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ADVENTIST

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ANDREW U. ...

ULFILLING

OF THE

CRIPTURE.

OR

An Essay shewing the exact *Accomplishment* of
the WORD of GOD, in his WORKS per-
formed and to be performed.

*For confirming of Believers, and convincing
Atheists of the present Time :*

Containing some rare HISTORIES of the *Works*
and *Servants* of GOD in the Church of
SCOTLAND.

By the Reverend

Mr. Robert Fleming,

Late Pastor of a Church in *Rotterdam.*

With a Preface by *Mr. Foxcroft,*
Pastor to the first Church in *Boston.*

ACT. I. 16. *This Scripture must needs have been
fulfilled*—

JOH. IO. 35.—*And the Scripture cannot be broken.*

BOSTON, *New-England,* Printed by ROGERS and
FOWLE, for WALTER Mc ALPINE near
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To the READER.

THIS excellent Book, The Fulfilling of the Scriptures, has long been a celebrated Piece, and much read in a great Part of the Protestant World; as it should seem by the numerous Editions of it, in various Countries. It found such Entertainment at its first Publication, that quickly there was a new Impression [Anno 1671.] When the Author revis'd his Work, and made considerable Enlargements in the Body of it (constantly distinguishing those Additions, with this Mark P both before and after) and further added an Appendix, to lead us into some practical Reflections, and proper Uses of the whole.---It's from this Edition, with such Alterations and Improvements, that the present Impression is done.

Being desired to revise the Copy, before it went to the Press, I found a Multitude of typographical Errata, which according to my best Skill I endeavour'd to amend; tho' upon a Review I observe, some lesser Mistakes have escaped the Printer's or my Correction, especially in the Pointing, which seems a little to cloud the Sense in several Places: but such Care has been us'd, that I hope no very great Errors have been committed in this Impression.

To the READER.

In some Instances, with Regard to the Diction, I have presumed to use the like Liberty, as the late Rev. Mr. DANIEL BURGESS, in republishing another valuable Performance of the same Author, has done before me. Besides the Authority of his Example, I have this Apology to make in his Words. "No Lion found I in my Way: but a sorry Worm I counted the Exclamation of some nice Folk, against the Phrase and Style of this confessedly excellent Work. Dutifully I compassionated the weak; and no less the many sick, of Curiosity: Who have such Ulcers in their Palates, that they cannot, without cruel Pain, swallow the most desirable Dainties, unless they may take them in Oil and Sugar; cannot prevail with themselves to read Periods that require an attentive Mind, and the least Strain of their Understanding. Wherefore I used my Spunge, and took out as many Expressions of my Author's native Language, that I thought would disturb an English Reader; substituting such as appear'd sufficiently intelligible." But where important Matters of Fact are related, I have thought it best to leave the Language altogether untouched.

The first and other Editions of the present Treatise were anonymous: But I have taken the Freedom to prefix the reputed Writer's Name to this: Tho' not so much upon the Credit of Tradition and common Fame, as of an express Testimony, the said Mr. BURGESS has left us of the Fact; who having discover'd the Author (about the Year 1693) corresponded with him, then living in Holland, and drew him out of his affected Secrecy. In his Edition of the Treatise, intitled, The confirming Work of Religion, he has (to do Honour to the Writer) inserted

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To the READER.

in the Title-Page this Clause, "Written by R. FLEMING, Author of The Fulfilling of the Scriptures." And in his Epistle to the Reader he has the following Paragraphs, which I take Leave to transcribe into mine.

"The highest Angels are most humble Creatures: The Church of God is full of their Services; but knoweth next to nothing of their Names. Their Works praise their Lord and ours, but not themselves. And if the evangelical Author of this Book could have had his Will, the Churches of Christ should not have had his Name. He would have kept himself together a Benefactor and a Sort of Stranger unto them.

"Against his Will it came to be known, that his Book of the Fulfilling of the Scriptures was his. And by the divine Providence it was made necessary, that his latter Works should bear his Name. Obscurity was his Ambition; though his Gifts and Graces prove too big and too bright to be covered. And, in short, it hath pleased the supreme Ruler (and Fountain of Honour) to honour him whether he would or no.

"The Book first named [*The Fulfilling of the Scriptures*] is followed with the Eulogies of the greatest DIVINES; and is a Manna sweet to the Taste of all serious Christians. His Epistolary Discourse, dedicated to the Queen's Majesty, was most graciously accepted by Her, and highly valued by those that I must think the best of her Subjects. Being, as is his Discourse of Earthquakes, a Treasure of Things old and new; Mich-tams, golden Jewels; Arguments, several, not so much as touched by any Pen within her Dominions,

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minions, or beyond them, save Mr. FLEMING's."

The said Rev. Editor has added, The JUDGMENT of some London-Ministers concerning one of his Treatises, who say, "We give our great Thanks to the Author of every good Gift, who hath drawn this his richly furnished Scribe, to supply us with so very needful a Treatise, as is here offered. Some of us do profess, that in reading it we were surprized with Joy, and with Wonder, that a Topick so little written, discoursed, or thought of, should be treated on with such Depth of Judgment, and with such Experience as is rarely found in the most laudible Writers. Thro' the divine Blessing which we implore, we hope, that we and our Brethren throughout these Nations shall find good Success of our People's Use of this most instructive Work. For which, with the excellent Author, (who did but consent to this Edition of it) we are indebted unto the Reverend and worthy Publisher, by whose Means we receive it. We join with both of them, in Prayer to the Most High, that this rich Seed of the Sower may be made Bread of Life to the Eater." --- The above Attestation is signed by the late Dr. BATES, Mr. MEAD, Mr. COLE, Mr. HOWE, Mr. SYLVESTER, Dr. WILLIAMS, and Mr. SHOWERS, some of the most burning and shining Lights among the dissenting Ministers of the last Age.

After so ample and honorable Testimonies from such eminent Hands, and contemporary with Mr. FLEMING, it were a needless and a vain Attempt in me, to offer at any Thing, further in Praise of the Author of The Iulking of the Scriptures, or in
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order to bespeak a welcome Reception of this his Performance among us. --- I trust it will be found a Word in Season.

I shall take Occasion here to observe, that when I deliberate on Mr. FLEMING's Monuments of Grace in former Days, particularly his Accounts of that memorable WORK of GOD in the West of Scotland about the Year 1625, and That in Ireland about three Years after (recorded in this Book, Page 393, 394.) and then view in a comparative Light some recent Accounts from Scotland of a Revival of Religion there, together with what we have seen and heard of the late remarkable Work in our English America; I can't but concur in Sentiments with such as believe a near Resemblance, in many Respects, between the several Cases: I behold a surprising Display of Divine Power and Grace, a very conspicuous Ministration of the SPIRIT, in each of these admirable Instances; and desire to give GOD the Glory due to his great Name. I think, we have in the Months past seen among these Churches, what Mr. FLEMING distinguishes by the Name of more solemn Times of the SPIRIT, and high Spring-Tides of the Gospel, whence a great Flight of Souls to Christ usually follows, with various other observable Events. [See Pag. 134, --- 140.]

I am aware indeed, that some Circumstances of the late religious Commotion (as they call it) are Matter of Stumbling to many, and have occasioned much Debate, both in private Conversation, and in publick Discourse and Writing. But I think, none deny, that uncommon Impressions, of a religious Aspect, have been prevalent of late in many Places, thro' out all New-England, and the Provinces adjacent. And

I judge it worthy a particular Remark, concerning those who account for the Rise & Progress of these religious Impressions by the Principles of Enthusiasm, or the Laws of Mechanism, resolving them into no better Original than an over-heated Brain, a Fire in the Imagination, and a Tumult in animal Nature; yet the more sober and impartial Inquirers, among those who view the Affair in this Philosophical Light, have nevertheless made such frank and full CONCESSIONS, with Regard to the happy Termination of these unusual Impressions in numerous Instances, which I suppose Ingenuity and the Force of a rational Conviction drew from them, as are enough (one would think) to rebuke their Incredulity, and to silence their ignorant Invectives against the Times, who (in open Contradiction to the great Rules of Piety, Charity, Truth, and Decency towards their Superiors) may have presumed to declare the late marvellous Work of GOD among us a meer Scene of Delusion and Imposture, and to absolutely pronounce the Accounts of it romantic Deceivings, which some of our most experienced, wise, and learned, both in the Magistracy and Ministry, have given the Publick.

I find it expressly confessed, by some in the Opposition to this uncommon Appearance, that they will not deny, there is a GREAT DEAL of that among us, which must be acknowledged to be true Religion, mixt with that which some may think to be the Effect of Imagination.--They say, they do not deny, that there may be a Mixture of real Christianity with great Enthusiasm.--And they doubt not, the unusual Appearance among us has been a Means to rouse MANY, who were before thoughtless; and to quicken MANY, who had fallen into a Slumber.

