of which more hereafter.

Now therefore is the last stroke of the batter, with reference to the destroying of the body of Antichrist; only the head of this monster remains, and that is SATAN himself: wherefore, the next news that we hear, is, that he is taken also: 'And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. and he laid hold on the Dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled,' &c. (Rev 20:1-3).

BRAVE DAYS WHEN ANTICHRIST IS DEAD.

Now therefore there will be nothing of Antichrist to be seen throughout the nations, but ruinous heaps, and desolate places. It is said of the army of the man of sin, when he came into the land of God's people, though it was before him 'as the garden of Eden,' yet behind him 'twould be as 'a desolate wilderness' (Joel 2:3); such ruins would he make of the flock of God, and of all their ordinances, and heavenly dainties. But when the days that I have spoken of, shall come, it will be to him a time of retaliation: for it shall then be done unto Antichrist, as he hath done to the church of God: As he hath made women childless, so shall he be made childless; as he has made Zion sit upon the ground, so now must this wicked one come down and sit in the dust; yea, as he has made many churches desolations, so now shall he be also made a desolation. Wherefore, whoso will find his body, they must look for it in the side of the pit's mouth; and whoso will find his friends and companions, they must look for them there likewise. 'They have set her a bed in the midst of the slain with all her multitude: her graves are round about him: all of them uncircumcised, slain by the sword: though their terror was caused in the land of the living, yet have they borne their shame with them that go down to the pit, he is put in the midst of them that be slain. There is Meshech, Tubal, and all her multitude:--There is Edom, her kind, and all her princes, &c.--There be the princes of the north, all of them,--which--with their--might' are laid with them that are 'slain by the sword, and bare their shame with them that go down to the pit' (Eze 32:25-30). For 'as Babylon hath caused the slain of Israel to fall, so at Babylon shall fall the slain of all the earth' (Jer 51:49). The margin reads it thus: Both Babylon is to fall, O ye slain of Israel! And with Babylon the slain of all the earth. Now then she is gone down, when all these things shall be fulfilled; and what remains now, but to talk of her, as folk used to do of them that are dead: for the day will come that the church of God shall have no more of Antichrist, Babylon, or the mother of harlots, than only the remembrance of

her; to wit, that there was such an enemy of God in the world; that there was such a superstitious, idolatrous, bloody people in the world. Wherefore the people that shall be born, that shall live to serve God in these happy days, they shall see Antichrist only in its ruins; they shall, like the sparrows, the little robins, and the wren, sit and sing, and chirrup one to another, while their eyes behold this dead hawk. 'Here [shall they say] did once the lion dwell; and there was once a dragon inhabited: here did they live that were the murderers of the saints; and there another, that did used to set his throat against the heavens; but now in the places where these ravenous creatures lay, grows grass, with reeds and rushes (Isa 35:7), [or else, now their habitation is cursed, nettles grow, and so do thorns and brambles, where their palaces were wont to be]. And as no good was with them while they lived, so their name stinketh now they are dead: yea, as they wrought mischiefs, and lived like the wild beasts when they enjoyed their abundance; so now the wild beasts of the desert, yea, they of the desert, shall meet with the wild beasts of the island: and the satyr shall cry to his fellows. Their houses shall be full of doleful creatures, even as devils and wicked spirits do haunt the desolate houses of the wicked, when they are dead' (Isa 34). 'And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there: neither shall the shepherds make their folds there' (Isa 13:19,20). A while after this, as was hinted before, the Christians will begin with detestation to ask what Antichrist was? Where Antichrist dwelt? Who were his members? And, What he did in the world? and it shall be answered by them that shall have skill to consider his features by the word, by way of taunt and scorn, 'Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms; that made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; that opened not the house of his prisoners? All the kings of the nations, even all of them, lie in glory, every one in his own house. But thou art cast out of thy grave like an abominable branch; and as the raiment of those that are slain, thrust through with a sword, that go down to the stones of the pit, as a carcase trodden under feet' (Isa 14:16-19).

There will be a strange alteration when Antichrist is dead, and that both in the church, and in the world. The church and the members of it then, shall wear the name of their God in their foreheads; that is, they shall be bold in the profession of their king, and their God; yea, it shall be their glory to be godly; and carnal men shall praise them for it: the praise of the whole earth shall the church of God be in those days.

Then there shall no more be a Canaanite in the house of the Lord: no lion shall be there; the unclean shall no more tread in the paths of God's people, but the ransomed of the Lord shall walk there.

Glory that has not been seen nor heard of by the people that used to walk in sackcloth, shall now be set in the land of the living. For as it was said of Christ, with reference to his day; so it shall be said of saints, with reference to this day: many kings and righteous men have desired to see the things that will be seen then, and shall not see them: but without all doubt, the men that

shall be born at this time, will consider that these glories, and liberties, and privileges of theirs, cost the people that walked in the king of Babylon's fiery furnace, or that suffered the trials, troubles and tyranny of the antichristian generation, more groans and hearty wishes, than they did them that shall enjoy them. Thus then it will go; the afflicted prayed for them, and the possessors bless God for the enjoyment of them.

Oh! now shall the church walk in the light of the Lord, and sit every man under his vine, and under his fig-tree, and none shall make him afraid!

'For the Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land: and the strangers shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob. And the people shall take them, and bring them to their place: and the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of the Lord for servants and handmaids: And they shall take them captives, whose captives they were; and they shall rule over their oppressors. And it shall come to pass in the day that the Lord shall give thee rest from thy sorrow, and from thy fear, and from the hard bondage wherein thou wast made to serve, that thou shalt take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say, How hath the oppressor ceased! the golden city, (or the exactress of gold) ceased! The Lord hath broken the staff of the wicked, and the sceptre of the rulers. He who smote the people in wrath with a continual stroke, he that ruled the nations in anger, is persecuted, and none hindereth. The whole earth is at rest, and is quiet: they break forth into singing. Yea, the fir trees rejoice at thee, and the cedars of Lebanon, saying, Since thou art laid down, no seller is come up against us' (Isa 14:1-8).

Also the world will now be (as it were) another thing than it was in the days of Antichrist: now will kings, and princes, and nobles, and the whole commonality be rid of that servitude and bondage which in former times (when they used to carry Bell and the dragon upon their shoulders) they were subjected to. They were then a burden to them, but now they are at ease. 'Tis with the world, that are the slaves of Antichrist now, as it is with them that are slaves and captives to a whore: they must come when she calls, run when she bids, fight with and beat them that she saith miscall her, and spend what they can get by labour or fraud upon her, or she will be no more their whore, and they shall be no more her bosom ones. But now! Now it will be otherwise! Now they will have no whore to please! Now they will have none to put them upon persecuting of the saints! Now they shall not be made, as before, guilty of the blood of those against whom this gentleman shall take a pet! Now the world shall return and discern between the righteous and the wicked; yea, they shall cleave to, and countenance the people of God, being persuaded, as Laban was of Jacob, that the Lord will bless them for his people's sakes: for at this day, 'the remnant of Jacob shall be [among the Gentiles] in the midst of many people, as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men' (Micah 5:7).

Also in these days men shall come flocking into the house of God, both kings and princes, and nobles, and the common people, as the doves do to their windows: and for that cause it is spoken to the church, with reference to the latter days, saying, 'Enlarge the

place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thy habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; for thou shalt break forth on the right hand, and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited' (Isa 54:2,3).

Now will be broken up those prophecies and promises that to this day lie as under lock and key, and that cannot be opened until they be fulfilled. Now will the Spirit of God be poured forth abundantly; and our rivers shall be in high places, that is, shall break forth from the hearts of great ones; yea, then shall our waters be made deep: 'And I will cause their rivers to run like oil, saith the Lord God' (Eze 32:14). Then shall the differences, the divisions and debates that are among the godly, cease: for men 'shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion' (Isa 52:8): yea, the watchmen of God's people shall do so; for it is for want of light in them, that the lambs have so butted one another.

Now the church of God shall read with great plainness the depths of providence, and the turnings and windings of all God's dark and intricate dispensations, through which she hath waded in the cloudy and dark day: now, I say, they shall see there was an harmony in them; and that if one of them had been wanting, the work and way of her deliverance could not have been so full of the wisdom, and justice, and goodness of God; Wherefore now will that song be sung with clearer notes than ever: 'Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou king of Saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest' (Rev 15:3,4). And again, 'For true and righteous are his judgments: For he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand' (Rev 19:2).

OF THE MANNER OF THE RUIN OF ANTICHRIST.

What Antichrist is, I have told you; and that as to his soul and body. I have also told you where, or in what things the spirit and life of Antichrist lieth, and how he shall reign for a time. I have moreover shewed you that he shall be destroyed, and by what, and that with reference both to his soul and body. Wherefore, waving other things, I shall here only present you with a few short hints concerning the manner of his downfall.

There is the downfall, the time of the downfall, and the manner of the downfall of Antichrist.

The manner of the downfall of Antichrist, may be considered, either with respect to the suddenness, unexpectedness, terribleness, or strangeness thereof. It may also be considered with respect to the way of God's procedure with her, as to the gradualness thereof. As to the suddenness thereof, 'tis said to be in an hour. It is also to be, when by her unexpected; for then she saith, 'I sit a queen' (Rev 18:7,8). For the terribleness of it, The nations shall shake at the sound of her fall (Eze 31:16,17). And for the strangeness thereof, it shall be to the wonder of the world (Isa 14:12), it will be as when God overthrew Sodom.

But I shall not enlarge upon this method in my discourse, but shall shew you the manner of the ruin of Antichrist, with respect to the gradualness thereof (Eze 16:36-43; Rev 18:8; Isa 47:9).

Antichrist then shall be brought to ruin gradually; that is, by degrees: A part after a part; here a fenced city, and there a high tower, even until she is made to lie even with the ground. And yet all shall be within the compass of God's days, hours, or moments; for within the compass of these limited times Antichrist shall be destroyed.⁹

Now, (as I said) He, she, Sodom, Egypt, Babylon, Antichrist, shall be destroyed, not all at once, after the way of our counting of time; but by step after step, piece after piece. And perhaps there may be in the words now following, something that signifies this: They shall 'shew the king of Babylon that his city is taken at one end' (Jer 51:31). This is also shewed by the vessels in which is contained the wrath of God for her, together with the manner of pouring of it out. The vessels in which it is contained are called VIALS; Now a vial is that which letteth out what is contained in it by degrees, and not all at once.

There are also two things to be considered, as to the manner of its being poured out of them. The first respecteth the nature of the vial. The other, the order of the angels that poured forth this wrath.

For the First: The vial, as it letteth out what is in it by degrees; so it doth it with certain gusts, that are mixed with strength and violence, bolting it out with noise, &c.

As for the order of the angels, or that order that they observe, they plainly shew that this enemy must come down by degrees; for that these vials are by them poured out one after another, each one working something of their own effects, before another is poured forth. The first is poured forth upon the antichristian earth: The second, upon her sea: The third is poured forth upon her rivers: And the fourth, upon her sun: The fifth is poured forth upon the seat of the beast: The sixth, upon her Euphrates: And the seventh, into her air (Rev 16:2-17). And, I say, they are poured forth not all at one time, but now one, and then another. Now, since by these vials Antichrist must fall; and since also they are poured forth successively: 'Tis evident that this man of sin, this son of perdition, is to fall and die by degrees. He would not die at all, as is manifest by his wrestling with it; but he is a strong God that judges, and therefore he must come down: His friends also, with what cordials they can, will labour to lengthen out his tranquility; but God hath set his bounds, and he cannot go beyond the time appointed.

We must also put a difference betwixt her being fought withal and wounded, and that of her dying the death. Michael and his angels have been holding of her in play a long season; but yet she is not dead (Rev 12): But, as I said, she shall descend in battle and perish, and shall be found no more for ever.

A TENTH PART FALLS FIRST.

To speak then to the manner of the ruin of this Antichrist, with respect to the gradualness thereof: It must piece after piece be overthrown, until at last every whit thereof is rolled down from the rocks as a burnt mountain.

And hence we read that this city falls first in a tenth part thereof, even while nine parts remain yet standing: Nor doth this tenth part, notwithstanding the faith and faithful testimony of the two witnesses, quite fall, until they are slain, and also raised again: For 'tis said, The same hour that the witnesses were raised, the tenth part of the city fell (Rev 11:13): The tenth part of that city that reigneth over the kings of the earth, which city is Sodom, Egypt, Babylon, or the great whore (Rev 17:18).

By the city then, I understand the church of Antichrist in its utmost bounds; and so it reacheth as far as the beast with seven heads and ten horns hath dominion. Hence this city is also called cities, as one universe is called by the name of several countries, &c. And them cities also are called 'the cities of the nations' (Rev 16:19): For as when they are put together, they all make but one; so when they are considered apart, they are found in number ten, and answer to the ten horns upon the heads of the (seven headed) beast that carries her, and do give her protection.

This then I take to be the meaning: That the antichristian church is divided into ten parts, and each part is put under one of the horns of the beast for protection: But that aid and protection shall not help, when God shall come to execute judgment upon her: For it saith, 'A tenth part of the city fell'; that is, first, and as a forerunner of the fall of all the rest: Now where this tenth part is, or which of the ten parts must fall first, or whether indeed a tenth part is already fallen, that I will leave to those that are wiser than myself to determine.

But since I am speaking of the fall of a tenth part of Antichrist; a word or two about the means of the fall thereof.

The means of the fall of this tenth part, is an earthquake; yet not such as is universal, over the face of all, but an earthquake in that tenth part where that city stood that should fall. Now by earthquakes here, cannot be meant any thing but such a shaking as unsettleth the foundations of this tenth part: But whether it shall be in this tenth part as a city, or in it as a state, that I shall not determine; only my thoughts are, That it shall be an earthquake in that kingdom where this tenth part shall happen to be: An earthquake not to overthrow further than is appointed; and that is the city which is called the tenth part of the great Antichrist. So far as that state is a state, so far then it is shaken for reformation, not for destruction; for in the earthquake were slain seven thousand (names of) men; and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven. But thus much for the first: Great Babylon falleth first, in a tenth part of it.

THE NINE PARTS FALL.

Again, The next step that the strong God taketh towards the utter overthrow of Antichrist, will be more sore upon the whole, though not at first universal neither, yet in conclusion, it shall throw down the nine parts that are left: For thus it is recorded: 'And

the cities of the nations fell': The cities of the nations, the antichristian churches, otherwise called the daughters of the mother of harlots, and abominations of the earth.

Now to shew you the hand of God in this second stroke, wherewith the Lord will smite this enemy. 1. Here we have a great earthquake.

2. And then, The fall of the cities of the nations.

For the earthquake, it is said to be such as never was, 'so mighty an earthquake, and so great' (Rev 16:18); for it extended itself as far as the other nine cities had any ground to stand on; for it shook the foundations of them all.

The fall of the cities, was not immediately upon the shake that was made, but the earthquake produced an eruption, an eruption in the nine remaining parts of this city: And such an eruption as is of the worser sort, for it divided them into a three-headed division: 'And the great city was divided into three parts': the great city, to wit, the powers by which they were upheld. The meaning then is this; when God shall strike this man of sin the second time, he will not be so sparing as he was at first, when he struck but a tenth part to the ground; but now he will so shake, so confound, so divide, so raise up Antichrist against himself, to wit, in the body and members of him, that they shall set to fighting, and to tearing one another in pieces, until they have consumed the whole of these nine parts. It was, saith the text, divided into three parts, which divisions are the worst of all: It will be therefore such a division as will bring them all to ruin. Hence it follows, 'And the cities of the nations fell.'

Wherefore, this three-cornered eruption will be the most dreadful to Antichrist that ever was: It will be like that that was in Jerusalem when she came to be laid even with the ground; and like that that came upon the armies of the Gentiles, when they came up to fight against Jehoshaphat.

'For the children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir, utterly to slay and destroy them: And when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, every one helped to destroy another' (2 Chron 20:23). This, I say, is the division that this mighty earthquake shall make betwixt the horns that are left to these nine parts that remained, when the tenth part of the city fell. And this will come to pass through the increase of the heat of God's anger: For he is angry with the waters where the woman sitteth, because they have delivered up his beloved to the bloody whore; wherefore, he now will give them blood to drink in fury.

Hence his beginning to deal with Antichrist, is called, the beginning of revenges: 'I will make [saith God] mine arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh; and that with the blood of the slain and of the captives, from the beginning of revenges upon the enemy' (Deu 32:42). And therefore it is said again, that when God comes to do this work upon this Antichrist, it is because 'it is the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion' (Isa 34:8). 'For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come' (Isa 63:4).

A peace therefore cannot be made among these cities when God has forbidden it: Wherefore the effect of all, is, The cities of the nations fall. There is therefore like to be no more good days for Antichrist after this earthquake has begun to shake her: No, nothing now is to be expected of her, but rumours, tumults, stirs, and uproars: 'One post shall run to meet another,--to shew the king of Babylon that his city is taken at one end': And again, 'A rumour shall both come one year; and after that in another year shall come a rumour, and violence in the land, ruler against ruler,' &c. (Jer 51:31,46). So that this earthquake has driven away peace, shaken the foundations, and will cast the nine cities down to the ground.

GREAT BABEL FALLS.

And this is a second stroke that God will give this man of sin, and a third cometh quickly. Wherefore it follows upon the downfall of these cities of the nations, that 'great Babylon came into remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.' Now then, have at great Babylon. Great Babylon! What is that? Why, I take it to be the mother, the metropolitan, the great whore herself: For though sometimes, by the great whore, or great Babylon, we may understand, the church of Antichrist in general; yet by it is meant more properly, the mother of the daughters, of whose overthrow we have spoken before. We are now then come to the threshold of the door of the house of the OLD one; to the door of the mother of harlots, and abomination of the earth. This then that but now is said to come into remembrance with God, is that which gave being to the cities destroyed before; to wit, the mistress, the queen, the mother-church, as she calleth herself.

And this is the wisdom of God concerning her, that she should not be the first that should die; but that she should live to see the destruction of her daughters, and pine away under the sight and sense of that, even until judgment also shall overtake herself.

Thus Pharaoh and his chief ones did live to see the greatest part of Egypt destroyed before judgment overtook them, but at last it came to their doors also.

Zedekiah lived to see his children slain before his face, before judgment overtook him to his own personal destruction (Jer 52:8-11).

Babylon also, when God sent the cup of his fury unto her, yet was to live to see the nations drink before her: 'Take the wine cup of my fury [said God to the prophet,] and cause all the nations to whom I send thee, to drink it' (Jer 25:15). To wit, All the kingdoms of the world which are upon the face of the earth. 'And Sheshach shall drink after them' (verse 26). But what was Sheshach? may some say. I answer, It was Babylon, the princess of the world, and at that time the head of all those nations (Dan 4:22), (as this queen is now the mother of harlots). Wherefore, the same prophet, speaking of the destruction of the same Sheshach, saith, 'How is Sheshach taken? and how is the praise of the whole earth surprised! How is Babylon become an astonishment among the nations!' (Jer 51:41).

Now, if this was the method of God's proceeding with his enemies

in the way of his judgments of old, why may we not suppose that he will go the same way with his great enemy now: especially since those judgments mentioned before, were executed upon those, which, in some things, were figures of the great whore. Besides, we read here plainly, that when the cities of the nations were fallen, great Babylon came into remembrance before God, to give her to drink of the cup.

From all which I conclude, as I did before, that the mother, the metropolitan, the lady of kingdoms, shall live to see her daughters executed before her face: After which she shall come into consideration herself; for she must assuredly drink of the cup.¹⁰

This destruction therefore must be last, for the reasons urged before, and also because she most deserves the bottom of the cup. The bottom is the dregs, the most bitter part, and that where the most heat, and fiercest wrath of God doth lie (Psa 75:8): Wherefore, although you find that by the first earthquake a great slaughter was made, and that a tenth part of the city fell; yet from that judgment some did escape: 'And the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven' (Rev 11:13). But now, this earthquake, by virtue of which the cities of the nations fall, and as an effect of which great Babylon is come into 'remembrance before God,' neither spares one of the daughters of this whore, nor any man that is a lover of them; but it so is seconded by a 'hail-storm,' and that hail-storm worketh so in wrath, that not one escapes by repentance. Every hail-stone was the weight of a talent, which some say is six pounds above half an hundred weight:¹¹ By this therefore God shews, that now his anger was wrought up to the height. I know not wherewith so to compare these hail-stones, as with the talent of lead that was laid over the mouth of the ephah, which was prepared to hold the woman, whose name was wickedness, this very whore of Babylon: For that talent of lead was to keep down this mistress, that she might get no more out of the ephah, and these hail-stone are to banish her out of the world (Zech 5:5-11): Therefore it follows, that she must have the most heavy judgment, even the bottom of the cup.

'And great Babylon came into remembrance before God.' To remember with God, is to visit either with grace or wrath, God is said to remember Rachel, when he visited her with the blessing of a fruitful womb (Gen 30:22). It is said also that God remembered Noah, when the time came on that he was to be delivered from the flood (Gen 8:1). Here also he is said to remember Babylon, that is, to visit her with his anger for the wickedness that she had committed: 'To give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.'

Now then is the time of iniquity, when it will be come to the full; and now also is the time of God's anger, when it will be come to the full: Now therefore must the murders (Rev 18:24), and thefts, and blasphemies, and fornications, &c., belonging to this mother of harlots, be recompensed to the full, to wit, with the dregs of this cup: Yet since the hail-stones come by weight, and the wrath comes by measure, (for so a talent and a cup imports) it follows, that the Almighty God, even in the midst of the heat of all this anger, will keep to the rules of justice and judgment while he is dealing with this enemy: He has not passions, to carry him beyond rules of judgment; nor weakness, to cause him to fall short of doing justice: Therefore he has (as was said) his judgments for

her by weight, and his indignation by measure: But yet this weight and measure is not suited to her constitution, not with an intent to purge or refine her; but it is disposed according to the measure and nature of her iniquity, and comes to sweep her, as with the besom of destruction, until she is swept off from the face of all the earth.

And thus I have shewed you the manner of the ruin of Antichrist; that is, That it will be gradual, part after part, until the whole be overthrown. And this truth may be applied both to the soul, as well as to the body of Antichrist: For the soul, spirit, or life of Antichrist must also after this manner be destroyed. And hence it is said to be consumed, that is, by degrees: For to consume, is to destroy by degrees: Only this caution I would have the reader remember, That much of the soul of Antichrist may be destroyed, when none of her daughters are; and that the destruction of her spirit is a certain forerunner of the destruction of her body in the manner that we have related.

Now since she is dying, let us ring her passing-bell; for when she is dead, we that live to see it, intend to ring out.

'For thus saith the Lord God; When I shall make thee a desolate city, like the cities that are not inhabited; when I shall bring up the deep upon thee, and great waters shall cover thee; when I shall bring thee down with them that descend into the pit, with the people of old time, and shall set thee in the low parts of the earth, in places desolate of old, with them that go down to the pit, that thou be not inhabited; and I shall set glory in the land of the living; I will make thee a terror, and thou shalt be no more: though thou be sought for, yet shalt thou never be found again, saith the Lord God' (Eze 26:19-21).

OF THE SIGNS OF THE APPROACH OF THE DOWNFALL OF ANTICHRIST.

Having in the foregoing discourse spoken of Antichrist his ruin, and the manner thereof, I now come to speak of the signs of the approach of her destruction. And whether I shall hit right, as to these, that I must leave to time to make manifest; and in the mean while to the wise in heart to judge.

That she shall fall, there is nothing more certain; and when she is fallen, that she never shall rise again, is also as firmly decreed; yea, and shewed too by him that cast the millstone into the sea, and said, 'Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all' (Rev 18:21). This is therefore her fate and destiny, from the mouth of the holy one; and is sealed up in the scriptures of truth, for the comfort of the people that have been afflicted by her.

True, the time of her fall is not certainly known by the saints, nor at all believed by her; wherefore, her plagues must come unlooked for by her. And as to the saints, their guesses, as to the time of her ruin, must needs be conjectural and uncertain. For her part, she shall say, and that when she stands where she must suddenly fall, 'I shall be a lady for ever' (Isa 47:7-9). And as to the saints that would very willingly see her downfall, how often have they been mistaken as to the set time thereof.

Nor have I been without thought, but that this mistake of the godly may become a snare to Antichrist, and a trap to her upholders. For what can be a greater judgment, or more effectually harden the hearts of the wicked, than for them to behold that the predictions, prophecies, expectation and hopes of their enemies (as to their ruin) should quite (as to the time) be frustrate, and made void.

Moses prophesied, and the people hoped that God would give Israel 'the land of Canaan'; and yet the Canaanites beat them (Num 14:40; Josh 7:5-9).

Jeremiah prophesied that the enemy should come and take the city [of] Jerusalem; but because he came once, and went back without doing it, how stout and hardened were the hearts of that people against all the rest of his prophetic sayings, as to such a thing (Jer 37). Now the error lay not in these prophets, but in the people's mistaking the times: and if mistakes do so much harden the heart of the wicked, what will they do to such of them who make it their business to blind and harden their hearts against God, by abusing all truths? Surely, when men seek to harden their hearts by abusing of truth, they will do it to purpose, when they have also the advantage of the weakness of their professed enemies to do it by: especially when their enemies shall say they speak by the word of the Lord, and time shall manifest it to be both a mistake and a falsehood.

It is to be bewailed, namely, the forwardness of some in this matter, who have predicted concerning the time of the downfall of Antichrist, to the shame of them and their brethren: nor will the wrong that such by their boldness have done to the church of God, be ever repaired by them nor their works. But the judgments of God are a great deep; and therefore who can tell, since the enemy of God would not be convinced by the power of truth, and the virtuous lives of some, but that God might leave them to be snared, hardened and emboldened to run upon their unavoidable destruction, by the lies and lightness of others. They begin to vaunt it already, and to say, Where is the word of the Lord, as to this, let it come now. But when Agag said, 'surely the bitterness of death is past,' then was the time for him to be hewn in pieces (1 Sam 15:32,33). I shall not therefore meddle with the times and seasons which the Father hath put in his own power; no, though they as to Antichrist's ruin are revealed; because by the Holy Ghost there is a challenge made, notwithstanding the time is set, and by the word related to the man of wisdom, to find it out if he can (Rev 13:18).

If Samson's riddle was so puzzling, what shall we think of this? and though the angel hath intimated, that this sealed matter shall be opened towards the time of the end (Dan 12:9); yet 'tis evident, some have either been so hasty, or presumed too much upon their own abilities: for I am sure they have missed the mark, hardened the heart of the enemy, stumbled the weak, and shamed them that loved them.

But since the most high hath irreversibly determined her downfall also, let us see if we can have better success in discoursing upon the signs, than others have had who have meddled with the timing thereof.

FIRST SIGN.

First then. The downfall and ruin of Antichrist draws near, when the church and people of God are driven from all those hiding-places that God has prepared for them in the wilderness. The church of God, when the dragon did his worst, had an hiding-place prepared her of God, that she might not utterly be devoured by him; and so shall have till the time of his end shall come.

Of this you read in the 12th of the Revelation, a place worthy to be noted for this. But now, when the time of the ruin of Antichrist draws on, then is the church deprived of her shelter, and laid open, as one would think, to be utterly swallowed up for ever, having no more place in the wilderness, that is, among the nations, to hide herself from the face of the serpent. But how comes this to be a SIGN of the approach of the ruin of Antichrist? why thus. The time of this beast's war with the church of God, and the time that the church shall have an hiding-place in the wilderness, are both of a length, the one continuing forty-two months, the other a thousand two hundred and threescore days. Now since the war that this beast makes with the woman and her seed, and the woman's hiding-place in the wilderness from his face, are, for length of time, the same; what hindereth but that when the woman and her seed can find no more shelter in the nations, the time that the beast hath allotted him to make war against her, should be finished also? when we therefore shall see that plots and conspiracies, that designs for utter ruin, are laid against God's church all the world over; and that none of the kings, princes, or mighty states of the world, will open their doors, or give them a city for refuge; then is the ruin of Antichrist at hand: for Haman's plot, though the most universal that ever yet was hatching, (being laid in an hundred twenty-seven provinces,) did but presage the deliverance and exaltation of the Jews, and the hanging of Haman and his sons: yea, and I take it, that the very day that this great enemy had set for the utter overthrow of the church, God made the day in which their deliverance began, and that from whence it was completed; and I take that to be a type of this.

There is but one thing that I can think of that can give matter of a shew of doubt about this thing; and that is, though the time of this war against the saints, and that of the woman's shelter in the wilderness as to length, be one and the same; yet whether they did commence together, and begin to take their rise, as men do that begin to run a race? a word therefore to this. I suppose they did commence much together; for else with whom should this beast make war, and how should the church escape? Or, if the beast began his war before the woman began to have a hiding-place, why was she not swallowed up, since in the wilderness was her only place of shelter? Again, what needed the woman to have a place of shelter in the wilderness, when there was no war made against her? And yet this must be, if her thousand two hundred and threescore days, began before the beast's forty-two months: but they ended both together; for the beast could not kill the witnesses before they had finished their testimony; which testimony of theirs lasted this full time that the beast had granted him to make war with them, to wit, one thousand two hundred and threescore days (Rev 11:3): therefore their times went out together, as will be made appear, if you consider also that the witnesses were slain, by virtue, not of the old, but of a new war levied against them; and that, as it should seem, at the very time when her hiding-place

was taken from her; for then indeed, for a little season, will the church of God be overcome, as I shall shew by and by.

Wherefore, let God's people consider and remember that when God's church is absolutely forlorn, and has no hiding-place any longer in the world, the kingdom of Antichrist will quickly begin to tumble. Nor is this the alone place from whence we may gather these conclusions.

The time of Pharaoh's tyranny, of his life, and of the deliverance of the children of Israel, came out much together; as any will discern that shall consider the history of them (Gen 15:13).

David, when Saul did sorely prosecute him, fled last into the wilderness to Achish the king of Gath, a Philistine, for shelter; and he gave him Ziklag for his refuge (1 Sam 27:5,6). And that place so continued to David, 'till just about the time in which Saul must die; and then behold, David's Ziklag is burnt with fire, and himself stript naked of harbour! (1 Sam 30:1). But what matter! The time of Saul's life, as well as of David's Ziklag, was now upon expiring; for within three or four days after, David became the king of Israel (1 Sam 31:1-6).

And thus also it was with the Babel-beast: His time expired, when the captivity of Israel was upon the finishing: then was the time of his land come, and 'in that' very 'night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain' (Dan 5:25-30).

Thus therefore it will happen to the church in the latter days: her place of shelter in the wilderness; her Ziklag will be taken from her, about the time that the war that the beast has to make upon the woman and her seed shall be finished. But now the church is not therefore immediately delivered, when her Ziklag is taken from her; for after that, the beast levieth a new war, to the overcoming and killing of the church: I say therefore, that this is a sign, not of the downfall of Antichrist, but of the approach thereof: for the church's bondage shall continue but three days, and a little after this [shall be her deliverance]. Much like to this was that of David; for after he had lost his Ziklag, for two or three days he had sore distress: but lo, then came the kingdom to him.

Indeed, sense and reason saith, it is a fearful thing for the church of God to be exposed to the rage of her enemy all over the world at once; and that all nations should shut up their gates, let down their portcullises, bolt up their doors, and set open their flood-gates to destroy them: but so will be the dispensation of God, to the end deliverance may be the sweeter, and the enemies fall the more headlong, and the arm of God the more manifest, both for the one, and against the other. And in this will that scripture be fulfilled: 'And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation--and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book' (Dan 12:1).

Let us gather up what has been said again; namely, that it is a sign of the approach of the ruin of Antichrist, when God's church can find no more shelter in the wilderness; because when her Ziklag is burned, the time of the war that the beast is to make against

her, is finished. Wherefore, when she hath given one desperate struggle more, and laid the church of God, or his witnesses, for dead, in the street of his great city, for three days and an half, then comes the kingdom, and the long, long-looked-for rest and glory. Wherefore it remains, that an angel should stand in the sun, and make proclamation to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, to gather themselves together to the supper of the great God: 'That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them; and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great' (Rev 19:18). This is to be after the forty-two months of the beast; and consequently, after the thousand two hundred and threescore days that the church was to be in sackcloth; yea, after the resurrection of the witnesses, as is evident by that which follows: 'And the beast was taken, [that is, after the second year] and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshiped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone' (verse 20).

SECOND SIGN.

Secondly, Another sign of the approach of the ruin of Antichrist, is this: towards the end of her reign, the nations will be made to see her baseness, and to abhor her and her ways. They will, I say, be made to see these things, in order to her ruin: also, when they shall be made to see, her ruin will not be far off. For so long as the nations and their rulers shall continue in that dead sleep that she hath bewitched them into, by their drinking of the wine of her fornication; so long we have no ground to think that her ruin is at the door: but when God shall lay her before kings, and shall discover her nakedness to the nations, then be sure her destruction is at hand. Hence you read, that precedent to her downfall: An angel comes down from heaven, and enlightens the earth with his glory (Rev 10:1). [The earth;] that is, the kingdoms, countries, and nations where the woman sitteth, or they that border thereupon. [Enlightened;] to let them see the filthiness of the whore. [With his glory;] with the doctrine that he had commission to preach against her, for the discovering of her lewdness to the earth. This also was the way that God took with backsliding Israel of old, (and she was a type of our religious Babel) when he intended to bring her to judgment for her sins (Eze 16:37); and this is the way that God will take to destroy our religious Antichrist, when he comes to deliver his people out of her hand.

For though the people that suffer at her hand, can do nothing against her, but lay, in prayers and tears against her before the God of heaven, and bear their witness against her before the gods of the earth; yet when kings shall come to be concerned, and they will count themselves concerned when they shall see how they have been deceived by her; then let her look to it. 'Behold, I am against thee, saith the Lord of Hosts; and I will discover thy skirts upon thy face, and I will shew the nations thy nakedness, and the kingdoms thy shame. And I will cast abominable filth upon thee, and make thee vile, and will set thee as a gazing-stock.' And what follows? 'And it shall come to pass, that all they that look upon thee, shall flee from thee, and say, Nineveh is laid waste: who will bemoan her? whence shall I seek comforters for

thee?' (Nahum 3:5-7).

Wherefore, there wants nothing but that she be discovered to the nations and their kings; for did they but see her, though they lay yet in her bosom, they would rise up against her, that she must die: wherefore it is written again, I will 'bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee' (Eze 28:18).

The chief of the wisdom of Antichrist this day is laid out, if perhaps by it she may cover her nakedness, and keep it from the eyes of kings and their people. But God has said it shall not avail: 'Thy nakedness shall be uncovered, yea, thy shame shall be seen: I will take vengeance, and I will not meet thee as a man' (Isa 47:3). But how will he make her naked? Verily, by kings. But how shall kings do it? Why, by virtue of the glory of the angel: yea, they 'shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire' (Rev 17:16).