They are not against allowing, that a GOOD NUMBER of Sinners have (probably) been converted into Saints; and as GREAT a Number of Saints enlivened in their Christian Work.---I find them repeatedly acknowledging, they are of Opinion, that the Appearances among us-- have been the Means of awakning the Attention of many; and a GOOD NUMBER, they hope, have settled into a truly Christian Temper.---In a Word, they say, That Good hath been done, is granted on all Hands; but it is denied by many, that near so much hath been done, as to warrant this high Encomium upon the Work.---[These are Passages occurring in sundry printed Pieces,† which I thought it worth while to collect, and thus present in one View before the Reader.] Now I gladly accept these Concessions, as some Testimony to a special Presence and Power of the SPIRIT OF GRACE in the late remarkable Season; altho' their intended & real Meaning may possibly be only this, That while our unhappy Case has been, "Enthusiasm raging," and "the superstitious Panick running very high," a merciful GOD has interposed, and controuled these strange "Fervours of Imagination," has "sanctified these Impressions to the spiritual Advantage of many," and wonderfully over-rul'd in this Affair, to produce gracious Effects, contrary to the natural Operation of second Causes; bringing Good out of Evil, and fetching Meat out of the Eater.--Well, were this a just Construction of the Matter, What then? Notwithstanding, every Way, whether in Pretence,

† *French Prophets, Page 100, 102.---Letter to Mr. Wisbart, P. 21.---Religious Commotions in N. E. Pref. P. 2.*

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or in Truth, Christ is preached, & CHRIST is exalted, his Body increased by the winning of many Souls: And I therein do rejoice; yea, and I will rejoice. However, tho' I thus speak, I am clearly of Opinion, the State of the Case ought to be otherwise represented: and I believe, it will be no Mis-application of Simeon's Declaration, if I say in the Language of that, God AT THE FIRST did visit these Lands, to take out of them a People for his Name. For I am persuaded, that the religious Impressions, so general among us, owed their Rise, as well as Progress, and happy Issue (in the confessedly multiplied Instances hereof) to the exceeding Grace of God, and a special Influence of his Holy SPIRIT.--- Though, I'm not insensible, while good Wheat has been sowing in Abundance, the Enemy of all Righteousness has been uncommonly busy in mingling his Tares: Nevertheless, still I must say, I look upon it to have been a Day of Visitation, a signal Day of the Mediator's Power: And that his Name is near, his wondrous Works declare; both his Works of common Grace in Conviction and Reformation, and his Works of special Grace in Conversion, in progressive Sanctification, and in the Comfort of the Holy Ghost.

Pursuant to the late TESTIMONY of a numerous Body of Ministers, I'm truly glad to find those very worthy Persons, the Rev. and aged Mr. STONE and Mr. LORING, notwithstanding the Difficulties that seem to incumber their Thoughts, in Relation to the unusual Appearances among us, and certain Articles of Conduct, which they enumerate and declare against; yet so far joining with their Brethren, as to give the Publick the following Attestation. These are some of their Words.--“That there is a SIGNAL Work of the HOLY GHOST of late, to and fro in

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New-England, SUPERIOR to what has been in many past Years, seems evident; and that the great JEHOVAH is for it to be adored by us. But there doubtless is a very grievous Failure in many Professors, in their not distinguishing between the good Seed sowed in the Field, and the Tares sowed by an Enemy, i. e. the Devil.---In what appears of late among us, there seems evidently to be the Work of the Holy Ghost, in convincing, humbling, and converting Souls; and as evidently, a Work of the Devil, in promoting what tends to blast and ruin that Work.”

To which I would add, in this complex State of Things, I think, we have a notable Discovery of the Fulfilling of the Scriptures. This Book may administer much Light and many seasonable Thoughts, in such a Coincidence of Facts.

We should be equally cautious, What we ascribe to the HOLY SPIRIT's Influence, and lest we deny or disparage What is of the HOLY GHOST, and has his Signature.---Therefore I think it meet to record here a Paragraph in a late Protestation presented to the Philadelphia-Synod, by the Rev. Messrs. Dickinson, Pierston, Pemberton, &c. “WE protest against all those Passages in any of the Pamphlets, lately publish'd in these Parts, which seem to reflect upon the Work of divine Power and Grace, that has been carrying on in so wonderful a Manner, in many of our Congregations: and declare to all the World, that we look upon it to be the indispensable Duty of all our Ministers, to encourage that glorious Work with their most faithful and diligent Endeavours. And we in like Manner protest and declare against all divisive and irregular Methods and Practices, by which the Peace and good Order of our Churches have been broken in upon.”

Boston,
Sept. 16. 1743.

To this I subscribe---

THOMAS FOXCROFT.



The Author's Epistle to the READER.

READER,

IT is like you may expect some account of the *rise* and *occasion* of this Discourse; that on so great and weighty a subject, so small an *Essay* should venture abroad; especially in a time, when it seemeth more safe & prudent, to *keep silence*, to be *swift to hear*, & *slow to speak*, which seldom hath an after-challenge. The Author will say little for his apology herein, tho' he hopeth, he may find it more easy to satisfy others, than he did himself. This freedom only he shall take, to confess, that sometimes it hath been matter of earnest, yea, hath caused some tossing and exercise upon his spirit, & pressed a more serious enquiry and search, with a respect to *his own case*, to be perswaded about the *Scripture's* divine authority, that *Godliness* is not an empty name or shadow, but of an undoubted truth, what indeed of all other things is the greatest, and of most near concernment. And truly about that, this grave convincing argument of the *Scripture's* certain *Accomplishment*, hath not only oft stared him in the face, with a satisfying *discovery* and *impression* thereof, as a most quieting and unanswerable demonstration of the truth; but he

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ye must also say, that by very remarkable confirmations from the Lord this hath been so convincingly witnessed to his *Experience*, as leaveth him under engagement (were such a poor testimony of weight) to *put his seal to the Word*, that it *falleth not to the ground*, neither doth the *promise of God fail*.

It is a dark time now with the Church of Christ; which we see every where almost suffering and afflicted, whilst the whole earth besides seemeth to be at ease; Christians also even beyond others in their *private* lot, assaulted with very sharp trials; though, I think, *suffering* may be the least of our fear at this day, while *Atheism* doth now appear on so formidable a growth, and hath a more threatning aspect, than the rage or violence of men. We see a sad decay likewise on the Churches *abroad*; Religion every where under a great consumption, & wearing out, that seemeth to have reached it in its vital parts: Men search after an unusual way of sinning, as if they scorned to be wicked at a common and ordinary rate; prejudice easily taken up and entertained against the way of God; whilst the *good man doth* (alas!) *perish*, without any affecting observation thereof; the choice and excellent of the earth pluckt away, and none to fill their room; Christians burials now frequent, but the birth and in-bringing of such to the Church, rare. This is indeed a sad subject, and so much the sadder, that few are found whose *eye affecteth their heart*, whose tears and groaning seem to answer such a stroke and ruin which now is like to fall under our hand: but

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I shall leave this. *Prayer* will be the best cure, and is this day more fit, than complaining, to turn unto him, who seeth the ways of his People, that he may heal them, and can prevent those with mercy, who seem least fit for the same.--- Only two or three sad remarks of this time, I cannot altogether pass; which indeed are strange symptoms of the Church's present case and distemper.--(1.) To see men own the doctrine of sanctification, who yet can professedly disown, yea, make it their work by reproach to beget a prejudice against the practice thereof. Oh strange! to find such as will dip their pen in gall against a tender and strict walk in Religion, and revile it in the power thereof; whilst they do not deny those truths, & principles, that necessarily oblige to such a tender practice; who, in the most grave concerning duties of Christianity, think it enough to charge their brethren with *Pharisaical* Ostentation, and Hypocrisy, whilst they must confess these duties to be unquestionably binding, and that they can be no competent judges of such a challenge, which the great witnesses of the heart & inward parts of men can only determine.(2.) It is a sad remark also of the time, that *Protestant* Writers, professing the reform'd Religion, shall state themselves in opposition to the most concerning grounds thereof, such as *imputed righteousness*, and *justification by faith*, which is well called *Articulus stantis et cadentis Ecclesiae*. I cannot have that charity, that it is from ignorance, but from a height of malice, that some of late reproach the *Protestant* doctrine, in this great fundamental of *justification*;

fiction; as if it pressed believing and resting upon Christ *without respect* to works and holiness. I confess, we put not *inherent* righteousness in the room of *imputed*; though we assert each is *necessary* in their own place, the one in order to our *right*, the other in order to our actual and full *possession* of that right, yea, that *holiness* is absolutely necessary, not only *necessitate precepti, sed medii*; and justifying *faith* doth necessarily require works, *sed non qua, et quatenus justificat*. But sure, if these men grant that we are justified by the satisfaction of Christ, they must needs confess it is by imputation; since if the *debtor* be acquitted by the *Cautions* payment, is it not by the *Imputation* thereof to him? O sad! to see some put their invention upon the rack how to wound the Church (yea, a death-wound it would be, if they could reach their end) in that great truth of *imputed righteousness*! But it were best they deny'd that 6th ver. of the 4. Ch. to the *Rom.* to be canonical Scripture, which none can read, and shift; it being so clear, that the *blessed man* is there held forth, unto whom God *imputeth righteousness without works*. Sure that cannot be inherent righteousness, else it were *contradictio in adjecto*. I profess, those (what ever they pretend) I must look on as *adversaries* to the *Reformed* Churches; and there is nothing more dangerous than a *pirat* going forth under a counterfeit flag.---(3.) Is it not likewise sad, yea, astonishing to see, *Ministers* now in these times, who are the express *Embassadors of Christ* given to the Church for her *edification*, stand so directly *cross* to the very end of their work & Ministry; many, of whom it

may be said, that knowingly & deliberately they oppose piety! That such should persecute, whose work is to feed; should wound, in stead of healing; grieve the spirit of the Godly, who should be helpers of their joy! that none are a greater plague, to corrupt the Church, and cause the sacrifices of the Lord to be abhorred, than some of those who should be the salt of the earth! yea, none more obstruct the treaty of the Gospel, betwixt Christ and his Church, than Ministers who are called the friends of the bridegroom! Oh what a strange and astonishing contradiction may this seem! But it should be no reproach to that holy and excellent calling of the Ministry; for of such the Scripture hath expressly warned. I confess, it may be said, No Atheist like an un sanctified Minister; yea, no Atheism of so black a die as theirs, who being still employed about holy things, have yet no sense thereof.