Let this, I pray, be considered, That Antichrist shall not down, but by the hand of kings. The preacher then kills her soul, and the king kills her body. And why should not the kings have it granted unto them, that she should fall by their hand? the kings are those that she has abused, that she has in the grossest manner abused, and has served herself of them: but the time of the end of Antichrist, mystery Babylon is coming, 'and then many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of him' (Jer 27:7).¹²

Nor shall all the tricks, lies, and deceit under which formerly she used to shroud herself, be able to prove a balm to her any longer: No, 'in vain shalt thou use many medicines'; for no cure shall be unto thee; 'the nations have heard of thy shame' (Jer 46:11,12).

Babylon has for a long time been 'a lady of kingdoms,' and 'a golden cup in the Lord's hand': the nations also have largely drank of her cup, and the kings have committed fornication with her (Rev 18:3). But now the angel is come down, and hath enlightened the earth with his glory. Wherefore now it follows immediately, 'Babylon is fallen! is fallen!' That is, in the eyes and esteem of the nations, as well as otherwise.

True, some of the kings will bewail her fall, and will cry, Alas! Alas! when they see that they cannot help her; for that they shall see, as is evident, because they stand afar off to lament her, 'afar off for the fear of her torment.' The kings therefore into whose hands God shall deliver her, and who shall execute his judgments upon her, shall be more mighty and powerful to bring her down, than shall be the whole world besides to uphold her.

The Protestant Kings.

And this observe further, That as the kings that shall hate her, shall hate her because in the light of the glory of the angel they are made able to see her filthiness; so the kings that shall bewail her, are such as in judgment are left in the dark, and that shall be bewitched by her to the end. This therefore will let us see something of the meaning of God, in that he has drawn off from

her some of the kings already; to wit, that he might train them up by the light of the gospel, that they may be expert, like men of war, to scale her walls, when the king of kings shall give out the commandment to them so to do.

There has been a great deal of talk in the countries about the ruin and destruction of Babylon; but could we see more of the kings engaged against her, we should hope groundedly that her fall was at the door. Well, blessed be God for what kings there are, and the Lord turn the hearts of many more to hate her.

Some, as I said before, have adventured to foretell the time of her downfall; but give me the signs thereof. This therefore is a sign, a sign that her downfall approaches, when God shall lay her nakedness before the nations, and put it into the hearts of kings to abhor her. The signs of the times the Lord Jesus would have us mind; and because the Jews neglected them, though as to the time they hit pretty right, yet they missed of the thing that the time brought forth.

THIRD SIGN.

Thirdly, A third sign of the approach of the ruin of Antichrist, is this: 'When Babylon is become the habitation of devils, &c.,' then the downfall thereof is upon us. True, Babylon was always an habitation for devils; but not an habitation only for them; Israel once dwelt there, and our Antichrist was sometimes a place of residence for good men. The meaning then, is, When you shall see the church and people of God so forsake her that she is left in a manner to herself, and to her disciples, then she is to fall quickly. When you hear it proclaimed by them that are yet in her, of God's people, 'We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed: forsake her, and let us go every one into his own country' (Jer 51:9): Then she will soon be hissed out of the world: for this is the way of the wisdom of God; namely, to bring his people out of a city or place, when he intends the ruin of that place. When God was about to destroy the old world, he put his Noah into an ark: when God was about to destroy Sodom, he sent his Lot away thence to Zoar: when Christ was about to destroy Jerusalem, he bid his disciples flee from the midst of that: and when there shall be by God a hissing for his people; and when they shall hear him, and obey, and gather to him, then you shall see what will become of this enemy of Christ: 'I will hiss for them, and gather them; for I have redeemed them' (Zech 10:8-12).

I say therefore, when Babylon shall become the habitation of devils, a hold for all foul spirits, and a cage for every unclean and hateful bird, then Babylon is fallen.

And thus the angel that lightened the earth with his glory, proclaimed, 'Babylon the great is fallen! is fallen! and is become the habitation of devils, and a hold for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hateful bird.' Wherefore it must be, that by that her time is come that she should fall, God will have gleaned his people from the midst of her. And when God shall have gleaned his people from the midst of her, those that are left behind will appear more than ever to be what they are, to wit, devils, foul spirits, and hateful birds; wherefore, now will Antichrist appear in his own most proper colours.

But to comment a little upon the words.

Babylon 'Mystery Babylon' (Rev 17:5). The antichristian church.

'Is fallen! Is fallen!' In the eyes and faith of the godly, by her dropping into the dregs of degeneracy, and so is become the habitation of devils, &c., in order to her falling into utter and unavoidable destruction for ever.

'Is become.' That is, through the labour of the fanners and winnowers that God hath sent to fan Babylon, and to fetch out his people, that she might be left to her chaff: 'I will send [saith God to Babylon] fanners, that shall fan her, and shall empty her land [of good men;] for in the day of trouble they shall be against her round about' (Jer 51:2).

'An habitation of devils.' Devils: not such by nature, but by practice. Incarnate devils. For when the time is come that Babylon must be destroyed, she shall be found to be an habitation for the most vile of the sons of men. For as devils have acted towards the world, so shall the sons of this sorceress, and this whore, act towards Christ and his members in the latter days. And, perhaps, the departing of Zion from the midst of her, will blow her up into this spirit of devilism. Let God's people therefore, when Antichrist is towards her end, look for nothing from her, but what the devil, in times past, used to do; to wit, all sinful subtilty, malice, wrath, fraud, deceit, lying, murder, false accusings, and implacable madness of spirit to do them mischief. (But Lord God! think I, what will become of good men! and where will they be safe in such days? Only I comfort myself, by saying to myself again, this a sign that the ruin of Antichrist is at the door.) But this I say, he must needs be a tuneable man, that shall be able in those days to sing this song to himself at all seasons: for this is to drive reason backward, and to set the cart before the horse. For what will the good man's reason say, when it seeth all Babylonians are become devils, but that the church of God will certainly be torn in pieces? But behold! the text and the Holy Ghost runs counter. 'Babylon is fallen! is fallen! and [or, for it] is become the habitation of devils.' These words for certain are the words of an holy angel; for it could not have entered into the heart of mere man to have conceived them.

'An habitation.' To be an habitation (for devils) is to be their house, their dwelling-place, their place of privilege, their place of rest and abode, or thither whither they have right to go. And thus will Babylon be; that is, an house, an habitation, a dwelling-place, and a place of rest, only for devilish-minded men; thither may such men come; for such her doors stand open, and there may such inhabit. When therefore you see good men come out thence, and all sorts of wicked men flock in thither, then know that Babylon is near her end.

'And a hold for every foul spirit.' Understand by spirit, either those that are devils by nature, or such as are such otherwise. But I think that the angel chiefly intends all manner of unclean and filthy spirits; and so the church and members of Babylon, their only place of safety: Or if you understand it of the uncleanness of the spirits and minds of men, then the meaning is, that they

are called foul spirits, in allusion to those of devils which go by the same name (Mark 9:25). But however, or which way soever taken, it seems Babylon is their hold; that is, their place of defence: For by an hold, we often understand a place of strength, a castle, a fort, a tower; so that these devils, these foul-spirited men, these Babylonians, will not only find house-room and harbour in Babel, but shelter, defence and protection, when she is near her ruin: yea, they will find her an upholder to them, and a countenancer of them, in all their foul and devilish pranks; yea, such an hold shall she be to such foul spirits in such foul acts, that it shall not be possible that they should be driven from her, or from them: For an hold is often taken in the scriptures for a place that is impregnable, and must be so taken here. This intimates then, that some faint opposition by the kings and nations will be made against these inhabitants, foul spirits, but to little purpose, until the time of her land shall come (Jer 27:7); for in their hold they still will be secured and defended from what reason, law and scripture can or would do unto them. Thus then we see how Babel, towards her end, will be filled, and with what, to wit, with devils and foul spirits; yea, and that she will not only be an habitation, but a place of defence for such.

'And a cage for every unclean and hateful bird.' Those that before are called devils, and foul spirits, are also here called 'birds, unclean and hateful beasts.' By the term [Birds,] he may allude to that of the prophet Isaiah, where these unclean birds are mentioned (34:11-17) And by cage, he may allude to the prophet Jeremiah, from whom, as I think, the Holy Ghost takes those words; but then we must put men in the place of birds, and the Babylonian kingdom for the cage (Jer 5:27).

'Every unclean bird.' As was said before, a hold for every foul spirit. These unclean birds therefore are not all of one feather, or kind, but of all and every kind; and it intimates, that the worst act of all professions, shall be, as in a cage, in Babylon, a little before her downfall. But I say, if they will not be all of one feather, yet in their temper they will somewhat agree, being either in shape, monstrous; of appetite, ravenous; or, of inclination, lovers of the night. For of all these sorts were the forbidden, or unclean birds among the Jews. Now since these unclean birds are not all of one feather, or kind, it intimates that the basest of all sorts, sects, professions and degrees, shall take shelter in Babylon towards her end; and that they shall there, in their temper, unanimously agree to show themselves monstrous, to devour and eat up the poor and needy, and to blow out the light of the gospel.

'A cage.' Not to imprison them in, but for them to sit and sing in, to confer their notes in, to make melodious music in; I mean, melodious to their own thinking; for the ass thinks that he sings full favouredly, and the owl endeavours to lift up her voice above all the birds of the wood: But it will be a prediction of her fall, and that her ruin is at the door.

Of these birds Zephaniah speaks, when he prophesies of the downfall of Nineveh, saying, 'The cormorant and the bittern [shall] lodge in the uppermost lintels of it, their voice shall sing in the windows; [when] desolation shall be in the thresholds' (Zeph 2:14). An unseasonable time to sing in; for when death is coming in at the

door, mourning should be in the chambers. But this is the judgment of God, That she should be a cage for every unclean bird to sing in, even then when her destruction and desolation cometh upon her.

To sing, as in a cage, doth also denote security, and that the heart is far from fear; for she saith, 'I shall see no sorrow, in that hour in which her judgment comes.'

But is this a sign of the approach of the ruin of Antichrist? And must those that shall live to see those days, rejoice when these things begin to come to pass? Are not these things rather a sign that the utter overthrow of the church of God is at the door? Indeed, to sense it is, and reason will be apt to say so: But hark what the Holy Ghost saith! 'She is fallen! is fallen now!'

When therefore we shall see men like devils; yea, every foul spirit, and hateful bird, flock to, and take shelter in Babylon; let us not be frightened or dejected, but pluck up our hearts, and say, This is one of the signs that the downfall of Babylon is near. Wherefore it follows, after that the prophet had told us that these birds should dwell in the land of the people of God's curse (Isa 34). That 'the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; [for that they are there] and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose: It shall blossom, [saith he] abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: The glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God.' And to support the weak from those fears that in those days will be pulling of them down, he adds, 'Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: In the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes. And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called, The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away' (Isa 35).

What say ye now, ye sons of God! Will you learn to make a judgment of things according to the mystery of the wisdom of God, or will ye longer conclude according to sense and reason: 'He turneth the shadow of death into the morning' (Amos 5:8). And commands oft-times, that the fairest day should succeed the foulest night. Wherefore, when we see these devils, foul spirits, and unclean birds in Babylon; yea, when we see good men leave her, and the vilest run in to her, then let us sing the angels' song, and say, 'Babylon the great is fallen! is fallen! and is become the habitation of devils, and a hold for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hateful bird.'

FOURTH SIGN.

Fourthly, another sign of the approach of the ruin of Antichrist, is, 'The Slaying of the Witnesses': For the witnesses are to be slain before the fall of Antichrist; and that by the hand of the beast, who shall manage the members of Antichrist, having qualified them before that work, with those qualifications of which you read in the sign foregoing. For what can better fit a generation for such a work, than to be themselves all turned devils, and also succourers of all foul spirits. Wherefore, they must be the wickedest of men that shall do this: the very scum of the nations, and the very vilest of people. Nor is this a new notion: God threatened to give his sanctuary 'into the hands of strangers for a prey, and to the wicked of the earth for a spoil' (Eze 7:21); To robbers, burglars, and they should defile it (verse 22). Again, saith God of his people, 'I will bring the worst of the heathen, and they shall possess their houses' (verse 24). For the truth is, this work is too bad for men either of reason or conscience to be found in the practice of. The hangman is usually none of the best: The witnesses are also to be slain; but not a man, but a beast must slay them; 'a den of thieves, a hold of foul spirits,' must do it.

That the witnesses must be slain before the fall of Babylon, has been hinted already. Also, that their death is a forerunner of the ruin of Antichrist, has before been touched upon; but in this place I shall a little enlarge.

And therefore I proceed: 'And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. And they of the people, and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put into graves.' 'And after three days and an half, the spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them. And they heard a great voice from heaven, saying unto them, Come up hither: And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them' (Rev 11:7-12).

Thus you see their death is before their deliverance. Also their death is to be by the hand of the beast; to wit by the men that have and hold his mark, and that of his image, and that are of the number of his name. You see also that their death is not only a forerunner of their deliverance, but a sign that their deliverance is at the door; since the one is but three days and an half before the other.

And if a short comment upon this text will give a little light to the reader, I shall not count my labour lost.

And when they shall have finished their testimony, when, or about the time they have done their work of witness-bearing for God in the world: When they have made or are making an end of giving their testimony for Christ, and against the witchcrafts, idolatries,

sorceries, fornications, thefts, murders, and wickedness of Antichrist: Then and not till then.

'The beast that ascended out of the bottomless pit.' The beast: The power that carrieth and beareth up Antichrist, the mother of harlots: The beast upon which the woman sitteth, and by the heads and horns of which she is protected and defended; he is said to ascend out of the bottomless pit; for that he manifesteth by his doings, that he was born there, and came to [do] the work of the king thereof.

'Shall make war against them.' We read that he made war against them all the time of their prophesying in sackcloth, while they were bearing their testimony against his doing; and that his commission was, That he should have leave to make war so long (Rev 12:6). But here we read again, that when they had finished their testimony, and so consequently he had run out the time of his first commission for war, he makes war again. So that this war which now he raiseth against them, seems to be another, a new war, and such as is grounded upon other, to wit, new arguments, besides those upon which his first war stood. By his first war, he sought to beat down and overthrow their testimony (Rev 13:4). By this war he seeketh to overthrow themselves. The first war he made, was grounded upon a vain confidence of his ability to destroy their faith; but this last was grounded upon madness against them, because their testimony had prevailed against him: Wherefore, Torment, wherewith these witnesses by their testimony tormented him and his followers, was the cause of this last war. And this is insinuated when he saith, 'They make merry for their victory over them, because these two prophets,' (to wit, by their testimony,) 'tormented them that dwelt on the earth' (Rev 11:10).

The beast therefore will make a war against the witnesses all the time of their prophesying in sackcloth, which will be a thousand two hundred and threescore days (Rev 12:6). In all which time they shall give him the foil, and overcome him by their faith and testimony; and be proclaimed more than conquerors over him, through the Christ that loved them. But now in this second war he overcomes them, 'he overcomes them, and kills them.'

Jezebel for a long time made war against Elias the prophet, seeking to overthrow the worship of God which he maintained, and to establish the religion of Baal: But when she saw that by all she could do she got nothing, but that the prophet got the day of her worship, priests and worshippers (1 Kings 18:30-40), she breaks out into a rage, as one tormented almost to death, and raises a new war; not now against his religion, but his person, and desperately swears by all the gods that she had, That by tomorrow that time the life of the prophet should be as the life of one of her priests whom he had slain for an idolater (1 Kings 19:2). When the devil sees that he cannot do by argument, he will try if he can by blows.

When Zedekiah, the son of Chenanah, saw that with argument he could not overcome Micaiah, he steps to him, and takes him a box of the ear (1 Kings 22:24). This new war, is a box of the ear which the beast will give the witnesses, because they overcame him by their faith and testimony, all the time that the first war lasted.

Now how long this second war will last, and what strugglings the

witnesses will make before he shall overcome them, I know not: This I know, that the text saith, 'by this war he shall overcome them.'

'And shall overcome them.' Saints are not said to be overcome, when they are imprisoned, banished, and killed for their faithful testimony: No, by these things they overcome. To overcome then, is to get the mastery, to subdue, to turn out of possession, to take and hold captive, to strip the subdued of power and privilege, as is sufficiently manifest both by scripture and reason: 'For of whom a man is overcome, of the same he is brought in bondage' (2 Peter 2:19).

So then, when he is said to overcome them, it is meant, he shall get the mastery of them, they shall grow faint before him, have no heart or spirit to bear up in their profession against him: Against him, I say, as she did the thousand two hundred and threescore days' war with him; for then they were overcomers, and did bear away the garland.

Nor do I, for my part, wonder at this, when I consider that these witnesses are a succession of good men; and that when Israel came out of Egypt of old, the feeble and weak-handed did come behind (Deu 25:17-19). It will be the lot therefore of the church, in the latter end of the reign of the beast, to be feeble and weak in their profession, the valiant ones having gone before: These will come, when those that were able have bravely borne their testimony, or when they are upon finishing of that: In comparison of whom, they that come after will be but like eggs to the cocks of the game: wherefore they must needs be crushed, cowed, and overcome. And then will the beast boast himself, as did his type of old, and say, 'My hand hath found as a nest the riches of the people: and as one gathereth eggs that are left, have I gathered all the earth; and there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped' (Isa 10:14).

A sad time, and it is to happen to the people that are left, to the latter end of the witness-bearers; and that too when they shall have finished their testimony.

Of this tyranny the cruelty of Amalek was a type; who, as was hinted before, smote the hindermost, the weak: But his judgment is, That 'he shall perish for ever.'

'And shall overcome them.' There are two ways of overcoming; to wit, by power and policy: And perhaps by both these ways they may be overcome. However, overcome they shall be; for so saith the holy word of God; yea, the beast shall overcome them. Wherefore the church of God, at that day, will be under such a cloud as she never was since Christ's day. Now how long they shall thus be held captive before they are brought to execution; whether the beast will ride in triumph while they are in his bonds; or whether he will suddenly kill them; that time, and observation, and experience, must make manifest: But kill them he shall, that's most certain, for so says the Holy Ghost.

'And shall overcome them, and kill them.' In this method therefore God will suffer the beast to proceed with the church of God, after she has sufficiently borne her testimony for him in the world. He

shall 'war against them,' but that is not all: He shall overcome them, but that is not all; he 'shall overcome them, and kill them.'

'And kill them.' Of their slaughter also I shall speak a word or two. But first I would note, as all know, that there is a difference to be put betwixt killing and overcoming: For though every one that is killed, is overcome: yet every one that is overcome, is not killed (Acts 21:32): men may be overcome, and yet live (Jer 12:11); but when they are killed, it is otherwise: There may be a cry heard from the mouth of them that are overcome, but not from the mouth of them that are killed (Exo 32:18; Acts 7:34): They that are overcome, may consult their own enlargement, and deliverance; but they that are killed, cannot do so. I do therefore distinguish between killed and overcome, because the text doth so: 'He shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.'

'And kill them.' From these words therefore I will take occasion to inquire,

1. How they are to be considered as to this slaughter.
2. What death they must die to accomplish this prophecy.

FIRST, How they are to be considered?

I answer: Not in a carnal or natural, but in a mystical sense. For, first, they are called witnesses. Secondly, They are put under the number of two: 'My two witnesses' (Rev 11:3). Both which are to be mystically taken.

First, Because their testimony standeth not in their words only, but in their conversation; yea, in their suffering also: and that is a mystical witness-bearing.

Secondly, They go under the number of two: Not because there were indeed two such men in the world, but because two are a sufficient number to bear witness (Num 35:30; Deu 17:6; 19:15); and God's church, in the most furious heat and rage of Antichrist, has been at least of such a number of professing saints, to proclaim against the beast and his worship in the name of God. To think that there have been two such men in the world, is ridiculous; for these witnesses must continue to give their testimony for God against Antichrist, a thousand two hundred and threescore years. Nor can they scripturally bear this title, My two witnesses, but with respect to their prophesying so long. The witnesses therefore are nothing else but a successive church, or the congregation of God abiding for him against Antichrist, by reason of a continual succession of men that is joined by the special blessing of God unto it.

SECONDLY, What death they must die? I answer, Not a corporeal one, but that which is mystically such. And I choose to understand it thus, because this suiteth best with their state and condition, which is mystical. Besides, thus did they (when they did overcome,) slay their enemies, even with the fire or sword of their mouth: 'If any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed' (Rev 11:5). As therefore they went about to kill their enemies, so their enemies will kill them: But

they sought to kill their enemies by their testimony, as to their antichristian spirit, and church-state; and their enemies will kill them, as to their Christian heat and fervency of mind; and also as to their Christian church-state. So that, (at least so I think,) there will be such ruins brought both upon the spirit of Christianity, and the true Christian church-state, before this Antichrist is destroyed, that there will for a time scarce be found a Christian spirit, or a true visible living church of Christ in the world: Nothing but the dead bodies of these will be to be seen of the nations; nor them neither, otherwise than as so many ruinous heaps. For the love that I bear to the church of Christ, I wish, as to this, I may prove a false prophet: But this looks so like the text, and also so like the dispensations of God with his church of old, that I cannot but think it will be so. For the text, I have spoken to that already; wherefore I will now present you with some things that look like parallel cases.

First, When the church was coming out of Egypt, just before they were delivered from Pharaoh, they were in their own eyes, and in the eyes of their enemies, none other than dead: 'It had been better [said they to Moses] for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness' (Exo 14:12). The people said so, Moses feared, and Pharaoh concluded they were all dead men (Exo 12:33). Also Paul tells us, 'that they were baptized [that is, buried] unto Moses in the cloud, and in the sea.' They were, for the time, to use the expression, a dead church both in the eyes of Pharaoh, in the eyes of Moses, and also in their own.

And 'tis to be taken notice of: As the witnesses in the text were slain but a little before the ruin of Antichrist began; so this church was baptized in the sea but a little before great Pharaoh was drowned there.

Secondly, In the time of Elias, which time also was typical of this, what church was there to be seen in Israel? None but what was under ground, buried in dens, and in caves of the earth: Yea, the prophet could see none, and therefore he cried to God, and said, Lord, they have 'digged down thine altars,' and slain thy prophets, 'and I am left alone, and they seek my life' (1 Kings 19:14; Rom 11:3). What visible living church was now in the land, I mean, either with reference to a godly spirit for it, or the form and constitution of it? What was, was known to God, but dead to every man alive.

Thirdly, What was the dry bones that we read of in the 37th of Ezekiel, but the church of God, and also a figure of what we are treating of? And why called dry bones, since the people were alive, with their substance, wives, and children; but to shew, that that church of God was now, as to their spirit and church-state, accounted as dead, not only by themselves, but by the king of Babylon, and the nations round about? Babylon then was the valley, and the grave; and the church of God were the bones: Bones without flesh, sinews, or skin; bones exceeding dry; yea so dry and dead were they, that the prophet himself could not tell whether ever they should live again (Eze 37:1-3).

Now this, as I said, was a state that was not to end with the church of Israel, but to be acted over once again by the beast with the church of the new testament: Yea, it is an easy matter to make

their witnesses in this their death, and the church of Israel in this their grave, in many things to symbolize.

Fourthly, Take another instance, or rather comparison, into which the church of God compared herself, when under the king of Babylon's tyranny: And that is, she counted herself as the dung that the beast lets fall to the ground from behind him. And doth this look like a visible church-state? Or has it the smell or savour of such a thing? Nebuchadnezzar (said she) 'hath swallowed me up like a dragon, he hath filled his belly with my delicates, he hath cast me out' (Jer 51:34). Pray, what would you think of a man, of whom one should tell you, That he was eaten up of a dragon; made to fill the belly of a dragon; and cast out as the dung of a dragon? Would you think that such an one did all this while retain the shape, form, or similitude of a man? Why, thus the church said she was, and thus the church shall be again: For she is once more to be overcome, to be overcome and killed; and that by the beast, the dragon's whelp, of which the king of Babylon was a type. And therefore I conclude the premises; that is, That the beast will kill the church that shall be in the latter days, as to her Christian spiritedness, and her church-state. And I could further add, That if we hold they die corporeally, we must conclude, that their natural body being slain, shall lie three years and an half in the street; yea, that their resurrection shall be corporeal, &c. But why we should think thus, as yet I can see no reason, since the persons are such mystically; the beast mystically so; the street in which they be, mystically such; and the days of their unburied state, to be taken mystically likewise. But we will pass this, and descend to other things.

Fifthly, I will yet add another thing. When Israel was coming out of Babylon; yea, while they were building of the temple of God, which was a figure of our church-state now under the Gospel; they were not only troubled, hindered and molested in their work, but were made for a time to cease, and let the work lie still.

'Now [says the text] when the copy of king Artaxerxes' letter [which he sent to forbid the Jews in their work] was read before Rehum and Shimshai the scribe, and their companions, they went up in haste to Jerusalem unto the Jews, and made them to cease by force and power. Then ceased the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem. So it ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia' (Ezra 4:23,24).

And I pray, since their temple-worship was a type of a new testament church-state and worship, what doth their causing of that work to cease signify to us, but that we must have a time also to cease as they? And since their temple-work was caused to cease before the house was finished, what face could there be at present thereupon, but that, to look to, it was like some deformed, battered, broken building, or as such an one that was begun by foolish builders? Yea, and since the Jews left off to build God's house at the command of the heathens, what did that bespeak, but that they had lost their spirit, were quashed, and so as to their temple-work, killed, as it were, to all intents and purposes? And thus it will be, a little before the church of God shall be set free from the beast, and all his angels: For these things were writ for our admonition, to show us what shall be done hereafter; yea, and whether we believe or disbelieve hereabout, time will bring it to

pass.

I do not question but many good men have writ more largely of this matter: but as I have not seen their books, so I walk not by their rules. If I mistake, the mistakes are only mine; and if I shall merit shame, I alone must bear it.

Some may think they have said enough, when they assert, that for the witnesses to be killed, is, To be dead in law. But I answer, That is not to be overcome. They are here said to be overcome; and that is more than to be dead in law: For a man may be dead in law, and yet not be overcome; and if so, then far enough off from being killed. So then, for as much as they are said to be overcome and killed, it must be more than to be dead in law. Besides, the text supposeth that they had yielded up, as dying men do, their souls, their spirit of life into the hands of God: For it saith concerning them, That at their resurrection, the spirit of life from God entered again into them: Into them, antecedent thereunto. 'and after three days and an half the spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet' (Rev 11:11). thus it was concerning the dry bones, of which mention was made before: 'Then said he unto me, Prophecy unto the wind, prophecy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live' (Eze 37:9). And thus much concerning their killing.

Now, as I said, since in death, the body doth not only lie dead, but the spirit of life departs therefrom; it is to shew, that not only their bodies, their church-state, shall die, [for churches are called bodies, (1 Cor 12:27; Eph 3:6; 4:12; 5:23; Col 1:18)] but that spirit of life that acted those bodies, shall be taken up to God. There shall, for a time, be no living visible church of Christ in the world: A church, but no living church, as to church-state: A church in ruins, but not a church in order: Even as there was once a Christ, but no living Christ in the grave; yet the gates of hell shall not prevail to an utter overthrow thereof, no more than they prevailed to an utter overthrow of Christ; but as one did, so shall the other, revive, and rise again, to the utter confusion and destruction of their enemies: Yea, and as Christ, after his resurrection, was, as to this body, more glorious than he was before; so the witnesses, after their resurrection, shall be more spiritual, heavenly, and exact in all their ways, than they were before they were killed. Resurrections are always attended with new additions of glory; and so shall the church of God, as to her church-state, be in the latter days.

But yet the beast shall not altogether have his will, (if that at all was his will) that these witnesses, in this second war, should be conquered to a compliance with Antichrist in his foolish and vain religion: For it is not with dead men to comply; but as they are dead to their own church-state, so they are to his. When the Jews had killed Christ, it was beyond all the art of hell to cause that his body should see corruption; so when the beast has killed the witnesses, he shall not be able to corrupt them with any of his vices.

Hence you find, that not the witnesses, but the dwellers upon the earth were them that danced after the devil's pipe, when he had fulfilled their murder.

Nor doth this murder, as to the fulfilling of it in those nations where the woman sitteth, seem to be a great way off, if all be true that from foreign parts some have said: For what a withdrawing of God and of his Spirit is there already in some of the churches of God! The word worketh not that sound repentance which it was wont to do: Preachers preach for little, but to spend themselves, as men that are wounded do when with groans they let out their life. Where (say some) is the spirit and life of communion? And where that practical holiness that formerly used to be seen in the houses, lives and conversations of professors? The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint already; and how long will it be before churches die of the wound that the beast has given them, time must make appear: But die I perceive they must; for if the wound already given will not kill, repeated blows shall.

By all that I have said, I do not deny but that many of the people of God may die corporeally, by the hand of the beast, in this second war that shall be made by him against the witnesses. But should as many more die, that will not prove that that death will be that that by the killing of the witnesses is intended.

Some thing I would bestow upon the reader, for him to carry with him as a memorandum, while he reads this account of things: As,

First, This victory of the beast, is not to be until the witnesses have finished their testimony; and so by all that he shall do, he shall not hinder the revelation of any of the truths that they either were to bring to light, or to confirm by their witness-bearing.

Witnesses are not always bound to speak: There is a time 'to keep silence' (Eccl 3:7), and 'thou shalt be dumb' (Eze 3:26). But how shall we know when this time is come?

1. When a sufficient testimony has been given for Christ, and against Antichrist, before the God of heaven; for he must be the judge.
2. When her enemies forbear to plead against her by argument, and rather betake themselves to blows (Matt 10:19).
3. When the spirit of testimony-bearing is taken from the church; for that is not essential to Christianity, but is given and taken away as there is occasion.
4. When testimony-bearing becomes a vain or needless repetition, when they have heard sufficiently of things before (John 9:27).

Secondly, This victory of the beast shall not invalidate or weaken their testimony; no, not in the eyes of the world; for they will still remember, and have a reverence for it: This is intimated by this, That 'they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations--(that are neither the witnesses, nor they that in the next verse are called the inhabitants, or they that dwell upon the earth,)--shall not suffer their dead bodies to be (buried, or be) put in graves' (Rev 11:9).

Thirdly, This shall not lengthen the reign and tranquility of the antichristian kingdom; nor frustrate, drive back (or cause to tarry)

the glorious freedom and liberty of the saints. But some may say, This will be a SAD day.

So it will, and gloomy; but it will be but short, and 'the righteous shall have dominion over them next morning.' 'Twill last but three days and an half; nor shall it come, but for the sins of churches and saints, and to hasten the downfall of the kingdom of the beast, and for the sweetening to the church her future mercies. Christ Jesus, our Lord, in answer to the question of his disciples, about the destruction of Jerusalem, presented them with a relation of many sad things; but when he was come even to the hearts of men, and had told them 'that they should fail for fear': He said, 'when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh' (Luke 21:25-28).

'Tis as ordinary as for the light to shine, for God to make black and dismal dispensations, to usher in bright and pleasing [ones]; yea, and the more frightful that is which goes before, the more comforting is that which follows after. Instances in abundance might be given as to this, but at present let this suffice that is here upon the paper before us; namely, the state of the witnesses, with their glorious resurrection.

FIFTH SIGN.

Fifthly, Another sign of the approach of the ruin of Antichrist, will be this: The great joy that will be in her, and among her disciples, when they shall see that the witnesses are slain, and lie dead upon the spot: 'And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwell on the earth' (Rev 11:10). Babylon has been always a merry city, and her disciples merry men; but the poor church of Christ has been solitary, and as a wife forsaken; her tears upon her cheeks bear her witness, and so doth her sackcloth-weed.

Hence our Babylon, under the name of Nineveh, is called, 'the rejoicing city' (Zeph 2:15). Only her joy is distinguished from that which is the joy of God's people, by these two things.

First, Either she rejoiceth in outward and carnal glory, or else in the ruin of the church of God. This last, to wit, the supposed ruin of the church of God, is that which will be now the cause of her glorying. And this is the joy that God complaineth of, and for the which he said that he would punish Babylon: 'Chaldea shall be a spoil: All that spoil her shall be satisfied, saith the Lord. Because ye were glad, because ye rejoiced, O ye destroyers of mine heritage,' &c. (Jer 50:10,11). The joy therefore of Babylon, Antichrist; the joy that she shall conceive in her heart upon the slaughter of the witnesses, is a sure sign of her unavoidable ruin and destruction. These two prophets tormented her; they were to Babylon as Mordecai was to Haman, a continual plague and eye-sore: As also was David to the wretched Saul: But now they are overcome, now they are killed; now she rejoiceth, and maketh merry. And this her joy was of old prefigured by them that in her spirit have gone before her: As, First, When the Philistines had, as they thought, for ever overcome Samson, that Nazarite of God, how joyful were they of the victory! 'Then the lords of the Philistines gathered them together for to offer a great sacrifice unto Dagon their god,

and to rejoice: for they said, Our god hath delivered Samson our enemy into our hand. And when the people saw him, [saw him in chains] They praised their god: for they said, Our god hath delivered into our hands our enemy, and the destroyer of our country, which slew many of us' (Judg 16:23,24). Poor Samson! While thou hadst thy locks, thy liberty, and thine eyes, thou didst shake the pillar that did bear up their kingdom! But now they have conquered thee, how great is their joy! How great is their joy, and how near their downfall! This therefore is a joy that is like that we have under consideration, to wit, the joy of them that dwell upon the earth; for that the witnesses that did bear up the name of God in the world, were overcome and killed.

Secondly, Like to this, is that which you read of in the first book of Samuel, concerning the men that had burnt David's Ziklag. Ziklag was poor David's place of safety; nor had he any else but that under the whole heaven: But the children of the east came upon it, and took it; set it on fire, and carried thence all David's substance, with his wives and his children. (Very ill done to a man in affliction; to a man that went always in fear of his life, because of the rage of his master Saul.) But how were they that had got the victory? Oh! joyful, and glad, and merry at heart at the thoughts of the richness of the booty? 'Behold, they were spread abroad upon all the earth, eating and drinking, and dancing, because of all the great spoil that they had taken out of the land of the Philistines (from Ziklag) and out of the land of Judah' (1 Sam 30:16). Here again you find a joy and merriment like these that we have under consideration, and that upon such like accounts. Nothing pleases the wicked more, than to see the godly go down the wind; for their words, and lives, and actions are a plague and a torment to them: As 'tis said of these two prophets, 'They tormented them that dwelt on the earth.'