Now in this very dark hour, wherein the Church seemeth to have fallen into a death like pang, and oh many of her Children in a sad lethargy) that if we looked in an ordinary way, her wound might seem incurable, there are two great and concerning Quæries, that I think should much take us up. The one is, to know what the Scripture speaketh to the Church; what solid ground of encouragement is there held forth? For truly, if we had not that sure testimony of the Word, we might fear, Religion would quite wear out, and Truth perish from the earth: but doth the Scripture speak peace? all then is well. That (O that) is sufficient security, to put the Church's hope beyond further debate; tho' men should threaten, tho' the earth were overturned, & the foundation sha-

ken! This is a determination, above men, above all the rules of humane policy, yea, above the stars, which frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; even that revealed Counsel of God, taking place about his work and People.

I know, some grave writers of these late times do express their fear, that the horrid wickedness and apostacy of the Gentile Church may at last resolve in the Lord's departure, and an universal darknes; that as the rejection of the Jesus made way for the Gentiles incoming, so their fall may as remarkably precede that solemn return and restauration of the Jewish Church; it is also become the fear of many, that Popery may yet once overrun the whole Reformed Churches, before Antichrist's fall. But since these sad thro'ts nor any appearance of the time, are no part of our Bible, we should learn neither to stretch our fears, nor expectations, beyond that which the Scripture warranteth: and if the Lord be God, and this his very word, let us adhere to it, and wait for its accomplishment.---A second Quere, which is indeed no less concerning in such a time, may be about Duty: What do so eminent an hazard of the Church, and this great decay of Christianity, most pressingly call for? But this is a subject which requireth another pen, and too large, to touch with a passing word: yea, we may say, the great want of these days is not about the discovery of duty, but of the practice of known, and discovered duties. For the Scripture giveth a certain and distinct sound, in the darkest time; and hath not left us to doubtful enquiries, and debate in this matter. I shall therefore leave

it, with a few things only to be in the general considered. (1.) It is sure, that *every time* hath its present *duty*; and the wise *discerners* thereof will know thence *what they ought to do*, what work and service the present circumstances of that time call for. Shall the earth have its *seasons*, wherein things are *beautiful*? shall the *stork* and *swallow* know their *time*? and yet *Christians* not know how to *bring forth fruit in their season*, and discern the special time and opportunity of duty! (2.) It is also sure, that *every Christian*, in what soever capacity or condition, as he hath his measure and talent, *to* hath some *work*, and *opportunity* of duty; wherein they may *serve the Lord in their generation*: yea, it is not the meanest lot or condition, that shutteth that door upon any, that they have no work for God, who desire to be faithful for him. O that in this *threatning time*, when darkness is like to overspread the Church, it were more *upon the hearts of Christians*, to strive together, and contend by a serious improvement of their several capacities, to *preserve Religion*, and transmit the knowledge of *Jesus Christ* to the posterity; that the Christian parent, or Master of family, did witness more that great resolution, in a time when many are drawing back, *But as for me, I and my house will serve the Lord*---(3.) It is found, that the most eminent and *honourable service* of the Church doth usually befall her in a *low* and *suffering* condition. When there hath been but *little strength*, & many outward *advantages*, then both their *call* and *furniture* hath been most observable, to confess the truth, to endure for the Gospel of Christ, to *overcome*

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by the *Word of his testimony*; a piece of service, whereto more prosperous times do not give such an opportunity. Yea, it hath been in such a case, *Dan. 11. 32.* that *those who knew their God, were made strong to do exploits*---(4.) It doth much concern us, to put a *high value* on the *truth*, in a time when men must either *lose* it, or *buy* it. And O! what a choice purchase is that, which cannot be bought too dear, tho' at the rate of our liberty, estate, credit and reputation, yea, with the loss of peace, when it cometh in competition with it? For it is that great *depositum*, once delivered to the *Saints*, the inheritance of our Children, that way whereby *Jesus Christ* keepeth intercourse with his Bride on the earth, yea, the charter of all our mercies, and of our hope through eternity---(5.) Tho' every line of divine truth is inestimable; yet it is sure, there is a *more pressing call* for our adherence to *that truth*, which is most *controverted* in the time. For it is *the word of his patience*, and the matter of *our present testimony*: and it is known through all ages, what a singular *blessing* hath followed the *contending* and *witnessing* of a few for the *truth* (in a torrent of publick *defection*) to keep it *alive*, when it was like to be swallowed up; yea, to effects above rational belief; *unus Athanasius contra totum orbem!* Many such remarks have not been wanting---(6.) I shall only add, that which is *always* necessary and binding, yet we may say in a time of the Church's *hazard* and *suffering* is more *pressingly* called for, even the *study of Christian PRUDENCE*; a duty *convincingly* necessary, for *regulating* of duties,

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according to the *circumstances* of the Church's case : which doth so nearly concern the interest and preservation of *Religion*, that I must say, *A breach in that Concord betwixt ZEAL and Christian PRUDENCE*, when there is not some equal respect studied in the exercise of both, cannot but give the Church a sore WOUND. This is indeed a large theme ; but I shall only point at in three things. 1. In our avoiding and being tender to give offence ; not only to keep a distance from evil, but from the smallest appearance thereof. I must say, they are bad casuists, and have little respect to the Churches edification, who make it their work, not so much to keep men from sin, as to shew them, *quam prope ad peccatum sine peccato accedere liceat*. O what a becoming fear is that, not to lay a stumbling block in the way of others, to grieve the weak, or confirm such who use to found their prejudice against the truth and way of God, upon the miscarriage of such as profess the same. 2. This excellent study of Christian Prudence hath a respect to men's taking offence, as well as their giving it ; to our being sober in judging, in personal reflections, to cover and hide the infirmities of others, rather than spread them, even for the Gospel's sake ; yea, to shut as it were our eyes, and cast a mantle on their nakedness, who tho' overtaken with the violence of some temptation may yet be serviceable to the Church ; but especially this should press us to a watchful regard of any breach & rent in the Church, and to study a healing spirit, so far as is possible, without prejudice to truth. 3. It is also a concerning piece of Christian Prudence, how to walk

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wisely towards those who are without, when prejudice against the way of God is now in such a growth ; to study how we may convince, gain ground, and by Christianly prudent and tender carriage conciliate respect to the truth ; and thus commend holiness, and those who profess it, to the conscience of men ; to study that rule of Expediency much in things of themselves warrantable, what fitness and advantage present circumstances may offer, or deny for edification and promoting that great interest of the Gospel in our converse with men.

I shall now cease to trouble you further ; only would premise some few things with a respect to the subject of this following essay.--(1.) Should we not with wonder and astonishment look on this great record of the Scripture ? by which the glorious Majesty of God doth speak to men, yea doth as certainly communicate his Counsel and mind, we may say more certainly, than if we had an immediate audible voice from Heaven. O could we have such ordinary thoughts of this, if we consider how near God cometh therein to us ? I think, if there were but one corner of the earth, though in the remotest parts, where men might go and get a look of so wonderful and important a thing as God's express Will written and sent from Heaven to the earth, about our duty here, and blessedness for ever, should we not think it worth our crossing the sea, and the greatest expence of time or labour ? It is truly a wonder how we can read and consider the Scripture, without wondring.--(2.) It is a great concernment, to know that the Scripture