Thirdly, While the church of God lay dead in Babylon, and as bones exceeding dry; what a trampling upon them was there by Belshazzar a little before his death! He called for his golden and silver vessels that his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple of God that was at Jerusalem, (those holy vessels once dedicated to the worship and service of God) that his princes, his wives and his concubines might drink therein. An high affront to heaven: 'They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone' (Dan 5:4). And all to shew what a conquest, as he thought, he had got over the God of heaven, and over his people that dwelt in Jerusalem, and over his ordinances and vessels used in his worship and service: Yea, this he did with such joy that was not usual, as is intimated by his doing of it before 'a thousand of his lords,' and that till he had drank himself drunken. But all this while, as was hinted before, the church of God, as it were, lay dead at his feet; or as the phrase is, 'as bones exceeding dry.' This too will be the joy of the beast and his followers in the latter days; they will make war with the witnesses; they shall overcome them, and kill them; and when that is done, they shall rejoice over them, and make merry. But as Belshazzar soon after this, saw the handwriting that made his knees knock together; and as he lived not to see the light of another day; so 'twill be with the beast and his followers; the next news that we hear upon this mirth and jollity, is, the tenth part of his kingdom falls, and so on till the whole is ruined.

Thirdly, Moab also, in the day that Israel was taken captive by their enemies, could not forbear but skip for joy, so glad was he in his heart thereat. But what saith the jealous Lord? 'Make ye him drunken: for he magnified himself against the Lord: Moab also shall--be in derision: For was not Israel (saith God) a derision unto thee? was he found among thieves? for since thou spakest of him, thou skippedst for joy' (Jer 48:26,27). Of all things, God cannot away with this: For when the wicked would rejoice that they have been suffered to make havoc of the church of God, they deny the wisdom and power by which they were permitted to do this, and offer sacrifice to their own net and drag (Hab 1:16); which provoketh the holiness of Israel: 'Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? As if the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up, or as if the staff should lift up itself, as if it were no wood.' But what follows? Why, burning and consuming of soul and body of them that do such a thing (Isa 10:15-18). And this text I the rather bring, because 'tis to be the portion of Antichrist.

And therefore let this be a caution to the men that wonder after the beast, to caution them to repentance, for he will assuredly go into perdition. What! shall the witnesses of God be killed! Shall the beast stand glorying over them while they are dead, with his feet in their neck? and shall none be angry at it? Let them that love themselves look to themselves: God will be concerned, and will assuredly for this quickly put a period to the kingdom and reign of Antichrist (Jer 50:13).

And although this glorying mistress of iniquity, this Antichrist and Babylon, may say that her power is the hammer of the whole earth; yet God will cut him in sunder, and break him in pieces with his bout-hammers,¹³ with the kings¹⁴ of the earth, that he will use to do this work withal; that is, when this last sign is fulfilled: I call it the last sign; I find none that doth intervene betwixt the slaying of the witnesses, and the beginnings of the ruin of Antichrist but this.

But a little to comment upon their joy, as the Holy Ghost doth set it forth. The cause of their joy we have touched already; which was, for that they had slain their tormentors. For, as was shewed you, the witnesses had been their tormentors: But when they shall overcome them, and kill them, they rejoice, make merry, and send gifts one to another.

This repeating, and repeating with aggravation, doth manifest, and at that day their joy will be exceeding great: 'They shall rejoice, and make merry,' &c. They shall rejoice over them, over their slain, their enemies, their tormenting enemies. This joy therefore, is a joy that flows from victory, from victory after a war that has lasted a thousand two hundred and threescore years. They shall rejoice, as they do that have a most potent, vexatious, and tormenting enemy lying dead at their foot, and as those that ride in triumph over them. They shall therefore rejoice as conquerors used to do, who make the slaughters of their spoiled enemies the trophy of their joy.

For the devil, that great deceiver of mankind, will so flush up and bewitch the men that wonder after the beast, with the victory

that they shall get over the faithful witnesses for God and his Son, that they will think ('twill never be day) that the victory is so complete, so universal, so thorough, that the conquest must be lasting. And from sense and reason they will have ground to think so; for who now is left in the world any more to make head against them? but here comes in that which will utterly spoil this joy; these conquered, killed, dead men must come to life again, and then what's become of their joy? 'And great fear fell upon them which saw them' (Rev 11:11). Wherefore, this joy must fade and vanish: But, I say, the followers of the beast will be far from thinking so; for they will 'rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts one to another,' concluding that these tormentors shall never torment them more. But Jacob's blessing upon his son Gad, shall be fulfilled upon these witnesses: 'Gad [saith he] a troop shall overcome him: but he shall overcome at the last' (Gen 49:19). So then these conquerors must not always rejoice, though they will suppose they shall, and also make merry too.

'And make merry.' To make merry, is more than to rejoice. To rejoice, doth shew the present act of the soul; but to make merry, is to use the means as will keep this joy alive, and on foot. Joy is one thing, and the continuance of it is another (1 Sam 25:36). Joy may be begotten by a conceit, a thought; but it cannot be maintained so; because deliberation will come in and spoil it (Esth 5:4), if sufficient means is not used to continue it: wherefore he adds, They rejoiced over them, 'And made merry.'

And there are five things that are usually made use of to keep up wicked joy. 1. There is the merriment of music (Luke 15:25,32). 2. The merriment of feasting (Judg 19:6,9). 3. The merriment of laughter (Eccl 10:19). 4. The merriment of fleshly solace (Jer 31:4). 5. Revenge upon a supposed enemy (2 Sam 13:28). So then, by these five things we see what is the way that sinful joy is maintained in the hearts of wicked men; and also by what means the limbs and brats of Antichrist will keep up that joy that at first will be conceived in their hearts at the thought that now they have killed their tormentors. They shall have music. They shall have feasting. They shall have laughter. They shall have fleshly solace. And they shall have their fill, for the time, of revenge. Thus therefore shall they rejoice over them, and make merry, all the time of that little, short everlasting that they are to live in the world.

'And make merry.' To make merry, to make wicked mirth, there must be a continual fraternity, or brotherhood in iniquity, maintained among them, and that where none may come to interrupt; and that they will be capable of doing any where then, for that their tormentors will be dead. Wickedness shall walk with open face in those days; for then there will be none alive for God and his ways; wherefore, the beast and his train may do what they will: now will be the time for men to live carelessly and wantonly, and to make their wantonness their joy, (after the manner of the Zidonians) for there will be none to put them to shame.

'And shall send gifts one to another.' This is another token of their gladness, and also a means to buoy them up still. And it will be a sign that they have joined hand in hand to do this wickedness, not dreaming of the punishment that must follow. This sending of gifts to each other, and that after they have slain these two

prophets, doth also declare that they will be far from repentance, for the commission of so great an offence. Nay, it signifies further, that they were resolved, and determined to quench all manner of convictions one in another, that might arise in their hearts for the sin which they had committed: for a gift blinds the eyes of the wise, and perverts the judgment of the righteous; how much more then will it stifle and choke appearances of such upon the spirits of wicked men! I question not at all but many have been, by the favours and gifts of wicked men, drawn down into the belly of hell.

Now what these gifts will be, either as to kind or quantity, that I can say nothing to: but probably, whatever they will be, there will be but little of their own cost in them. Victors and conquerors do used to visit their friends with their spoils won in battle, with the spoil of the enemies of their God (Ezra 10:7).

And this was David's way, after he had recovered the loss that he had sustained at the burning of his Ziklag; he sent to his friends of what he had taken from his enemies, as token of victory: 'David sent of the spoil (says the text) unto the elders of Judah, even to his friends, saying, Behold a present for you of the spoils of the enemies of the Lord' (1 Sam 30:26); And why may not those we have now under consideration, do so to their god, and their friends also? Spoiling is like to be one of the last of the mischiefs that Antichrist shall do to the church of God in this world: And methinks, since the beast will have power to overcome, and to kill, he should also have power to take away (Dan 11:33): 'Hast thou killed, and also taken possession?' said the prophet to wicked Ahab.

However, whatever their gifts may be, and at whose cost soever bought, 'tis a sign their hearts will be open, they shall send gifts one to another: their merry days will then be come, and their enemies will then be dead at their feet; wherefore, now they will have nothing to do but to rejoice over them, and to make merry, and to send gifts one to another.

Thus as to sense and reason, all shall be hush, all shall be quiet and still: the followers of the Lamb shall be down; the followers of the Beast be up, cry peace and safety, and shall be as secure as an hard heart, false peace, and a deceitful devil can make them. But behold! While they thus 'sing in the windows,' death is straddling over the threshold! (Zeph 2:14). While they are crying peace and safety, sudden destruction cometh: By that they have well settled themselves at their table with Adonijah (1 Kings 1), they shall hear it proclaimed with sound of trumpet, the witnesses are risen again.

Now the Christians' pipes will go again, and surely the earth will be rent with the sound of their shouts and acclamations, while they cry with joyful sound, 'The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever' (Rev 11:15).

But woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with them; for the Lord Jesus will now begin to shew his jealousy, and to make known his indignation towards those that have thus cruelly slain his prophets, digged down his altars, and made such havoc of the afflicted

church of God (Isa 66:14). Now will he whet his glittering sword, and his hand shall take hold on vengeance, that he may render a recompence to his enemies, and repay them that hate him (Deu 32:41).

But this he will not do immediately by himself, but by such instruments as have been spoken of before: of which more particularly to treat, shall be that I shall next take in hand.

OF THE INSTRUMENTS THAT GOD WILL USE TO BRING ANTICHRIST TO HIS RUIN.

Although I have hinted at this before, yet it may be convenient briefly to touch it again. Antichrist, as I have told you, consisteth of soul and body, and must be destroyed by such instruments as may most properly be applied to each. Further, As to the soul, spirit or life of Antichrist, and its destruction, of that we have also spoken already: It remains then that now we discourse of the ruin of his body and flesh.

I then take it, That the destruction of her flesh shall come by the sword, as managed in the hands of kings, who are God's ministers for the punishment of evil deeds, and the praise of them that do well (Rom 13). Not that the church, even as a church, shall be quite exempt and have therein no hand at all; for she, even as such, shall with her faith and prayers help forward that destruction.

The church therefore, as a church, must use such weapons as are proper to her as such; and the magistrate, as a magistrate, must use such weapons as are proper to him as such. When the church of Israel were prisoners in Babylon, they did not fight their way through their foes, and the countries to Jerusalem; but waited in their captivated state with patience, until the kings of the Medes and Persians came to deliver them. Nor is it to be sleighted, but to be thought on seriously, that before there was an Israelite captive in Babylon, their deliverer Cyrus was prophesied of: which Cyrus did afterwards come and take Babylon, and deliver the captives, as it was foretold he should. He saith unto Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid' (Isa 44:28). And again, 'Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden to subdue nations before him, &c. I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives, not for price nor reward, saith the Lord of Hosts' (Isa 45:1,13). And this accordingly he did, to wit, when the time was come; as may be seen in those holy records where these things are made mention of. Indeed, as I said, the church is not excluded (2 Chron 36:2); she may, and ought, with her faith and prayer, and holy life, to second this work of kings (Ezra 1:2,3). Wherefore, when God speaks of bringing down the lofty city and of laying it low in the dust by the church, he saith, they shall do it by their feet, and with their steps: 'The foot shall tread it down, even the feet of the poor, and the steps of the needy' (Isa 26:6).

By feet and steps, I understand the good lives of the children of God: but now, when kings come to deal with her, as kings, they serve her as Samuel served Agag, as a judge, 'cut her in pieces

with their swords': or as you have it elsewhere, 'They make her desolate and naked; they eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.' The sword will be put into their hands for this very purpose. Thus therefore must their deliverance be begun.

It is also to be considered, That after these first kings of the Medes and Persians had broken the yoke of the king of Babylon from off the neck of the captive church, and had given her license to go to her place to build her temple and city, and to sacrifice there according to the law of their God, (as both in Ezra and Nehemiah we read;) and when their work was hindered by under-officers, or they endeavoured so to do, they pleaded the license that they received to build and sacrifice by the decree of the first kings, and so finished their deliverance: They went not on in headstrong manner, as if they regarded neither king nor Caesar: 'But Zerubbabel, and Joshua, and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel, said unto them,' that sought to hinder their work, 'Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God; but we ourselves will build unto the Lord God of Israel, as king Cyrus the king of Persia hath commanded us' (Ezra 4:3). And as they said, so also they did: 'The elders of the Jews builded, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they builded, and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the commandment of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia' (Ezra 6:14). Yea, they did not only accept of the kindness of kings, but did acknowledge that kindness with thanksgiving, as a gift of the God of heaven: for the kings had commanded and given leave to the Jews to go to Jerusalem, to build their temple, and to do sacrifice there, according to the counsel of the priests that were at Jerusalem, and according to the law of God that they had in their hand (Ezra 7:13,14). For Artaxerxes sent Ezra the priest to inquire after the condition that Jerusalem and Judah was in, according to, or by the law of God that was in his hand (verse 14). And he had license also further to do with the king's silver and gold, which he gave of the service of the house of the Lord, 'according to the will, word or law of HIS God.' 'And thou, Ezra, [says the king] after the wisdom of thy God, [that is, after his word] that is in thine hand, set magistrates and judges, which may judge all the people that are beyond the river, all such as know the laws of thy God; and teach ye them that know them not. And whosoever will not do the law of thy God, [that is, worship, and walk by the rule of his testament,] and the law of the king, [that is, shall refuse to give Ezra such things as by the king was appointed for Ezra's help in the furthering of the worship of God, according to the law of his God,] let judgment be executed speedily upon him whether it be unto death, or to banishment, or to confiscation of goods, or to imprisonment' (Ezra 7:25,26). This was therefore a wonderful gracious license that the king now gave to Ezra: he imposed nothing upon him or the Jews in matters of religion and worship, but left him and them wholly to the law, will, and word of God, only he laid check upon wicked and ungodly people: that if they did things contrary to the laws of Ezra's God, or did sleight the king's law, as aforesaid, that then such penalties and pains should be inflicted upon them.

To the same purpose was the decree of Cyrus, and that of Darius, to put it in execution. Also the penalty enacted against such offenders, was full as sharp and severe: 'Also I have made a

decree [said the king,] that whosoever shall alter this word, let timber be pulled down from his house, and being set up, let him be hanged thereon; and let his house be made a dunghill for this.--And the God that hath caused his name to dwell there destroy all kings and people, that shall put to their hand to alter and to destroy this house of God which is at Jerusalem. I Darius have made a decree; let it be done with speed' (Ezra 6:11,12).

Indeed, sometimes a stop was put to this work by the kings, and the Jews were made to cease by force and power, (Ezra 4:23,24) the which the good people did bear with patience (Ezra 4:11-21): also they waited to see their God go before them among the kings, who at length took away Artaxerxes, who for a time had put a stop to the work, and brought in another, who gave leave that with speed it should be set on foot again (Ezra 5).

The Jews did also in these vacancies, or times in the which hindrances were put, carry it very tenderly and lovingly to those kings that at present they were under, submitting of their bodies and their goods to their will, and meekly endured the trial and affliction, serving them with all faithfulness, watching to save their lives from the hands of bloody men. Also when the king's laws, and the law of their God, did at any time come in competition, they would indeed adhere to, and do the law of their God; yet with that tenderness to the king, his crown and dignity, that they could at all times appeal to the righteous God about it (Dan 6:22). Nor did they lose by so doing; yea, they prospered; for by this means Mordecai was made a great man, and a saviour of his people (Esth 2:21-23) By this means also was Daniel made a great man, and helpful to his brethren (Dan 5:29).

Kings, I say, must be the men that must down with Antichrist, and they shall down with her in God's time.

God hath begun to draw the hearts of some of them from her already, and he will set them, in time, against her round about. If therefore they do not that work so fast as we would have them, let us exercise patience and hope in God: 'tis a wonder that they go so fast as they do, since the concerns of whole kingdoms lie upon their shoulders, and that there are so many Sanballats and Tobias's to flatter with them and misinform them concerning the people that are delivered but in part. See what an ugly account was given of Jerusalem by the enemies of the Jews, even then when they were in the hands of their deliverers: 'Be it known unto the king, that the Jews which came up from thee to us, are come unto Jerusalem, building the rebellious and bad city, and have set up the walls thereof, and joined the foundations.--Be it known now unto the king, that, if this city be builded, and the walls set up again, then will they not pay toll, tribute, and custom, and so thou shalt endamage the revenue of the kings' (Ezra 4:12,13). Oh! what a be it known, be it known, is here! But were not these gentlemen more afraid of losing their own places and preferments, than of the king's losing of his toll and custom? But the whole was a lie, though it hindered the work for a time, and the patience of the people, and their loyalty to the king, did conquer and overcome all.

I speak the more to this, because, (as I have said) I believe that by magistrates and powers we shall be delivered and kept from

Antichrist; and because God has already begun to do it by such, by which also she shall be destroyed: and I have a few things to present to good men, to be conversant in, in such a day as this.

Let the king have verily a place in your hearts, and with heart and mouth give God thanks for him; he is a better saviour of us than we may be aware of, and may have delivered us from more deaths than we can tell how to think. We are bidden to 'give thanks to God for all men, and in the first place, for kings, and all that are in authority' (1 Tim 2:1,2).

Be not angry with them, no, not in thy thought; but consider, if they go not on in the work of reformation so fast as thou wouldest they should, the fault may be thine; know that thou also hast thy cold and chill frames of heart, and sittest still when thou shouldest be up and doing.

Pray for kings to the God of heaven, who has the hearts of kings in his hand: and do it 'without wrath, and doubting'; without wrath, because thy self is not perfect; and without doubting, because God governeth them, and has promised to bring down Antichrist by them.