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ture hath such a *witness*, as *Experience*! and that there is such a *trade* and *correspondence* as this betwixt the *Saints* and the *Word*, which lieth not in the common road of the World. O what an empty thing would Religion be, if it had not this word *Experience* in its grammar; that secret and sure *mark*, whereby the Christian knoweth the Scripture is of *God*; how thus the Lord hath oft sealed their instruction in a dark plunge; how life and power, inlivening influences, to the melting of their heart, have oft met them therein a very dead frame; and now they know that verily *God heareth prayer*: now they are persuaded, and have learned by the cross, that he is indeed a *Comforter*; yea, many can shew how by the Word their *first acquaintance* with the Lord did begin; how some particular truth, like a grain of corn sown in their heart, by the blessing of the great husbandman was made to take life, and grow.--(3.) It much concerneth us, to know what an excellent *key* the Scripture is to unlock that sealed book of *providence*; and that no other key can fit the same; many have tried another way, but lost themselves on the search, & the more they attempt by human wisdom, they became the more dark. I truly think, there is not a more satisfying discovery within time, than this, to trace divine truth back until we see its first breaking forth out of his eternal *decree* and *council*, who is the author thereof; how thence it taketh hold of the *word*, which is the adequate sign and declaration of his purpose; and then how the *word* taketh hold of his *work* and *providence*, where we may see the face and condition

dition of the *Church* clearly written out through all the changes of time; how *providence* keepeth a *certain* and *steady course*, even amidst the most perplexed motions & reelings of the earth; yea, how all things, even those which would seem most contradictory, run within that strait channel of the word, and cannot go without these bounds.--(4.) It is the *principal* & *most concerning Scripture-promises*, that are only touched in this following discourse, these which carry along with them a clear continued series of the Church's condition through time, and shew the most remarkable changes of her lot. For it is clear, that in *diverse* prophecies and in a *different* manner the Spirit doth point at *one* & *the same thing*; and truly it should cause no mistake or prejudice, that we find several of the *Scripture-prophecies* express in such *dark* terms, since the wisdom of God saw it fit that for a time these truths should be locked up and sealed. But now *light* hath so far broken forth with the *event*, as we may see how very significant and suitable to the matter these most dark ænigmatick terms are.--(5.) We should upon no account *shut our ears*, where the *Scripture* is *clear*, and giveth us ground to hope that the *outgoing of the Lord*, for his people in their deliverance, & for the destruction of his enemies, now in these *last times*, shall be *very glorious*; yea, by some stately & stupendious acts of providence, that he shall accomplish his judgment on *Antichrist*: neither must we take a prejudice at *truth*, because of the wild *elancies* of many who would extend it beyond its bounds, or that near *Resemblance* which the *Error* of some in this

this time may seem to have thereto. For that hath been an old stratagem of the Devil, to prejudice the World at some of the truths of God, by setting up a counterfeit thereto. I shall add no more, only what account is given, upon the close of the last argument, of some remarkable passages of providence in the late times, as herein the Author hath some confidence to profess, he did endeavour what could be attained for certainty of the same, and if any circumstances of these relations should be found a mistake, he dare say before Him who is greater than our conscience, it was not the neglect of serious inquiry; so he must also premise, the inserting of them was upon no further intent, than to be a witness to that truth of the Lord's eminent appearance for his Church in the last days. It would be of great use and profit to the Church, that some more fitly qualified would study a more large Collection of this kind. O that this might go forth with a blessing from Him, who by the meanest things can serve himself, and promote the edification of his Church; and that the Lord would raise some up with much of his Spirit, to make a further search and enquiry into this great and weighty truth.



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I N D E X.

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In

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Other Escapes are left to the Candour of the intelligent Reader.



The *Fulfilling*

OF THE

SCRIPTURE.

HERE are two Means by which the blessed Majesty of GOD hath chosen to reveal himself to the sons of men, his WORD and his WORKS: which may be called the two great Luminaries, for giving Light to the Church, though the one be greater, I mean doth more clearly shine forth, yea, doth communicate light to the other. These, men must not divide, which by so strait a tye the Lord hath joined, and by a marvellous correspondence hath set the one over against the other, that it may be easy to see his faithfulness, and the accomplishment of the Scripture therein: and indeed this is a great concerning truth, that calleth for a serious study, the solid perswasion of which should afford a sweet ground of repose, and rest for the soul, though the earth were all in a combustion round about, and give a satisfying answer to our most sollicitous thoughts and fears. Now this being the intended subject of the following discourse, I shall first touch it a little in the general, and then hold forth some more particular grounds, whence it may be clearly demonstrated.

B

I. That

I. That the *Scripture of God* hath a certain *Accomplishment here in the World*, and what is to be understood by the same, I shall endeavour to clear in these things, which would be considered.

1. This is the very unfolding of the Lord's decree, and secret purpose, the bringing forth of his work, now within time, to the view of Angels and Men, which was before him in the deep of his thoughts, and Counsel from eternity; it is an opening up of the sealed Book, which we must not understand to be that secret Roll of Election, and the Book of Life, wherein the Names of the Elect are writ; but *Liber fatidicus*, the sealed Book of God's Dispensations in the World, shewing out his Counsels, and Designs, which should be brought forth in the After-ages of Time: for as the Lord did fully comprehend what he was to do, and all that was to befall his Church, and People from the Beginning to the End, long before there was a Beginning, before the Mountains were formed, so hath he copied, and written out his Heart in the Word about the same, wherein he hath most plainly shewed forth, what were his blessed Purposes, and Counsel of old; and thus the Thoughts of his Heart, his Word and his Works do sweetly agree, and each one wonderfully answers to another. For his Work doth bring forth, and accomplish his Word, that his Decree and Counsel from all Eternity may take Place.

2. The Scripture's Accomplishment is the Transcript and Writing of it over in Providence: where we may see and admire how the Word doth shine upon all the Paths and Footsteps of the Lord toward his Church in every Age, and gives Light to the same, and what an evident Reflection his Work hath again upon the Word; so that through the whole Series and Course of Providence in the Earth, we have a most exact Portraiture, and Image of the Scripture, answering one to another as Face answers to Face in the glass, where
it

it may be easy to discern the copy by the principal, and that Resemblance which is betwixt the Building, and that excellent pattern, and Model, which is held forth thereof in the Word.

3. The Accomplishment of the Scripture is the very turning that, which was the Object of our Faith and Contemplation, to be the Object of our Sense and Feeling: it is the real Birth, and bringing forth these Truths unto the World in their appointed Time and season concerning the Church, and particular Christians, which were hid in that Womb of the promise, and many dark Predictions of the Word; it is such a Thing as giveth the Promises and Prophecies, a visible Being, yea bringeth Truth so near within the Reach of our Senses, that we may even touch, as it were, and handle the Words of Life. O what an excellent Interpreter is Experience! *Taste and see*: for thus the serious Christian getteth a View of the Scripture, and spiritual Things, which the most subtil, and piercing Eye of un sanctified Schoolmen cannot reach, yea, by the Practice of Truth, Nearness to God, and retiring of the Soul to him, hath oft got more Light in an Hour, than others by many Days putting their Judgement and Invention upon the Rack.

4. This is God's own Seal, which he putteth to the Word to confirm and ratify the same; I do not only mean that secret Seal of the Spirit within, but something more external, that solemn Testimony of his Works, whereby he doth every Day appeal to Men's Consciences about his Truth: for his Works are very manifest, whereon there is so clear an engraving of his Truth and Faithfulness, that as the Impres and Image of the seal is upon the wax, men may also see whose superscription and image that is, which doth appear on such, and such passages of providence.

5. This is something we are not to seek only in the extraordinary acts of providence, or in any singular

and eminent path of a Christian's experience; nay, it doth shine forth in the smallest and most casual things that fall out, yea in every Page of that great Volume of Providence may it be clearly read.

6. The Scripture's accomplishment is such a thing as concerns every Christian in his personal case; to which his ordinary experience doth relate; whereof such have a large register, what of the Word hath been certainly proved in the several steps and changes of their life, whose practice doth much lie betwixt improvement of the Word, and observation how it is fulfilled: such can witness, how under a spiritual decay to be carnally minded is death, and when its well, what great peace they have who love God's Law: they have oft found, that in a strait he is a very present help, and in the way of duty that it's surely good to draw near to him; and in the close of their life, can from many remarkable and convincing providences declare the truth, and faithfulness of God. And truly whilst I speak here, of the Christian's experience, I think it's sad, and a great short-coming, that there is not a more serious improvement of it for this end: which is a very concerning duty on such who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, and O what an excellent addition would this be to their will or testament, when they are to leave the World, to leave a testimony behind them to the faithfulness of God in his Word and promise, and thus put their seal to the same, from what they have oft proved by sure experience! For this should prove a singular help to strengthen others, and spread abroad the same and good report of religion: yea, thus one generation should declare the works of the Lord to another, and transmit the memory of his goodness to succeeding ages.

7. This is something which not only the Christian's experience doth witness, and in every time taketh place, but hath also a peculiar reference to those ages, and periods

periods of times, wherein such particular truths should have their accomplishment. For its true, that the Prophets of old did not only in their predictions hold forth in general, the truth and certainty of those things, which should fall out: but they also inquired and searched diligently about the time; to what or what manner of time the Spirit by them did point. *1 Pet. 1. 11.* --- For 'tis truly clear, that a piece of the Word was under the Law to have its peculiar accomplishment; that part of it also under the Messiah's Kingdom, in the days of the gospel should be fulfilled, and we find a very concerning part thereof belongs to these latter times. And there is betwixt such periods of time and revolution of the Church's case, and the bringing forth of such a piece of the Scripture to a performance, a very certain and undoubted connection. 'Tis true, we do not yet well understand (which will be one of the last manifestations the Church shall have, at the end of time, when the mystery of God is finished) how to sort the event exactly to the Word: but it is sure (and were worthy of our study and observation) how every age hath something of the Scripture peculiar thereto, yea carrieth forward the Lord's work and design a further step. May we not see how one age fulfilleth such a piece of the Church's sufferings appointed for her, and puts some great trial and sad persecution over her head, which she was to meet with; whilst another age carrieth her thorow an other change, and giveth her a time of rest and breathing? How such a time bringeth Antichrist forward to his height, and such a following age begins the turn of the Church's case? Yea, every several period and revolution of time, still addeth something, to that excellent history of the Word and Providence, which we have since the beginning, and bringeth forth something further into the world, of the Lord's counsel and design about his Church.