Pray for the long life of the king.

Pray that God would always give wisdom and judgment to the king.

Pray that God would discover all plots and conspiracies against his person and government.

Pray also that God would make him able to drive away all evil and evil men from his presence; and that he may be a greater countenancer than ever, of them that are holy and good, and wait and believe, that God that has begun his quarrel with Babylon, Antichrist, the mother of Antichrist, the whore; would in his own time, and in his own way, bring her down by the means which he has appointed.

I do confess myself one of the old-fashion professors, that covet 'to fear God, and honour the king.' I also am for blessing of them that curse me, for doing good to them that hate me, and for praying for them that despitefully use me, and persecute me. And have had more peace in the practice of these things, than all the world are aware of. I only drop this, because I would shew my brethren that I also am one of them; and to set them right that have wrong thoughts of me, as to so weighty matters as these.¹⁵

Now these kings whose hearts God shall set to destroy Antichrist, shall do it without those inward reluctancies that will accompany inferior men: they shall be stript of all pity and compassion. Hence they are compared to the mighty waves of the sea (Jer 51:42), which saith, when the wrecked and dying mariners cry out for mercy for themselves, and for their children, I am a sea; 'I travail not, nor bring forth children, neither do I nourish up young men, nor bring up virgins' (Isa 23:4,5): I have therefore no pity for these, or any of them. Therefore they must be swallowed up of this sea, and sink like a stone in the midst of these mighty waters.

And thus much for the means by which God will destroy the body

and flesh of Antichrist.

OF THE CAUSES OF THE RUIN OF ANTICHRIST.

Although the causes of the ruin of Antichrist be to some conspicuous enough, yet to some they may be otherwise; yea, and will to all kings and people whose eyes shall be held, that they may not see the judgment, in the reasonableness and equitableness thereof; and these shall wail when they see 'the smoke of her--torment'; and these shall cry, Alas! Alas! (Rev 18:10). Wherefore, for further edification, as I have treated of the man of sin already; so will I now, of the causes of his downfall. And,

FIRST CAUSE.

First, He must down, for that he hath usurped, and taken the name and attributes of God upon himself: He hath said, 'I am God': He hath set in the temple of God, 'shewing himself that he is God'; yea, and that in contempt and scorn of any other, 'exalting himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped' (2 Thess 2); yea, hath cried down all gods but himself. Wherefore it must needs be, that he be brought to judgment, that the truth of his saying may be proved. And for this cause he is threatened, under the name of the prince of Tyrus: 'Because thine heart is lifted up (saith the Lord) and thou hast said, I am a god,--therefore I will bring strangers upon thee, the terrible of the nations: and they shall draw their swords against the beauty of thy wisdom, and they shall defile thy brightness. They shall bring thee down to the pit, and thou shalt die the deaths of them that are slain in the midst of the seas. Wilt thou yet say before him that slayeth thee, I am god? but thou shalt be a man, and no god, in the hand of him that slayeth thee' (Eze 28:2,7-9).

If God will not give his name or glory to another, be sure he will not be under another; but this to have, and thus to do, Antichrist has attempted. But how? In that he has been so bold as to prescribe and impose a worship besides, and without reverence of that which God has prescribed and imposed: For to do this, is, to make one's self a God. 'Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them': For he that thus doth, is an idolater; and he that these things doth impose, is one that shews himself a God. But this doth Antichrist do: And 'tis worth the noting, That God forbids not only images, but the likeness of any thing; books, altars, fancies, imaginations, or any thing in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, to bow down to, or to make them a means to worship or come to God by, if he has not commanded nor tolerated them in his holy word.

Thus saith the Lord: And, I am the Lord, is the stamp, the seal, and sign of all true rules of worship; and therefore it is so often repeated both in Moses, and in the prophets, where God commandeth worship to be performed, and imposeth the means and methods of it. Now this, Thus saith the Lord, Antichrist has rejected; and I am the Lord, he hath assumed to himself: and therefore without the law, the word and commandment, hath framed and imposed a worship, exalting himself in the temple of God, although he is but the man of sin, above all that is called God, or that is worshiped.

Nor is he in this his so foul a fact, without them that adore, worship his image, and wonder after him; yea, he hath got by this means almost the whole world to himself, who say, 'Who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him?' (Rev 13:4). And that they might shew their resolvedness to stand by him, they receive his mark in their forehead, or in their hand; His mark; that is, they either openly or seriously become his disciples, and worship him according to the rules, methods, and ways that he hath prescribed. Wherefore, these with him, are also to drink of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God: 'If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb' (Rev 14:9,10).

But, I say, for that Antichrist hath thus taken the place of God, prescribed and imposed a worship as a God, got the world to worship and wonder after him as after a God. Therefore shall he die the death of the uncircumcised, both in the soul, spirit, body, or flesh of Antichrist; therefore will God enlighten, and gather, and set the kings and nations against him, that both he and his may be buried, and have their dolesome withdrawing-rooms from the world in the sides of the pit's mouth.

SECOND CAUSE.

Secondly, Antichrist must be destroyed, because he hath set himself against the Son of God; against the Father, and against the Son. He had a spite against the Son betimes, even then when he came forth but in little bits, when he attempted to deny that he was come in the flesh (1 John 4:1-4). But seeing he could make no earnings of that, he hath changed his methods, and seeks to run him out and down by other means and ways: because therefore he hath set himself against the Son of God, the king, therefore he must die. That he hath set himself against the Son of God, is also evident; for he hath his name from thence: He is therefore called Antichrist. That he hath set himself against him, is yet further evident; for that he hath endeavoured to take from him his headship over, and his offices for and in the church, which is his body. He hath plainly endeavoured to be head, for that he hath striven to take his wife from him, and to cause that she should be called HIS: Yea, he hath endeavoured by all inventions to prostrate her to his lusts, to deflower her, and to make her an adulteress. He has been worse than Pharaoh, who took Abraham's wife (Gen 12); and worse than Abimelech, who lusted after Isaac's (Gen 26): Yea, worse than Phalti, who run away with David's (1 Sam 25:44); forasmuch as she is higher, beloved better, and cost more than did any of these. Would it not be counted an high affront, for a base inferior fellow, to call himself the head of the queen? Yet thus has Antichrist done, and worse; he has called himself the head of the universal church of God.

And as he has attempted to be head in his stead, so to be king, priest, and prophet.

[1.] He has attempted to wrest his sceptre and kingdom from him, in that he hath endeavoured to thrust himself into his throne,

which is the heart and conscience of his people. The heart and conscience is that which Christ claimeth for his own proper and peculiar seat: 'My son, give me thy heart.' 'That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith' (Eph 3:17). In this therefore the church is not to be for another man, so will he be for her; but this throne Antichrist has lusted for, attempted to take, and made war with Christ and his church, because they would not yield up to him this glorious throne of his, and therefore he must die.

[2.] He hath intruded upon the priestly office of Christ, hath called himself high-priest; though the Lord hath said, 'Because thou has rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children' (Hosea 4:6). But he will make himself a priest; he hath invented sacrifices for the quick and the dead: he hath put, as he presumes, merit and worth into these sacrifices; he hath commanded that those that worship, should have faith in, and expect benefit by these sacrifices, although he offereth to his God nought else but the flesh of the hog, and of the mouse, with the broth of his abominable things (Isa 66:17). Many and sundry ways he hath set himself up to be high-priest, though God knows no high-priest but one, though the church ought to know no high-priest but one; yea, though no high-priest but one can approach God's mercy-seat, to do for us the necessary and desired work.

[3.] He hath intruded upon the prophetic office of Jesus Christ. What else means his pretences to infallibility?¹⁶ And that too when he imposes unwritten verities, abominable traditions, blasphemous rites and ceremonies; and forbids or dispenseth with the holy commands of God: Yea, when he enforceth these his Omrian statutes, and doth impose the works of the house of Ahab (Micah 6:16), he doth all in the name of the Lord Christ, when himself hath set himself in his place, and in his room. This is mystery Babylon, the mystery of iniquity: This is Antichrist's soul and body, and as such, must be destroyed. But,

THIRD CAUSE.

Thirdly, Antichrist must be destroyed, because he hath blasphemed against the Holy Ghost, and so set himself above the Father, the Son, the Spirit; against ALL that is called God. The Holy Ghost is that Spirit of truth that Christ has promised to give unto his church, to help her in the understanding of his holy word, and to enable her to believe, and walk humbly and holily before God and man. The spirit of Antichrist is that spirit of error that hath puffed up the false church into a conceit of herself, and unscriptural worship; and that hath made this false church, which is his body, to ascribe all the horrible things and acts thereof, to the wisdom, guidance, directions or operations of the Holy Ghost: As,

1. In all her unscriptural councils, assemblies and convocations, they blasphemously father what they do upon the Holy Ghost, and make him the inventor and approver thereof.

2. She also blasphemeth the Holy Ghost, in accusing and condemning the holy scriptures of insufficiency, for that she saith, though it is a rule, yet but an imperfect one; one deficient, one that is not able to make the man of God perfect in all things, without

the traditions, inventions, and blasphemous helps of antichristian wisdom.

3. She hath also blasphemed the Holy Ghost, in that she hath set up her own church-government, offices, officers and discipline: None of all which is the church of Christ directed to by the wisdom of the Spirit of God in his testament.

4. She hath also sinned against the Holy Ghost, in that she hath, as it were, turned the Holy Ghost out of doors, in concluding that he, without the works of the flesh, is not sufficient to govern the hearts of worshippers, in the service and worship of God.

5. She hath also thus sinned, in that she hath wrought many lying miracles in the face of the world, and imposed them upon her disciples for the confirming of her errors and blasphemous opinions, to the confronting of the true miracles wrought by the Holy Ghost; and also to the concluding, that there was an insufficiency in those that were true, to confirm the truth, without the addition of hers; which she has wrought by the power of Satan, and the spirit of delusion, only to confirm her lies.

6. She hath sinned against the Holy Ghost, in that she hath, with Jeroboam the son of Nebat, striven against the judgments wherewith God hath punished her; to call her back from her wicked way; and persisted therein, to the effectual proving of herself to be the lewd woman (2 Kings 13:4-7,23,24).

7. She hath sinned, by labouring to hide all her wickedness, by lies, dissimulations, and filthy equivocations of her priests, friars, Jesuits, &c. I say, her labouring to hide the wickedness that she hath committed against kings, countries, nations, kingdoms and people. She hath hid these things by the means or persons made mention of before; as by the tail; for they indeed are the tail of the beast, that cover his most filthy parts: The prophet that speaketh lies, he is the tail (Isa 9:15). But,

FOURTH CAUSE.

Fourthly, Antichrist must be destroyed, for the horrid outrage, and villainous murders that she hath committed upon the bodies of the saints. For there is none, as to these things, for cruelty, to be compared with the church of Antichrist, and her followers: For upon whom hath not her cruelty been shewed; have they never so little stood in her way, though never so innocently and honestly by so doing, stood to the truth and verity of God? Yea, the promoting of her own superstition, idolatry, and blasphemous rites and ceremonies, have been so pursued by her, that she has waded through a sea of innocent blood for the accomplishment thereof.

The poor church of God is a sensible bleeding witness of this, and so has been for hundreds of years together; witness the chronicles of all nations where she hath had to do; yea, and the sackcloth and ashes, and tears, and widows, and fatherless children, and their cries, of all which the holy word of God is a sufficient confirmation; 'And in her,' when God shall come to make inquisition for blood, 'will be found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth' (Rev 18:24). And yet has she such a whore's forehead, such a blindness in her judgment,

and such an hard and obdurate heart, that it is not possible she should ever repent. Murders have been so natural to her, and in them her hand has been so exercised, that it is now become a custom, a trade, a pastime to her, to be either in the act, or laying some foundation for murders: Witness those plots, designs conspiracies, and frequent attempts that are, one or other of them, continually on foot in the world for the commission of murders.

Nay, the text last mentioned seems to import, that blood is so natural to her, that she sticketh not at any condition, sex, age, or degree, so she may imbrue her hands in blood. In her was found the blood of saints and prophets, and of all other carnal, natural, ignorant, graceless men that have been slain upon the earth. It is she that sets kings and kingdoms at variance: It is she that sets parents and children at variance, by her abuse of the word of our Lord and Christ. And besides, is it not easy, if we do but consider those bloody massacres that have been committed by her hand, both in France, Ireland, Piedmont, and in several places besides, without wronging of her, to conclude, that the blood of thousands, that have not known their right hand from their left in religion, hath been shed, to quench, if it might have been, her insatiate thirst after blood. Therefore, for these things shall she be judged, as women that shed blood are judged; because she is an adulteress, and blood is in her hands (Eze 23:45). She hath been as a beast of prey: Nay, worse; for they do but kill and tear for the hunger of themselves, and of their whelps: but she, to satisfy her wanton and beastly lusts. 'They have cast lots for my people; [saith God] and have given a boy for an harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they might drink' (Joel 3:3): and therefore must Antichrist be destroyed. Forbearance is no payment, God's patience is not a sign that he forgetteth to take vengeance; but rather, that he waiteth till his own are come out of her, and until her iniquity is filled up: For then he will execute the judgment written, and will remember, as has been said, the Babylonians, and all their ways. 17

FIFTH CAUSE.

Fifthly, Antichrist must be destroyed, because she hath put out of order, and confounded the rule and government that God has set up in the world. I say, she has put it out of order, and confounded it in all places where she rules; so that it cannot accomplish the design of him that ordained it, To wit, To be a terror to evil works, and a praise to them that do well. Wherefore we read, That those horns or kings where Mystery Babylon sitteth, are upon the heads of that beast that carrieth her, which beast is her protector. Magistracy is God's ordinance, appointed for the good of society, and for the peace and safety of those that are good. But this Antichrist has, where she rules, put all out of order; and no wonder, for she has bepuddled the word of God; no wonder, then, I say, if the foundations of the world be out of course. 'Tis she that hath turned the sword of the magistrate against those that keep God's law: 'Tis she that has made it the ruin of the good and virtuous, and a protection to the vile and base. Wherefore, when the Holy Ghost tells us, that the time is coming in which God will count with the bloody-minded, for the murders that they have committed; he in a manner doth quite excuse the magistrate, saying, 'Woe to the bloody city! it is all full of lies and robbery; the prey departeth not: The noise of a whip, and the noise of the

rattling of the wheels, and of the prancing horses, and of the jumping chariots. The horseman lifteth up both the bright sword, and the glittering spear: and there is a multitude of slain, and a great number of carcases; and there is no end of their corpses; they stumble upon their corpses' (Nahum 3:1-3). But what is the cause of all this slaying, and the reason of this abundance of corpses? Why, it is because of the unsatiable thirst of the bloody city after blood: and, 'Because of the multitude of the whoredoms of the well-favoured harlot, the mistress of witchcrafts, that selleth nations through her whoredoms, and families through her witchcrafts' (verse 4). But doth this bloody city spill this blood by herself simply, as she is the adulterated whore? No, this church has found out a trick; that is to say, to quarrel with Christ in his members; and to persuade the powers where she rules to set ensnaring laws to catch them, and to execute the same upon them.

Thus when the synagogue of Satan, of old, had taken Christ, and accused him, they made Pontius Pilate to condemn and hang him. But God has begun to shew to some of the kings this wickedness, and has prevailed with them to PROTEST against her. And in the mean time, for those that are yet in the bed of love with her, the Holy Ghost doth, in the text last mentioned, and in Revelation 18:24 much excuse them for the blood that they have shed, and for the injuries that they have done to his people; because they have not done it of their mere inclinations, nor in the prosecution of their office, but through the whoredoms and witchcrafts of this well-favoured harlot, who hath with false doctrines, false promises, and causeless curses, prevailed on them to do it. And they have done it, rather of fear than favour. Some indeed have more doted upon her beauty, and have more thoroughly been devoted to her service: But they also had not that aptness to do so of themselves, but have been forced to it by the power of her enchantments: Therefore, I say, the main guilt shall be laid at her door, for that she in chief has deserved it. 'Son of man [says God] take up a lamentation for the princes of Israel.' Why? Because their mother, the church, was at that time adulterated, and become a lioness, had lain down with the heathen, and so brought forth young lions, that is, rulers: 'And she brought up one of her whelps: it became a young lion, and it learned to catch the prey; it devoured men' (Eze 19:1-3). It learnt, It learnt: But of who but of its dam, or of the lioness to whom she had put it to learn to do such things? Therefore they are to be lamented and pitied, rather than condemned, and their mother made to bear the blame. Wherefore it follows, 'She was plucked up in fury, she was cast down to the ground, and the east wind dried up her fruit: her strong rods were broken and withered; the fire consumed them. And now she is planted in the wilderness, (in the provinces of Babylon,) in a dry and thirsty ground. And fire is gone out of a rod of her branches, which hath devoured her fruit, so that he hath no strong rod to be a sceptre to rule. This is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation' (Eze 19:12-14).

SIXTH CAUSE.

Sixthly, Antichrist must be destroyed, because of her exceeding covetousness. Religion, such as it is, is the thing pretended to: But the great things of this world, are the things really intended by her in all her seeming self-denials and devotions. And for this covetousness also it is that this destruction is to fall upon her:

'Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, (to his church) that he may set his nest on high' (Hab 2:9); (for he could not do the one, before he had obtained the other:) for then indeed they began to be high, when they had so inveigled Constantine, that he bestowed upon them much riches and honour; and then it was cried by an angel, and the cry was heard in the city, Constantinople! 'Woe! woe! woe! this day is venom poured into the church of God!' (as both my Lord Cobham and Mr. Fox witness in the book of Acts and Monuments).¹⁸

Nor has any generation since the world began, been so insatiably greedy of gain, as these poor people have been: They have got kingdoms, they have got crowns, they have got,--What have they not got? They have got everything but grace and pardon. Did I say before, that religion is their pretence? Doth not the whole course of their way declare it to their face? Every one of them, from the least even to the greatest, is given to covetousness, from the prophet even to the priest, every one dealeth falsely (Jer 6:13, 8:10): Money, money, as the peddlar cries,¹⁹ broken or whole, is the sinews of their religion: And it is for that they set kingdoms, crowns, principalities, places, preferments, sacraments, pardons, prayers, indulgences, liberty; yea, and souls and bodies of men, women and children, to sale. Yea, it is for this that they have invented so many places, offices, names, titles, orders, vows, &c. It is to get money, to rob countries, that they may make their nests on high. And indeed they have done it, to the amazement of all the world. They are clambered up above kings and princes, and emperors:²⁰ They wear the triple-crown: They have made kings bow at their feet, and emperors, stand barefoot at their gates: They have kicked the crowns of princes from their heads, and set them on again with their toes.²¹ Thus their covetousness has set them high, even above the suns, moons and stars of this world: but to what end? That they may be cast down to hell.

SEVENTH CAUSE.

Seventhly, Antichrist must be destroyed, because he standeth in the way of the setting up of the kingdom of Christ in the world. Many princes were in Edom before there was a king in Israel; and Christ has suffered Antichrist to set up before him. And he standeth in his way, and has so overspread the world in all places, with that which is directly contrary to him, that he cannot set up his kingdom, until that which is Antichrist's is tumbled down to the ground; even as a man whose ground is full of thorns, and briars, and weeds, cannot sow in expectation of a crop, until he hath removed them. And these seeds has Antichrist sown where the kingdom of Christ should stand: 'Upon the land of my people shall come up thorns and briars; yea, upon all the houses of joy in the joyous city: Because the palaces shall be forsaken; the multitude of the city shall be left; the forts and towers shall be for dens for ever, a joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks, [this is to happen to the church of God,] Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest' (Isa 32:13-15). And the antichristian synagogue be turned into a wilderness.

When God came from Egypt with his people, to set up his kingdom in Canaan, he cast out the heathen before them in order thereunto; 'Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the

heathen, and planted it' (Psa 80:8). Wherefore, Antichrist must be removed and destroyed for this: For Antichrist is in flat opposition to Christ, as Tibni was to Omri (1 Kings 16:21,22): Wherefore Antichrist must die. The reason is, because Christ's kingdom shall be peaceable, without molestation; and glorious, without the fumes and fogs of antichristian darkness: Because also, as the world hath seen the manner of the reign of Antichrist, and how tyrannical and outrageous a kingdom his is: so they shall see the reign of Christ, by his word and spirit in his people, how peaceable, how fruitful in blessedness and prosperity his kingdom is. And hence it is that God purposeth to bury Antichrist, before he sets 'glory in the land of the living' (Eze 26:20,21). As also you read in the book of Revelations; for there you find the kingdom of Antichrist was destroyed before the new Jerusalem was set up. When men intend to build a new house, if in the place where the old one stood, they first pull down the old one, raze the foundation, and then they begin their new. Now God, as I said, will have his primitive church-state set up in this world, (even where Antichrist has set up his;) wherefore, in order to this, Antichrist must be pulled down, down stick and stone; and then they that live to see it, will behold the new Jerusalem come down from heaven, as a bride adorned for her husband.

New wine is not put into old bottles, nor a new piece into an old garment; nor shall any of the old anti-scriptural ordinances, ceremonies, rites, or vessels of the man of sin, be made use of, or accounted anything worth, in this day of the kingdom of Jesus Christ. And thus I have shewed you something of Antichrist, of his ruin, and of the manner and signs of the approach thereof; together with the means and causes of his ruin. All which I leave to the judgment of the godly, and beg their instruction where they see me to be out; and shall conclude, after a short word of application.

First, Must Antichrist be destroyed? Then this informs us, that a time is coming wherein there shall be no Antichrist to afflict God's church any more. 'Tis Antichrist, antichristians, and antichristianism, that is the cause of the troubles of Christians, for being Christians. And therefore 'tis from the consideration of this that it is said, men 'shall beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks,' and that they 'shall learn war no more' (Isa 2:4): Yea it is from the consideration of this, that it is said the child shall play with venomous and destroying beasts, and that a little child shall lead the wolf, the leopard, and the young lion, and that the weaned child shall put his hand into the cockatrice's den, and catch no hurt thereby (Isa 11:6-9). For as was said before, 'tis through the instigation of this spirit of error, that the governors of the world have heretofore done hurt to Zion, and I say now again, all things shall turn to their right course, and occupy their places, as do the bodies in the higher orbs.

Secondly, Is Antichrist to be destroyed, and must she have an end? Then this gives us to understand, that a day is coming when Antichrist shall be unknown, not seen, nor felt by the church of God. There are men to be born who shall not know Antichrist, but as they read in the word that such a thing has been. These shall talk of her, as Israel's childrens' children were to talk of Pharaoh, of his cruelty; of his tasks, of his pride, of the Red

Sea, and how he was drowned there: They shall talk of them, as of those that have been long dead; as of those who for their horrible wickedness, are laid in the pit's mouth. This will be some of that sweet chat that the saints shall, at their spare hours, have in time to come. When God has pulled this dragon out of the sea, this leviathan out of his river, and cast his dead carcase upon the open field, then shall those whose ancestors have been put into terrors by him, come flocking to see the monster; and shall rejoice for all the mercy. In that day, the church of God shall say, 'O Lord I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me.--In that day shall ye say, Praise the Lord, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people,' &c. (Isa 12:1,4). O how sweetly did David, and the church in his day, sing of the ruins of the Egyptians, and the deliverances of their fathers, which had been in times of old! (Psa 68). to wit, what God did in Egypt, what he did at the Red Sea; what he did to Sihon, to Og, and to the remnant of the giants: How he divided the waters of Jordan, and gave the land of Canaan in its fruitfulness among his people (Psa 105): How that though Pharaoh and his horsemen and chariots were terrible then, yet now there is nothing left but their souls, their feet, and the palms of their hands; nothing but that which can do no hurt; nothing but what may minister an occasion of joyful remembrance of them (Psa 106; 132).

Thirdly, Is Antichrist to be destroyed? Then this calls aloud to God's people to make haste to come out of her. 'Ho, ho,' says the prophet: He cries out as if the people were asleep: 'Come forth, and flee from the land of the north' (Zech 2:6). The people of God in the latter days will want a heart to come out of her, with that fear of her plagues as they should: Wherefore another says, 'Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins and that ye receive not of her plagues' (Rev 18:4). When Israel was carried into Babylon, 'twas not that they should dwell there for ever: Though they were bid to build them houses, and beget them children there. But when they had built, planted vineyards, and got wives and children there, 'twas hard getting them from thence again: For now they were as it were naturalized to the country, and to the manners of it (Jer 29:4-7). But God will have them out, (but they must not think to carry thence their houses and vineyards on their backs,) or he will destroy them with those destructions wherewith he hath threatened to destroy Babylon itself. Flesh will hang behind, because it favoureth the things of the flesh, plenty of which there is in that country: But they that will live after the flesh must die. 'Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate,--and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty' (2 Cor 6:17,18). But why (some may say) must we come out? I answer, because God has temple-work to do, temple-worship to do, temple-sacrifices to offer, and none of these things can by any means be done, but at Jerusalem. But if you still object and say, 'The Lord has raised us up prophets in Babylon,' and we will not come out; you must not murmur if you feel what is to follow. And that such may know upon what bottom they stand, let them read the 29th chapter of Jeremiah 15-19.

Fourthly, Must Antichrist be destroyed? Then what mean they, who were to appearance once come out, but now are going thither again?

If it cost Lot's wife dear for but looking back, shall not it cost them much dearer, that are going back, that are gone back again? and that, AFTER the angel had fled through the midst of heaven, preaching the gospel to those that dwell on the earth? (Rev 14:6-10). They that received the mark of the beast at first, before this angel came forth, are when compared with these, excusable (Rev 13:16,17): Wherefore, they are not threatened with that smoking wrath, as are these which are here under consideration.

You dread, that which is like to become of them that will be so mad to run into an house, when fire is putting to the gunpowder barrel, in order to its blowing up: Why thus do they, let their pretended cause be what it will, that are returning again to Babel. Are her plagues pleasant or easy to be borne? Or dost thou think that God is at play with thee, and that he threateneth but in jest? Her plagues are death, and mourning, and famine, and fire (Rev 18:8); are these things to be overlooked? And they that, as before is hinted, shall receive the mark of the beast in their forehead, or in their hand, and shall worship him, they, 'the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God' (Rev 14:10): And will this be a delightful draught? Remember how ill God took it, that his people of old, in their hearts, though but in their hearts, went back again into Egypt. You may say, but I have friends, relations, and concerns in Babylon. And, I answer, so had Lot in Sodom (Gen 19:14-16); but for all that, he must either quickly come out, or run the hazard of being burned there with them. But methinks, a people that belong to God, should be willing to leave all to follow him: Besides, his presence is promised at Jerusalem, there also will he accept thy offerings.

Fifthly, Is Antichrist to be destroyed? Then let them that love God, his Son, and his Zion, cry to God, that it may be hastened in its time. One of the songs of Zion is, that Babylon shall be destroyed. The cries of the souls of them that were slain for the witness of Jesus is, that Babylon may be counted with, and that their blood may be revenged upon her. The promise is, that Babylon shall be destroyed: And do we hold our tongues? The church of God will not flourish as it should, until Babylon is destroyed: The world will never be in its right wits, until Babylon is destroyed: The kingdom of Christ will never be set up, in and by his church, as it ought, and shall, until Antichrist is destroyed: There will never be peace upon earth till Antichrist is destroyed: And God has promised that there shall be peace and truth, and glory, when Babylon is destroyed: And do we hold our peace? Besides, your innocency in suffering; your honesty towards God, in your testimony for his truth; the substantial ground which you have for the bottom of your faith, as to things controverted betwixt Antichrist and you, will never be manifested as it will then; and so consequently, you never so brought out to the light, and your enemies never so put to shame as then. 'Then shame shall cover her that said unto thee, Where is the Lord thy God?' Wherefore, as I said, cry unto the Lord, keep not silence, give him no rest, let him not alone, until he has delivered his miserable people out of the mouth of this lion, and from the paw of this bear.

Sixthly, Is Antichrist to be destroyed? Then let us live in the expectation of it; and let this be one of our songs in the house of our pilgrimage. God bids his people, while in Babylon, to let Jerusalem come into their mind (Jer 51:50), and writes to them that

then were in her, to acquaint them that he remembered them still, and would assuredly deliver them from that place and state. And wherefore doth he thus, but to beget an expectation in them of their salvation and deliverance? (Jer 29:13,14). The Lord is so pleased with the faith and expectation of his people, as to this, that they seldom are herein concerned as they should, but he steps in with them, and warms their hearts. The reason is, because the faith of God's people, as to the downfall of Babylon, stands upon as sure a foundation as doth the salvation of their souls; and that next to that, God is as much delighted in what he has purposed to do against Babylon, as in anything else in the earth: And therefore, if you consider it well, the great and glorious promises that are to be fulfilled on earth, are to be fulfilled when Antichrist is dead and buried: These bits are too good even for his children to have, so long as this dog is by, lest he should snatch at the crumbs thereof; wherefore they are reserved until he is gone: For thus saith the Lord, 'That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon, I will visit you, and perform my good word towards you, in causing you to return to this place: For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord; thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.' This is in Jeremiah the 29th chapter, verses 10, 11 and in the 31st chapter he adds, 'Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and of the young of the flock and of the herd: and their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all. Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow. And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, saith the Lord' (verse 12-14). Again, in the 32nd chapter, still speaking of the same thing, he saith, 'Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul' (verse 41).

I conclude this with that which I find in the 33rd chapter: 'And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me. And it shall be to me a name of joy, a praise, and an honour before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them: and they shall fear and tremble, for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it' (verse 8,9).

Seventhly, Must Antichrist be destroyed? Then this should make us glad, when we see the signs of his fall presenting themselves to our view. Indeed, the signs of his fall, or those that forerun it, are terrible, and amazing to behold. But what of that, since the wrinkles that are in their faces threaten not us but them? A man is angry, and will punish; yea, and whets his sword, makes his rod, and he speaks not a word, but blood, blood, is in it. Indeed, this should make them that are concerned in this anger, be afraid; (but the judgment is, they are fast asleep,) but what is in all this of terror to them, for the pleading whose cause he is so angry with the other? Nothing whereat the innocent should be afraid. Cold blasts in November are not received with that gentleness as are colder in March and April; for that these last cold ones are but the farewell notes of a piercing winter; they also

bring with them the signs and tokens of a comfortable summer. Why, the church is now at the rising of the year; let then the blasts at present, or to come, be what they will, Antichrist is assuredly drawing towards his downfall: And though the devil, knowing what is to be done to him, and to his kingdom, shall so blind his disciples, and fright the godly, do something like it upon the church of Christ; yet we should look through these paper-winkers,²² and espy in all this, that fear, yea, certain terrible judgments are following of him at the heels, by which not only the soul, spirit, and life of Antichrist, but the body thereof; yea, body, and soul, and head, are quickly to go down thither; from whence they, as such, shall not arise again. Amen.

FOOTNOTES:

1 'Paper-winkers,' in every edition, except the first, which was from the author's manuscript, has been altered to 'paper-windows.' Bunyan's allusion is to the winkers, called by many 'blinkers,' put by the side of a horse's eyes, to keep him under the complete control of his driver--and by 'paper-winkers' the flimsy attempt of Antichrist to hoodwink mankind by printed legends, miracles, and absurd assumptions--it is one of the almost innumerable sparks of wit, which render all the writings of Bunyan so entertaining and strikingly instructive.--Ed.

2 The absurd act to compel uniformity in modes of worship, (14) Charles II, had then recently passed; and when this treatise was written, it desolated the country. This paved the way for the glorious Revolution. The wicked fell into the pit which they had dug for the righteous; the hopes of the Papists were crushed; toleration to worship God was established. Let us follow Bunyan's example, and attribute these mercies to a gracious God.--Ed.

3 When seven members of the first protesting church in London were burned, a proclamation was made that no one should pray for them, speak to them, nor once say, 'God help them.' But the church pressed through the officers,--embraced and prayed for and with the martyrs; and all the people with one consent said, Amen; to the astonishment of the officers. And so these godly martyrs, praying and praising God, sweetly ended their lives in the flames at Smithfield.--Clarke's Martyrology, p. 500 and 516.--Ed.

4 Christian, read in these words your duty. Bunyan felt the tusks of the wild boar, even to the peril of his life. He bore with resignation all his sufferings, and was blest. Pity those whose souls are under the yoke. Antichrist, if cruel to the body, is more dangerous to the souls of men. Your prayers and exertions should be redoubled until it is delivered up to the just judgment of the Almighty. Come out, O Christian, and be separate from every system which is stained with the blood and defiled with the soul-harrowing groans of the saints of God.--Ed.

5 No man of the most refined education could have manifested greater delicacy than Bunyan has in treating this subject, leaving his reader to imagine whether the high-sounding titles, such as 'His Holiness,' 'God's Vicegerent upon earth,' which are given to men, are consistent with the simplicity of the gospel or not. If

they are not, they belong to Antichrist, and will be consumed with the stubble at the brightness of Christ's coming, when he shall judge the earth.--Ed.

6 Antichristian statistics of Antichrist. Those who weigh things to place them in their relative order in the kingdom of Antichrist, as the decree followed by the lions' den, &c.

7 The homilies read in the Church of England prior to the Reformation, called 'The Festival,' contains the pith of these lying legends and pretended miracles. Omitting the obscene parts, it ought to be republished, to exhibit the absurdities of popery as it was then seen in England.--Ed.

8 'The last stroke of the batter,' probably alludes to an engine of war used by the ancients, called a battering-ram.--Ed.

9 Upon the Sunday sports being authorized, and pious ministers persecuted for refusing to wear popish vestments in the reign of James I, that godly Puritan, Mr. Carter, exclaimed, 'I have had a longing desire to see or hear of the fall of Antichrist: but I check myself. I shall go to heaven, and there news will come, thick, thick, thick.'--Life by his Son, p. 13.

10 How remarkably has this come to pass since Bunyan's time; a slow but sure progression. That darling ugly daughter, Intolerance, was executed by the Act of Toleration. The impious Test by the repeal of the Sacramental Test Act, &c., &c.--Ed.

11 There is great difficulty in estimating the weight of a talent. Dr. Gill considers it about sixty pounds; this was the lesser Roman talent. Michaelis estimates the Jewish talent at thirty-two pounds and a half. The attic talent of gold used in Greece in the time of Homer is estimated at less than an ounce. The safest conclusion as to the weight of the hail-stones is, that they were enormous, and fell with a velocity to crush all animals to instant death.--Ed.

12 The reader must not misunderstand the words, 'The king kills her body.' Bunyan does not in the slightest degree concede to kings or nations a right to interfere with 'the soul' or religious principles or practices--these are to be slain, if false, by persecution of the preacher. Kings and nations will restore to the people the immense property and revenue of which they have been plundered, under the hollow knavish pretence of curing souls and forgiving sins. THUS will human laws kill the body of Antichrist. Every motive for professing to believe absurdities and contradictions will be at an end, when neither rule nor honour, nor pelf is to be gained by hypocrisy.--Ed.