8. The accomplishing of the Scripture is such a thing, we are to look after, in a special way here, which concerns this militant and traveling condition of the Church: for if the Scriptures were once fully accomplished, and the great mystery of God therein finished, there were then nothing more to do, his work of providence were at an end, and time should be no more. This is something, that is not here perfected at once, but is still gradually carrying on, and then shall be compleat at the resurrection of the just, and second coming of the Lord, which is the last part of Canonical Scripture to be made out, when both his work and his word, and time, shall be all finished together; but while the saints are yet by the way, they have the written word and all those precious promises therein, for present use and encouragement. For that is its proper work, to take them safe thorow this labyrinth of the world, and when it hath brought them to land, it hath no more to do; there will be then no more need for a Christian to go to a promise, and adventure upon it; we shall then no more watch, with the watchmen in a dark and stormy night, and hope for the breaking of the day: faith then shall not be at a stand, how such a word shall be made out, because of invincible difficulties in its way; no, then it hath done its work, and that which is written shall be swallowed up, in that which is seen and enjoyed, all the streams of our encouragement will then lose themselves in a greater depth. O then its finished and done, what all the promises, prophecies, and threatnings of the Word were bringing forth: and then no more need of something as a pledge and earnest in hand, to them who have the full possession of the inheritance, & under whose feet the God of peace hath trod Satan and all their enemies.

9. I shall add this, the accomplishment of the Scripture is something, which is not only demonstrated to a Christian by sensible influences, and God's secret working with his Spirit, but is made out to the observation of men, in the way of providence; and not only witnessed by that internal evidence of the Spirit, but by an external testimony, which both rationally holdeth this out to the judgment, and sensibly to the sight and experience: and this is the strongest and most full of all outward evidences, since the world must shut their eyes if they do not see it, and a Christian must deny what he both seeth and feeleth, if he deny a witness to this.

II. We would consider the *accomplishment of the Scripture*, as that which is *the Lord's peculiar work and design in the World*, and that great business which is upon the wheels of providence amidst the various changes and revolutions, which are here within time, for bringing about whereof the blessed thoughts of his heart are fixed and unalterable. This is indeed a grave and serious truth, worthy to be more noticed and laid to heart by men, that the glorious providence of God, which goeth throughout the earth, and doth particularly reach all things which come to pass, the smallest as well as the greatest interests of men, in all these doth move certainly and infallibly for the accomplishing of the Scripture, which is that great thing God hath before his eyes: for it is no personal interests of men, how great so ever they be, that can answer this end; it is something beyond the setting up of Kings, or overturning Kingdoms and Nations, that he doth mind amidst these various changes, which are in the World; 'tis some greater thing, than that which we most notice, the Lord thereby designs, how such a party is advanced, and others brought low, for these things come within the reach of his care and providence,

providence, in so far as the fulfilling of the Scripture is therein concerned,--- the outmaking of the promises, and threatnings: one syllable whereof he doth more value than all the Crowns and Kingdoms of the earth, yea will not let it fall to the ground, tho' it should be at the rate of laying cities and countries desolate. For it's in this the Lord taketh pleasure, and exerciseth his blessed tho'ts, even the bringing about what he hath spoken in his Word.

Now to clear this further, I shall hold forth these following grounds, whence it may appear.

First, The fulfilling of the Scripture, or written Word, is so great a thing, and of such Concernment, that the blessed Majesty of God thought it worthy of a place in his heart from all eternity. This was before him in his thoughts and counsels of old; even that marvellous work, which should be the after-product, and outmaking of his Word to his Church here within time, and surely was such a plot and contrivance, that as no less than infinite love, wisdom and power, were required to bring it about, so it was well becoming the Majesty of God, and worthy to be the work of all the three blessed persons of the Trinity. O if we could go down a little into this deep, and see the wonders that are there, we should find, that knowledge which usually lesseneth our admiration of other things, would heighten it here: it would be new to us every day to think how great and marvelous a thing that is which the Word is bringing forth.

2. It is upon this, even the Performance of the Word, that the present encouragement, and future blessedness of the saints doth lie. For the great interest of the Church is adventured upon the Word, and embarked with it, which would be lost; yea their stock and treasure which is laid up in heaven, and all that a Christian is worth, which is laid up in the promise, were then perished,---if the Scripture should want an

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accomplishment: the godly man hath then run and laboured in vain, and those who are fallen asleep in Christ, have died in a sad delusion: providence would be like the work of the foolish builder, who begun and knew not how to finish. O how highly then is the Lord concerned in fulfilling of his Word? That he may perfect what concerns his people, and having surely paid the price put them also in possession.

3. There is yet more than the interests of Angels and men, yea than heaven and earth is worth, that depends upon the outmaking of the Scripture; the glory of God, and especially the praise of that great attribute his *faithfulness*, which he will have no less shine forth in the performance of his Word, than his power and wisdom in this great fabrick of the universe, and these marvellous productions of nature. For he hath magnified his Word above all his works: therefore is his heart greatly set upon this, even the bringing to pass what he hath spoken; which if in the least should fail, this were no less than to make God a liar, and falsify his Word, who is through all the Church known by this blessed name, *The God of truth*.

4. We should consider this, as that great trust, which is put in his hand who only in heaven and earth was found worthy to open the Book of God's decrees and counsels, and loose the seals thereof: a trust, which the Lord did not adventure upon the Angels, the smallest promise being such as requires no less than an omnipotent power and the arm of *Jehovah*, to bring it about. For which end, he whom the Father hath anointed, is gone forth as a mighty man who rejoiceth to run his race, that he may perform his Word, and execute this great design in the administration of providence, about his Church and People; which he will not cease or give over, until the mystery of God in the Scripture, and all that was spoken by the Prophets, be put to a close, when Heaven and Earth at the

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pouring out of the last vial, shall give that solemn shout and exclamation, *It is finished, it is finished.* O if this were once fully perfect, there would be no more to do; then the Winter were past, and the Summer come, the song of *Moses* and the Lamb should be heard, because the bride hath made her self ready, then let all the trees of the wood rejoice, the hills break forth into singing, and all that is therein be glad, because the Scripture and the great design thereof is fully finished, and the day of the perfect liberty of the Sons of God is come.

5. The accomplishment of the Scripture is of such concernment, that nothing can be done until it be once finished. For this, time must wait, the Sun must keep its course, and the ordinances of the Heaven continue as they are; the World is but a scaffold until this building be perfected; for this the grave doth still retain her prisoners, and the dust of the Saints must yet rest in hope, the creation still groaneth, and the marriage-supper of the Lamb is deferred, the cry of the souls under the altar get not a full return, until all that is written in the Word be fulfilled.

6. We would consider, this is the great thing which the Lord this day is carrying on, even the accomplishment of his Word. For this is most brought upon debate, of any thing besides; the World challengeth it, and the hearts of the godly do oft call it in question; the Atheist scoffs at it, and sayeth, Where is the promise of his coming? There are often to appearance insuperable difficulties in the way of its performance: therefore doth the Majesty of God so much concern himself in this, for bringing about of which he is in a holy way restless, and providence in an incessant motion, until he hath done that which he hath spoken in his Word. It was for this cause (that the Scripture might be accomplished) that the Word was made flesh, and he who counted it no robbery to be equal with God,

God, did take upon himself the form of a servant. This is of such account in his eyes, that what time he speaks concerning a Nation or People, ere it come not to pass, he will rather put forth omnipotency, for the working of miracles, and change the very course of nature: for this, he will make the deep dry, make a way through the red Sea, and cause *Jordan* to stand as in heaps, that he may keep promise to his People; if there be no way for bringing about his Word, but through a Sea of blood, and over the bones and carcases of his enemies, he will do it, and bring it to pass, though Walled Cities, and the Sons of *Anak* mighty and strong, should stand in the way thereof. *Abraham's* old age, and *Sarah's* dead womb, must not frustrate this: if the promise of the Church's restoration cannot be made out without a wonder shewed upon dry bones scattered at the graves mouth, this shall not be wanting; when God saith, he'll bring down the enemies of his Church, if the dust of the ground should arise, down they must come. How many great designs of men hath this blessed design (that the counsel of the Lord may stand) crushed and broken? so that their work and counsel hath been as the Spider's web, when it stood cross to this end. The godly need not fear, that he be not a present help in time of trouble: for he will keep his word herein, though the Earth should be overturned, and the Mountains cast into the midst of the Sea. O who hath resisted his counsel! What are all these vicissitudes and changes here in the World, but making way for the Scripture's accomplishment? With what desire doth he move towards this end? So that as in *Zachary* 6. 8. the instruments by him appointed for executing his judgment and the threatenings of the Word, it's said, they have quieted his Spirit, his decrees are mountains of brass, which are unchangeable; the thoughts of his heart take place in all generations: therefore the Word which

which is gone forth out of his mouth, shall not return empty, but the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.

III. *The accomplishment of the Scripture is a truth very clear and manifest*, whereof none can pretend ignorance, if they do not shut their eyes, and force their own light, from the fear of such a discovery. For the obstruction doth not lie in the darkness of the object, or that men cannot see this; since we have it so clearly held forth in great and legible characters: nay, we must say, the cause is culpable, there is much of the will in it, which renders such an ignorance without excuse. O that this should be so little looked after, a matter of such near and weighty concernment, when there needs not an other demonstration, but *come and see* the works of the Lord through the earth! For he hath here so far condescended to his People, as to bring the truth near, that they even feel and handle the same: yea, he doth in a manner say to every one as to *Thomas*, *put in your hands*, touch the Word, and truth thereof, and be no longer faithless, but taste and see, that the Lord is good, and that he is true in what he hath spoken.

We are indeed to look for a more clear and full discovery of this truth, the nearer the Church is to the end of time. There is a labyrinth, as it were, of turnings and windings, through which we may see the Word oft brought, so as we lose sight thereof, and are ready to stagger about its performance: but it's as true, that the most eminent confirmations, the saints ever had of this truth, have been after greatest shakings thereabout. Yea, the Lord hath in all ages, so visibly sealed his Word by its performance, that we may say, can he be a Christian and a stranger to this in his experience! or a serious on-looker on providence and the dispensations of the time, wherein he lives, and a stranger to it, in his observation! yea, can any be so wholly
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brutish, as not to discern a thing so clear that oft-times those who run, may read?

But to speak a little more to this, I shall here point at some things, that may shew how manifest this truth is.

1. Is it not very clear, which we see every day brings to light? A truth so conspicuous, both in God's ordinary way with his Church, and in the several steps and passages of a Christian's life! For these mercies which bring the Word and promise to pass, are new every morning, and cry aloud, if we could hear, great is his faithfulness. This is indeed tried: and needs there more, to convince a blind man, that his sight is restored to him, but that he certainly seeth? sure they never wanted confirmations here, who do but seriously seek to be confirmed.

2. Is it not a clear truth, which not only is found upon the exactest trial; but is witnessed by such who ever tryed it in their most pressing straits, and extremity? for it's in the darkest night this truth hath most brightly shined: and these more remarkable venturous acts of faith, have they not still brought forth most convincing experiments of this truth? We may say, there is none can give a better account of the performance of the Word, than those who against hope, have believed in hope, that this never made them ashamed.

3. Is it not also clear, whereof there are such solemn extraordinary confirmations in all ages? For that his name is near, his wondrous works declare. I am sure, no time could ever deny its witness, how by great convincing providences, both of judgment and mercy, it hath been so sealed, as hath forced Atheists to keep Silence: no time, wherein the Church had not cause to erect a pillar, and engrave thereon, *We have seen with our eyes* the great and wondrous works of the
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Lord, by which he hath witnessed the truth of his Word,

4. Is it not a manifest truth, which even in the most strange, and dark footsteps of providence, so clearly shineth forth? These, which at the first look are an astonishment, and hard to be understood, yet after most clearly verify the Scripture; that whilst the Lord's way goeth out of our sight, yea, out of the ordinary road of his working, through a labyrinth of turnings, and cross dispensations, yet at length it doth evidently clear, and disentangle it self, which men may oft see break forth as the sun out of a dark cloud, that shineth the more brightly, the more at was obscured.

5. Is it not very clear, which can be demonstrated by such visible effects in these great changes of the World? For the fulfilling of the Scripture is not a thing hid in a corner, but oft published in the house-tops, that men may see legibly written, upon Kingdoms and Nations, the desolate ruins, and devastation of cities and houses great and fair, which are made to be without inhabitants, so as those who go by may clearly read the cause, and bear that witness, *Lo, there is sin visibly punished according to the Word.*

6. How clear is this, which we have so evidently drawn out, and acted over in a Christian walk? For what else is the spiritual conversation of such, those visible effects and evidences of the grace of God all along a Christian's way, but a visible convincing witness to the performance of the word? Have not such a very audible Echo and refund to that which is the great drift and Scope of the Scripture? where men may see the Bible turned over into a practical history, written forth, and acted on the heart, and conversation of the saints, as on a stage, or theatre: the Word living, speaking, moving, and clearly diffusing it self through all the veins, as it were, and conduits
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of a Christian's life; so that if the truth, and reality of the grace of God be a thing manifest, and unquestionable, we must also see therein the real performance of the Scripture.

7. I shall add, we may clearly see how one piece of the Scripture is nothing else but the punctual fulfilling, and accomplishment of the other: how that which was shadowed out by dark types, under the Law, and held in a Prophecy, through the Old Testament, is written before our eyes in a plain, and real history in the New Testament, and that the gospel is only a fulfilling of the Law and the Prophets.

IV. Though it is very manifest, and by undeniable proofs can be demonstrated, that the Scripture hath a real accomplishment, and doth certainly take place, in the constant course of providence here in the World, that I am sure if men do not darken themselves they can be no strangers to such a thing; yet we must say, *This truth which most nearly concerns us, is to the most of men, (even such who seem to give a large assent to the Word) a mystery and dark riddle.* There are few who do but enquire if there be such a thing, if the promises and threatnings have indeed a certain outmaking; few do seriously ponder the providences of God, in which the truth and faithfulness of the Word shineth forth, that they may thereby be further confirmed: we see that to many (alas too many) the great concernments of the Law and everlasting happiness are a trivial and an impertinent business: this is a truth the World doth pass without regarding: such as sport at Religion, when they come to earnest here, dare not stand before this discovery; it concerneth them much to reconcile their principles with their practice, their fear begetteth hatred, and both put their wit and invention on the rack, how to dispute away any remainder of a conscience, to im-
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prison their light, and under the pretext of reason, run down godliness, and the absolute necessity thereof: yea, besides, doth not sensuality, wherein many wallow, and steep themselves, so dull and drown the soul, put such an interposition of the Earth betwixt them, and this truth, as wholly darkens it? And, oh, how sad, that many having a large profession to be Christians, scarce ever knew what it is to put the Word to an essay and trial, in the concerns of their life; to have their light followed with experience, wherein the very truth and reality of Religion lieth.

To clear this, I shall hold forth some things, which may shew how little this truth of the Scripture's accomplishment is known, or studied by the most of men.

1. The abounding of so much Atheism, that there are many who not only disclaim the practice of that Religion they seem to profess, but do state themselves in most direct opposition to the rules and principles thereof; these to whom the Scripture is but as a Romance, yea, who do only converse therewith to prove their wit and parts in impugning the same; who avowedly mock at the judgments, and providences of God; I confess these may be reckoned Monsters, a very prodigy in the time, wherein they live; though, alas, it is not the least part of the World! and which is strange! we see the most horrid Atheists do usually abound where the light of the Gospel hath most shined: the savage places of the Earth bring forth no such monstrous births, as are hatcht within the visible Church; for thus the judgment of God putteth a blacker dye on them than others. O what a terrible sound would the fulfilling of the Scripture have in men's ears, if they once came to have serious thoughts thereof; since they cannot admit this, but they must certainly read their

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own sentence of death, which a few days shall put in execution; and if the Scripture be true, they are then unspeakably miserable!

2. That indifferency which we see amongst men about Religion, and the most concerning truths of scripture, doth shew how little this is known or laid to heart: whence, there is such a generation who do not professedly deny the scripture, yet can turn it over in a school-problem, and wonder that men should ingage so far upon it. It is not that it is hid from them, but they truly chuse to hide themselves from it; as more suiting that interest they drive, that the truth of God should be rather a matter of opinion than of faith, a thing which they would dispute, but not believe. But, O, what other thoughts would a clear sight of this, cause, --- That within so few days the truths and threatnings of the Word shall be sad earnest; the fulfilling whereof no sharpness of wit, nor subtil arguments, will be able to evade!

3. That there is so much barren theory of Divine truths in the world, with so little serious Christian diligence, doth it not sadly witness how small acquaintance men have with this truth? Whence, we see so great a part of those who professedly acknowledge the word, and are daily conversing with it, yet can give no other account thereof, but report; so many that can satisfyingly discourse of the Scripture, could never put their seal to it, that *God is true therein*. Whence are so many great School-divines, and able Ministers for parts, such visible Atheists in their way, and practice? Is it not, they really judge Divinity and Religion, rather a science, and matter of speculation, than a matter of sense and feeling, which men should more live than speak, and cannot be known without experience, the true end of knowledge? But, O this cannot be found in books, men will not meet with it in a throng of choicest notions, it confoundeth

confoundeth the wise, and the disputer of this world, whilst the meanest and most simple Christian oft knoweth more than those of greatest parts.