13 This is a very expressive term, but better understood by Bunyan the brazier than by many of his readers. It is well known to those who live near a coppersmith's, when three or four athletic men are keeping up, bout and bout, incessant blows upon a rivet, until their object is accomplished.--Ed.

14 Protestant kings.

15 This Christian temper of Bunyan certainly saved him from much

suffering while under persecution. It probably saved his invaluable life. But how deeply it increases the guilt of his persecutors, to send such a man to a damp wretched prison, for more than twelve years, because he dared not join in the worship established by law; and after all this, to hear his prayers and good wishes to his persecutors, ought to have cut them to the quick.--Ed.

16 Lord, what is man, to pretend to infallibility! His heart, be he pope or pagan, is 'deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.' Pope Sixtus V in 1589 issued his infallible Bible; but the edition of Clement VIII, in 1592, differs much from that of 1589. Infallibles ought never to differ with each other; but how often it has happened.--Ed.

17 These bloody massacres, to which Bunyan here alludes, were attended with atrocities at which nature shudders. In France, under a Bourbon and a Guise, the murder of hundreds of thousands of pious men and women, with helpless infants, threw down every barrier to the spread of infidelity, and a frightful reaction took place at the Revolution. In Ireland, under a Stuart and a Bourbon, still more frightful atrocities were perpetrated, and which were severely punished by Cromwell and his Roundheads. Under a second Stuart, awful wholesale murders were again committed, and punished by William III; and the voice of the blood that was shed by Antichrist, and the voices of people enslaved by prejudice, and vindictive, ferocious enmity--these voices cry for vengeance, and desolate that unhappy country.--Ed.

18 In the first examination of Lord Cobham (Fox, vi p. 732, edit. 1632) the gallant knight was asked by his bitter persecutor, what he meant by 'the venom shed over the church'; his reply was, 'Your possession and lordships.' For then cried an angel in the air--'Wo! Wo! Wo! this day is venom shed into the church of God.--Rome is the very nest of Antichrist--prelates, priests and monks are the body; and these pild [bald, but query, pillaging] friars are the tail, which covereth his most filthy part.' How peaceful and blessed will be the church when ALL her ministers can glory with Paul, in Acts 20:33,34.--Ed. 19 The principal cry of the traveling peddlars was for broken or light money, to exchange for their wares: now obsolete.--Ed.

20 Such has been the tendency of the antichristian church in all ages; witness the cases of the Emperor Henry IV, Henry II of England, and many others. The spirit and precept of Christianity, on the contrary, is, while fearing God, to honour the king; and that we be subject to principalities and powers, Titus 3:1; see also Matthew 22:21; Romans 13:1-7.--Ed.

21 See Fox's Martyr, folio, vol. i., last leaf.--Ed.

22 'Paper-winkers,' in every edition, except the first, which was from the author's manuscript, has been altered to 'paper-windows.' Bunyan's allusion is to the winkers, called by many 'blinkers,' put by the side of a horse's eyes, to keep him under the complete control of his driver--and by 'paper-winkers' the flimsy attempt of Antichrist to hoodwink mankind by printed legends, miracles, and absurd assumptions--it is one of the almost innumerable sparks of wit, which render all the writings of Bunyan so entertaining and strikingly instructive.--Ed.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD, AND ETERNAL JUDGMENT:

OR, THE TRUTH OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODIES, BOTH OF GOOD AND BAD AT THE LAST DAY: ASSERTED, AND PROVED BY GOD'S WORD.

ALSO, THE MANNER AND ORDER OF THEIR COMING FORTH OF THEIR GRAVES; AS ALSO, WITH WHAT BODIES THEY DO ARISE. TOGETHER, WITH A DISCOURSE OF THE LAST JUDGMENT, AND THE FINAL CONCLUSION OF THE WHOLE WORLD.

BY JOHN BUNYAN, A SERVANT OF THE LORD'S CHRIST.

"Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed"--(1 Cor 15:51,52).

"Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation"--(John 5:28,29).

ADVERTISEMENT BY THE EDITOR.

This very important treatise, judging from the style in which it is written, was, probably, one of the first books composed by Bunyan. The form in which it is prepared, with minute divisions to assist the memory, and its colloquial language, indicate that it was first intended for the pulpit and then enlarged to form a more complete treatise; while the frequent recurrence of the words "I say," shew the unpolished style in which he was in the habit of committing his thoughts to paper, when he became an author.

A good copy of what appears to be the first edition, is in the British Museum, a small 8vo, without date--and from this, collated with the reprint by C. Doe in Bunyan's works, 1691, the present edition is published. Doe, in his catalogue of all Mr. Bunyan's books, appended to the Heavenly Footman, 1690, states that "The resurrection of the Dead, and eternal Judgment by John Bunyan, a servant of the Lord's Christ, was first published in 1665." I have not been able to discover any subsequent edition in a separate volume.

The resurrection of the body is a subject of universal and deep importance. It defies our reasoning powers, while it exalts our ideas of the divine omnipotence. With God, all things revealed in his word are not only possible, but certain of accomplishment. The bodies of the saints, which are a part of the Redeemer's purchase will be raised in heavenly and wondrous perfection; like to the Saviour's glorious body. That body, which being transfigured "did shine as the sun, and his raiment became as the light." That body which, after his resurrection, might be touched, but which could appear and disappear to mortal eyes; in the room at Emmaus, or in a closed room filled with his disciples; could be touched, yet vanish away; could eat with them on the sea shore, and could

ascend to heaven from the mount. Thus it was foretold by the prophet and reiterated by the apostle--"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (Isa 64:4; 1 Cor 2:9). Not one atom of our dust can be lost; a bright, a glorious anticipation to the saints; but how solemn and awful a thought to those who die without hope. Among Christians it is common to think and talk of the happiness of the spirits of the just made perfect; but alas, how seldom do we think or speak of the perfect bliss of our whole nature, body, soul, and spirit--incorruptible, undefiled, glorified--every part equally the object of the Saviour's purchase and of his care.

This treatise, which will be ever new, and ever important, was peculiarly required in Bunyan's early days. Under the protectorate, the minds of men, which had been kept in slavery, became suddenly emancipated from human creeds and formularies of public worship. The personal attention of every one was then directed to the Bible--the Lord's day was observed, men were chosen as ministers not from high connections, but from deep and humble piety. Tens of thousands became happy in a personal knowledge of divine truth. At such a period, it must have happened that some evil spirits would exalt themselves, and that even some serious inquirers would draw strange conclusions from a misconception of divine truth; and dimly see "men as trees walking." Among these there appeared teachers, who, unable to comprehend how that body, which had gone to dust, or in some cases had been reduced by fire to its primary elements, and dispersed to the winds or waves, could be again produced. They revived an ancient error, That the new birth was the only resurrection from death; and consequently, that to those who were born again, the resurrection was passed. The individuals who promulgated these opinions, do not appear to have been associated together as a sect, or a church. The greater number were called in derision "ranters," and some "quakers." It is very probable, that this treatise was intended as an antidote to these delusions. We must not infer from the opinions of a few unworthy individuals, who justly deserved censure, that Bunyan meant to reflect upon the Society of Friends. This treatise was printed in 1665: but it was not until 1675 that the Quakers' rules of discipline were first published, and they from that time as a sect have been, in a high degree, conformable to the morality and heavenly influences of the gospel. But even before this, Fox, Crisp, Penn, Barclay, and others, who afterwards formed the Society of Friends, had declared their full belief in this doctrine. "The resurrection of the just and unjust--the last judgment--heaven and hell as future rewards--we believe and confess." "We believe the holy manhood of Christ to be in heavenly glory." "We acknowledge a resurrection in order to eternal recompence, and rest contented with that body which it shall please God to give us." "We do firmly believe that besides the resurrection of the soul from the death of sin, to a life of righteousness while here, there will be a resurrection of the dead hereafter, and that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." Barclay, in his catechism, 1673, clearly asserts Bunyan's own ideas of the resurrection. But in the face of these, and a thousand similar declarations, the grossest calumnies were asserted by a fanatic clergyman, Alexr. Ross, in his View of all Religions:--"The Ranters are a sect of beasts that neither divide the hoof, nor chew the cud; that is to say, very unclean ones. They, like the Quakers, oppose forms and order (the form and order

of Common Prayer). To anatomize this monster: 1st, They hold that God, Devils, Angels, Heaven, and Hell, are fictions. 2d, That Moses, the Baptist, and Christ were impostors. 3d, That preaching and praying is lying." 8vo., 1696, p. 273. And such wild slanders were uttered occasionally against all dissenters, until a much later period. Happily they are now better known, and the truths of Christianity are more appreciated. I have been careful to guard the reader upon this subject, lest it should be thought that Bunyan had in any degree manifested the spirit of those, who even to the present day misrepresent the opinions of the Quakers. This may be occasioned by their distinguishing tenet--That the work of the ministry is purely a labour of love, and ought not to be performed for hire--derived from the command of Christ to his disciples, "Freely ye have received, freely give." This, however, is no reason that they should be, as to their general views of divine truth, misrepresented and traduced.

Bunyan, at all times solemn and impressive, is peculiarly earnest and searching in this treatise. The dead will arise involuntarily and irresistibly--conscience uncontrolled, must testify the truth, yea, all the truth to the condemnation of the soul and body, unless cleansed from sin by faith in the Redeemer and the sacred influences of the Holy Spirit. The books will be opened, and every thought and word and action be seen inscribed in characters legible to all. Every soul will be able to read and clearly to understand those mysterious books--God's omniscient, his penetrating, his universal sight of all things from the creation of the world to the final consummation; and his perfect remembrance of all that he saw--are one and the same. There is then no refuge, no escape--the word depart impels obedience, and the sinner plunges into eternal woe!! O that the living may lay these awful realities to heart, and fly for refuge to the bosom of the Redeemer--he only is able--he is willing to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. And they who find in him a refuge from the storms of life, shall hear his voice irresistibly impelling them to heaven, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

O glorious hour! O blest abode! I shall be like and near my God! And flesh and sin no more control The sacred pleasures of the soul.

May the divine blessing abundantly attend the reading of these awful or joyful realities.

GEO. OFFOR.

PREFACE.

COURTEOUS READER,

Though this be a small treatise, yet it doth present thee with things of the greatest and most weighty concernment, even with a discourse of life and death to eternity: opening, and clearing, by the scriptures of God, that the time is at hand, when, there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust; even of the bodies of both, from the graves where they are, or

shall be, at the approach of that day.

Thou hast also in these few lines, the order and manner of the rising of these two sorts of people, wherein is shewed thee with what body they shall then rise, as also their states and condition at this day, with great clearness.

For here thou shalt see the truth, and manner of the terrible judgment, the opening of the books, the examining of witnesses, with a final conclusion upon good and bad. Which, I hope will be profitable to thy soul that shall read it. For if thou art godly, then here is that which will, through God's blessing, encourage thee to go on in the faith of the truth of the gospel; but if thou art ungodly, then here thou mayst meet with conviction: yea, and that of what will be, without fail, thy end, at the end of the world: whether thou continue in thy sins, or repent. If thou continue in them, blackness, and darkness, and everlasting destruction; but if thou repent, and believe the gospel, then light, and life, and joy, and comfort, and glory, and happiness, and that to eternity.

Wherefore let me here beg these things at thy hand,

First, That thou take heed of that spirit of mockery that saith, "Where is the promise of his coming?" (2 Peter 3:4,5).

Secondly, Take heed that thy heart be not overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and so that day come upon thee unawares (Luke 21:34,35).

Thirdly, But be diligent in making thy calling and election sure; that thou in the day, of which thou shalt read more in this book, be not found without that glorious righteousness that will then stand thee in stead, and present thee before his glorious presence, with exceeding joy. To him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, world without end. Amen.

JOHN BUNYAN.

OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD.

"BUT THIS I CONFESS UNTO THEE, THAT AFTER THE WAY WHICH THEY CALL HERESY, SO WORSHIP I THE GOD OF MY FATHERS, BELIEVING ALL THINGS WHICH ARE WRITTEN IN THE LAW AND IN THE PROPHETS: AND HAVE HOPE TOWARD GOD, WHICH THEY THEMSELVES ALSO ALLOW, THAT THERE SHALL BE A RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD, BOTH OF THE JUST AND UNJUST"--(Acts 24:14,15).

My discourse upon this text, will chiefly concern the resurrection of the dead: wherefore to that I shall immediately apply myself, not meddling with what else is couched in the words.

You see here, that Paul, being upon his arraignment, accused of many things, by some that were violent for his blood; and being licensed to speak for himself by the then heathen magistrate; he doth in few words tell them, that as touching the crimes wherewith they charged him, he was utterly faultless, only this he confessed, that after that way which they call heresy, so he worshipped the

God of his fathers; believing all things that are written in the law and the prophets, and that he had the same hope towards God, which they themselves did allow, that there should be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.

Whence note by the way, that a hypocritical people, will persecute the power of those truths in others, which themselves in words profess. I have hopes towards God, and that, such a hope which themselves do allow, and yet I am this day, and that for this very thing, persecuted by them.

But to come to my purpose, "There shall be a resurrection of the dead," &c. By these words, the apostle sheweth us what was the substance of his doctrine, to wit, that there should be "a resurrection of the dead;" and by these words also, what was the great argument with his soul, to carry him through these temptations, afflictions, reproaches, and necessities he met with in this world, even the doctrine of a resurrection. I have hope towards God, saith he, and there is my mind fixed; for there shall be "a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust." The reason why I cannot do what these Jews would have me; also why I cannot live as do the Gentiles, it is, because I have in my soul, the faith of the resurrection. This is the doctrine I say, which makes me fear to offend, and that is as an undergirding to my soul, whereby I am kept from destruction and confusion, under all the storms and tempests I here go through. In a word, this is it that hath more awe upon my conscience than all the laws of men, with all the penalties they inflict. "And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men" (verse 16).

Now here, seeing this doctrine of the resurrection of the dead hath that power, both to bear up and to awe; both to encourage and to keep within compass, the spirit and body of the people of God; it will be requisite, and profitable for us, to inquire into the true meaning and nature of this word, "the resurrection of the dead."

And for the better compassing of this matter, I shall briefly enquire,

First, What in this place is meant by the dead.

Secondly, What is meant by the resurrection.

Thirdly, Why the apostle doth here speak of the resurrection of the dead as of a thing yet to come--"There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust."

First. The dead in scripture go under a five-fold consideration; as,

1. Such as die a natural death, or as when a man ceaseth to be any more in this world, as David, whom Peter tells us "is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us to this day" (Acts 2:29).

2. There is a people that are reckoned dead in trespasses and sins, as those are, who never yet were translated from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God. Such, I say, who

yet never felt the power of the Word and Spirit of God, to raise them from that state, to walk with him in the regeneration; making a life out of Christ, and his present benefits (Eph 2:1,2; John 5:25).

3. There is a death seizeth men often after some measure of light received from God, and some profession of the gospel of Christ. These, for the certainty of their damnation, are said to be dead--dead, twice dead, and plucked up by the roots (Jude 12).

4. There is in scripture mention made of a death to sin, and the lusts of the flesh; this death is the beginning of true life and happiness, and is a certain forerunner of a share in Christ, and with him in another world (Rom 6:6-8; 2 Tim 2:11).

5. Lastly, There is also in the word, a relation of eternal death. This is the death that those are in, and swallowed up of, that go out of this world Godless, Christless, and graceless; dying in sin, and so under the curse of the dreadful God; who, I say, because they have missed of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour in this day of grace: are fallen into the gulf and jaws of eternal death and misery, in the fire that never shall be quenched (Mark 9:43,44; Luke 16:23-26).

Now then, seeing there is death, or to be dead, taken under so many considerations in the scripture; it is evident, that to be dead in Christ, the text is not meant of them all: I then must distinguish, and inquire which of these deaths it is, that here the apostle did look for a resurrection from. (1.) then, It cannot be meant a resurrection from eternal death, for from that there is no redemption (Psa 49:8). (2.) Neither is it a resurrection from that double death; for they that are in that, are past recovery also. (3.) And as for those that are dead to sin, it is nonsense to say there shall, or can be a resurrection from that: for that itself is a resurrection; which resurrection also, the apostle had then passed through: and also all the brethren, as he saith, You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins (Col 2:12,13,20). And again, "If ye then be risen with Christ" (Col 3:1), and again, "Wherein also ye are risen with him, through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead" (Col 2:12). (4.) The dead therefore in this scripture, must be understood of those that have departed this life, that have body and soul separated each from the other; and so the resurrection, a resurrection of the body out of the grave; as Daniel saith, "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake" (Dan 12:2). And again, "The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth," &c. (John 5:28,29).

Second. [What is meant by the resurrection.] The resurrection of the just, then, is the rising of the bodies of the just, and the resurrection of the unjust, the rising of their bodies, at the last judgment. This also is the meaning of that saying of Paul to Agrippa, "I stand," saith he, "and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers" (Acts 26:6), which promise at first began to be fulfilled in the resurrection of the body of Christ (Acts 13:32,33), and hath its accomplishment, when the dead, small and great, are raised out of their graves. Wherefore, though Paul saith in the 13th of the Acts, it is already fulfilled;

yet here he saith, he hopes it shall come. "Which promise,

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