4. The great Hypocrisy which is in the world, I mean within the visible Church, doth too clearly shew, that this truth is little thought on, or laid to heart. For what is that false shew, and appearance (which we may say is not a sin, but the very sinfulness of sin) Is it not the height of Atheism? And a real contradiction in their practice, to this, that the Scripture of God is true, and will have an unquestionable accomplishment? O could any be so monstrously irrational, to drive this poor plot, how to appear that which they are not, to be at such pains to act the part handsomely of a serious Christian, to personate his tears, and grief, his spiritual frame, his zeal for God, if he did think gravely on this truth, and did believe the threatnings of the Word; that they will surely take place and be within a little while no complement, but sad earnest, & that he is every hour standing under that Scripture-wo against Hypocrites? I am sure it would make his very hair stand upright, his joynts loose, and his thighs smite upon one another, could he but seriously think upon this.

5. Those unwarrantable ways which in a time of trial men take for their escape, may witness this, that the word they do not judge a sure ground to venture on. Whence is there such hesitation in suffering times? From that day many taking their leave of Christ, who have rather chosen sin than affliction? O is it not that they judge the testimony of the God of truth is not sufficient security to carry them through such a strait, and are not fully perswaded that it must come to pass what he hath promised? For if they were, they should reckon it their greatest safety to embarque their interest on so sure a ground, and with much quietness

etness repose their soul, and disburthen their care by putting it over on the word.

6. What doth the frequent discouragement and uncomfortable walk of the People of God speak forth? doth it not witness how little they are in earnest with this great truth of the Scripture's accomplishment, or established herein? What meaneth these distrustful fears, and perplexed complaints? If their eyes be but open to know, they have such a well as the promise of God, at their hand, how is it that the smallest straits are so puzzling, and ready to outwit them, that they so usually stumble at the cross? And as things from without do appear, their encouragement made to ebb and flow? Is not here the cause, That they stagger at the promise, whilst probabilities in some visible way, do not go along for its performance? It's truly easy to have some sweet notions of faith at a distance, but whilst the trial comes near, upon such a close approach, that there is not another way, but to put the whole stress of their particular interest on the Word, and on it alone, many are then at a stand, because they are not thoroughly assured, that though the earth should be overturned, there is an absolute necessity for the promise of God to take place.

Now from these things may it not appear, that this grave truth of the Scripture's accomplishment is but little known, or studied? I confess, we may think on it with astonishment, how a matter so nearly concerning us is not more our work! there are indeed many things worthy to be known, but our short life can scarce allow time, or give leisure for the study thereof. But O this, though we had only two days to live, I think might require the one, to be sure and perswaded about the truth of that whereon our heaven and eternal Blessedness lieth, and on which we must lay our last Hold, when we are in the passage at
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that strange step betwixt time and eternity. O what a wonder, how rational souls who walk on the border of the greatest hope and fear imaginable, can yet be so unconcerned thereabout! such serious thoughts might force men to retire, and go sit alone; and truly these things gravely considered may seem strange and hard to reconcile.

1. That there is such a thing as the very Word and Testimony of God this day upon record, wherewith we have so much to do, which doth offer it self to men's trial, and exactest search; and yet we put it so little to that touchstone, that we may know it upon an other account, than report or hear-say.

2. How in a matter of such high importance as salvation through all eternity, and the ground of this hope, men should take the truth on an implicit faith, or satisfy themselves with a common assent thereto, as though it were enough to witness our believing the same, because we did never doubt or call it in question: I am sure, men would not be so lax, and so easy to satisfy, in the most common interest they have here in the World.

3. How can men render to others a reason of their hope, when it is enquired, who did never ask a reason of this at themselves? or will those seal the truth with their blood, who never had it sealed upon their heart by experience?

4. Whence is it that men can have comfort in Scripture, who are not well grounded in the faith thereof? Indeed those who are solidly perswaded about the truth, and its certain out-making, may have much joy and peace; whilst they know, the ground of their confidence can bear up any stress or burden they lay upon it. And for what end did the Lord witness the certainty of his Word by two immutable things, wherein 'tis impossible for him to lie, but that from so
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sure and strong a ground, his People might have strong consolation?

5. How can any think to adventure their immortal soul upon that, whereon they fear to venture an outward interest? or put over their dearest things into his hand and keeping, who could never say, they know in whom they believed?

6. May it not seem strange, that men can believe a certain performance of the Word and promises, and not be more deeply affected therewith? O is this true, shall it surely come to pass, and not one jot thereof fall to the ground! and should it not cause us to awake in the night, and ever bear us company? Ought we not to think our selves at a sad pass, that day, wherein we take not a turn in the meditation of divine truths, if we be sure that these must take place?

7. I would add, if this be indeed the Scripture of God, which surely hath an accomplishment, O how is it we are so little Christians? Why doth men's walk so sadly jar with so great an hope? What manner of persons should those be, that are perswaded, within a little time these heavens must pass away as a scroll, the elements melt with fervent heat, and the earth be burnt up? I think, if this will not press home on men, to be fervent and diligent, they must be in a very sad lethargie.

V. *The accomplishment of Scripture is a most clear, and undeniable witness of its divinity; that it is his Word, who is not like man to lie, or the son of man to repent, and hath this as its distinguishing character, that not one syllable thereof falls to the ground: This is the undoubted privilege of God, and of him alone, to foresee things contingent, which are many ages after to fall out, & have no dependence upon necessary, and natural causes; and truly, this may be a convincing argument, yea, we may say, of all external testimonies*
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nies is the greatest; but it's strange to think what a generation there is, who can sport at the Scripture, and question the truth thereof! who yet did never once seriously enquire if such a thing be true, else so clear a witness might stare them in the face. Such a party we should look on with compassion. It's also sad to think at how poor a rate, far below their allowance, many of the Saints do here live, because there is so little of that excellent and more noble Spirit, to search the Scripture for their further comfort and establishment thereby.

It is true, this blessed record doth bear witness to it self, and is known by its own light: whereon there is such a visible impress of the glorious God, such convincing marks of its true descent, as may thoroughly shew whose it is, and how far it exceeds all human invention; and thus by a clear manifestation of the truth, doth commend it self to men's consciences, as a safe ground whereon they may repose their soul. It is also clear, how wonderfully the Scripture hath been preserved, and the original copies thereof kept through all ages, that what ever small variation there may appear as to some *Apiculi*, which in some places hath caused diverse readings, yet in any necessary, or saving truth, the greatest Criticks will confess they do not in the least vary; and it is known (wherein we are to adore that special providence of God) that the Jewish Church, to whom this sacred *depositum* was delivered, did with such exact and singular care look to the same, even in the least tittle, or letter thereof; this being the great work and study of the Mazarites, from one age to another, to see to the preserving of that great record, from being in the least vitiated or corrupted; and the greatest adversaries of the truth cannot possibly deny that agreement betwixt those many original copies, in the whole substance, which may be very convincing

cing to the World. And do not men see, how marvelous the whole frame of the Scripture is? What a correspondency betwixt all the parts thereof, that nothing in it doth in the least vitiate the proportion and beauty of the work, but it has all along an evident tendency to advance holiness & conform the soul to God: With a wonderful consent and harmony in answering to this great end, we see the simplicity, and plainness of its style, yet backt with a convincing Majesty, and authority upon the conscience; yea, besides, it hath been attested by miracles, that were great in themselves, famous in their time, transmitted to the Church in after-ages, with unanswerable evidences of their truth; that not only the witness of the Word, but other pressing and rational grounds may let us see there could be no deceit, or imposture therein.

These are a great testimony to the truth: but I may say on very sure ground, that, next to that great witness of the Spirit, there is no argument more convincing to reach Atheism a stroke, and throughly satisfy an exercised spirit, who may be plunged about this great thing, the authority of the Scripture, than a clear discovery of its performance whilst under the assault of such a temptation: if this be the very word of God, they may but retire within, & then turn their eyes abroad in the World, to see what a visible impress of the Word is stamped on every piece of the work, and providence of God. Now for further clearing I would offer these few things.

I. The accomplishment of the Scripture is a very publick testimony from Heaven to its divinity, whilst the Lord by his works through the earth, which are done in the view of Angels & men, doth solemnly avow that this is his Word. For we must say, his work within on the hearts of his People, & without about the Church, is such, whereat men, yea all the magicians of the earth, may stand amazed, and confess that nothing

nothing less than a divine almighty power can accomplish the same.

2. This gives in the witness of all the generation of the righteous : who from the beginning have proved the truth thereof, yea, 'tis sealed by the blood of many excellent Christians, some of whom though they could not well dispute for it, yet had so strong a demonstration of the power of the truth within, as made it an easy work to die for the same.

3. This doth clearly shew, the Scripture is an unchangeable rule of righteousness that alters not ; but takes place in all ages, whence such as are wise to bring providence in to the Word, and compare the experience and remarks of one time with another, may have a great reach, & be thus led in a sure path, as to the foreseeing of events.

4. This also doth demonstrate, that it is his Word, who doth rule and guide the World, and hath a sovereign dominion over the same : whilst we may here see such remarkable events, which both in the present and in former times have fallen out, as may shew a power, that can reach the greatest with a stroke, shake the most established Kingdoms, and even over the belly of insuperable difficulties, accomplish the Word ; yea, that surely the Spirit of the wheels which moves them, is from him whose Word this is. For it is not more clear, that these curtains of the Heavens are stretcht forth over the earth, than that the Scripture is stretcht out over the whole work and frame of providence : so as that all the motions and steps thereof, even of the most casual things that fall out, have a visible tendency to accomplish those ends which the Scripture hath held forth.

5. This clearly sheweth, it must be his Word, who hath foreseen all things that were to befall the Church, and the various changes and adventures of every Christian's life through time : whilst it is so wonderfully shaped

shaped and suited to every new trial of the church, as if intended only for that time, and to every case of a godly man, as though it had been alone writ for them.

6. This also sheweth, that he who is the author of the Scripture, and hath framed that admirable piece, must have some immediate correspondence with the Spirit of man, knoweth our sitting down, and rising up, yea, doth search the heart and the reins. For experience can tell how the Word is directed to the heart, doth reach the most inward contrivances thereof, doth so clearly reveal and open up a Christian to himself, that we may say, of a truth he is the God of the Spirits of all flesh, and one greater than our heart, whose it is.

7. I shall further add, the fulfilling of the Scripture in the experience of the Saints doth shew, it is nor a dead letter, but hath power, and life ; and there must be an enlightning quickning Spirit, that surely goeth along with the same. This clearly demonstrates something above words, yea, above nature, in the written Word, that can make such a change upon the soul, give life to the dead, open the eyes of the blind, yea, can turn a lump of earth, that formerly tended downward, now without any violence to move, from a principle of life towards God, as the sparks flee upward.

VI. *The accomplishment of the Scripture is a most pleasant, and truly delectable subject*, worthy of our serious thoughts, and study. For here is held out the highest truth, for the judgment to contemplate the truth and faithfulness of God in the Word ; and here is also the greatest good for the affections to embrace, and delight in, as that wherein our whole happiness is certainly wrapt up. It is undeniable, that it is the godly man, who knoweth best what true and solid pleasure ;

pleasure is ; which he doth not lose, by turning his heart from the creature to God, but maketh a blessed exchange. O, how far do the joys and delights of the soul exceed these of the senses ! And the delight of a Christian, how far doth it surpass that of a natural man, even in his best estate ! and sure, this precious study of the daily performance of the Word, is one of these paths of pleasure, which would bring in more solid joy to the spirit in some few hours, than some years wallowing in the carnal delights of the flesh, which is but as pleasure in sport, but quickly turneth to grief in earnest. It is one of the great mistakes of the World, that religion tends so much to sadden and disquiet the Soul ; nay, it is certainly the want of this, because we are so little truly religious. When we shuffle over our duty, and take but a passing look of the ways and work of God in the World, then it is indeed very affrighting, and unpleasant ; but when in a more Christian way, we do seriously look thereupon, and get our heart near God, taking the Word along with us, O how delightful, and ravishing a sight will this be ! I truly think, though there were not a command, though it were no duty, nor such advantage in the study of this grave truth, yet that joy and refreshment, which the soul would find in such a diligent search, in going down into this blessed deep, should invite us thereto.

But when I speak of this, what a sweet, and delightful subject, the performance and outmaking of the Scripture is, it must be understood, that it is so only to the saints : and it is no wonder, the World keep at such a distance from it ; for this is a truth they can not bear, they hate it, which (as *Micajah*) doth prophesy alway hard things, and carrieth a message of death to them ; a serious View of this truth, to ungodly men, is as the handwriting upon the wall before them, which doth foretel their approaching ruin, and should

should cause them all to tremble ; the knowledge whereof must encrease their sorrow, and disquietness, yea, cause them to cry out, O, do not torment us before the time. For they are surely undone, and ruined, if the Scripture of God be true, and hath a performance. But, O what pleasant and refreshful tidings, doth this carry to a Christian ! What a sweet view doth he here get of the inheritance, and blessed estate of the saints, which may cause such an exclamation, How great is that goodness, which is laid up for those that fear thee !

To demonstrate this, I shall hold out some things, from which we may see how delightful a subject the accomplishment of the Scripture is, for a Christian to study.

1. Serious converse with this grave truth leadeth forward to practice, and thus helpeth to bring down theory to experience : which is the most sweet, and desirable of all other demonstrations, that we can have of the truth of the Scripture, and maketh our light clear, and pleasant to the eyes, turning the exercise of our judgment and reason thereabout, into sense and feeling ; we are then made to see what a difference there is, betwixt that discovery which a spiritual man (whose religion is his practice) hath of this, and the cold winter-light of natural understanding, that hath no heat or warmth therewith ; which is as great a difference, as betwixt hearing of such a thing by report, and seeing it with our eyes.

2. This blessed study, how the Scripture hath certain accomplishment, would help us to read the Word with an other kind of pleasure. O, what representation should then the truths and promises thereof have to the godly man ? It would be as one going in to look over his charters, and the great things therein contained, which he doth not in the least debate, or question, since they are past the seals, and fully ratified,

and now considereth all which is promised, as his own, which he lookt in former times upon, but as a common thing, whilst he made not earnest of the certainty thereof, and what an interest he had in the same. O, when he readeth that promise of a new heaven and earth, & that glorious estate which abideth the Saints; He cannot turn his eyes & thoughts so easily off it, but is made to stand, and wonder, that so great a thing, that will make such a marvellous change in his condition, is even shortly to come to pass! How sweet and pleasant is it, for such an one to turn over the promises, who can set to his seal, and bear this witness, that he hath as really prov'd the truth thereof by sure experience, as he knoweth he hath a real being! Surely the Bible is an other thing to these, than it is to the greater part of men, who only make it the subject of their contemplation.

3. In this blessed study we should have much bro't to our hand to observe, and our observation made sweet, and pleasant to us. For there we might see how all the paths of the Lord towards his People are mercy and truth: this would give us a refreshing d'jary of providence; how in such a plunging strait we found the Word sensibly sealed; what observable confirmations we have had therewith, at such a time and in such a condition; the after-recounting of which in an hour of trial, or in the evening of our life, would exceed the greatest pleasures, the men of this World can have, in looking over their gold and greatest treasures, which for many years they have been laying up.

4. In the serious study of the daily accomplishing of the Scripture, we should have a most satisfying view and prospect of what God is doing up and down the earth; what purposes and designs he hath on foot; and how things here beneath do work together for carrying on of the same. We should see what

an excellent and curious piece of work this frame of providence is, which the more it is considered, it will be the more a wonder; how perfect in all its various colours; what an observable concurrence there is here; how several discords, which we see here, do yet agree with one consent, for the completing of God's design, which is still going on: and whilst we think there must be some disorder amongst the wheels, we are made after to see that this confusion was an excellent step of providence, confounding the wisdom of men; every piece of his way being so knit to another, as discovers to such who make this blessed truth their serious study, a most rare contexture, beyond the reach of the greatest artists that ever was. Here also we might go up to that watch-tower of Christian observation, and from thence take a grave view of God's way, and lay his work in the World to the scripture as the measuring line; where we should see (and find the sight thereof very pleasant) how the Word every day takes place, doth issue through all the veins and arteries of providence, each line whereof is so exactly drawn, as by a pencil in some skilful hand, to that great exemplar of the Scripture. Here we might discern those eminent examples of judgment and mercy, that in every age are set before us how wicked men prosper for a time, yet have a dreadful issue, and are suddenly cast into destruction; they spread as a green bay tree, and within a little time their place cannot be found; also how the godly are oft sore afflicted, yet flourishing as the palm-tree, and the more they are depressed, the more they grow:--how the enemies of the Church are oft lifted up, for a sorer fall; and the Church brought low, in order to her greater enlargement:---how judgment finleth out sinners, and is oft exactly proportioned in measure and kind to the sin; and on the other hand how integrity is sore tossed off, yet still falleth upon

upon its feet, and overclouded that it may shine more brightly after : How the threatenings of the Word do visibly overtake Kingdoms and Nations, bring down great houses, cause those brought up in scarlet to embrace the dung-hill, and oft let not the hoary head of *cruel* and wicked men go into the grave in peace : and again to consider how the Lord forsaketh not his People, but sheweth respect to their way ; the good man walketh in his integrity, and his seed after him is blessed. O, how sweet an exercise were this for a Christian, even to lose himself in !

5. From thence we might in a great measure discern *what of the night* it is with the Church : if there be any evidences that it is near day ; and what such a sinful case doth threaten ; we should be skilful to feel the Churches pulse, and thereby find what symptoms there are of life or death and perceive a dark cloud of judgment advancing, when it is but like an hand-breadth. Surely this study would make us wise to know the times, and what we ought to do therein ; for amongst those various events which fall out in every age, the Lord's way is constant with itself, and with his truth, if we be right Observers.

6. Here we should have a most pleasant and clear view, how the Scripture of God comprehendeth the whole state of the Church, from the beginning to the end of time : that it is a most full, and perfect register of all the vicissitudes and alterations, which are to go over her head, whilst in a militant condition ; and doth also most exactly point out those occurrences, and remarkable events, which fall out in the ordinary way and course of providence, that we may read them as evidently in the Word, as we see them with our eyes fall out in the World. For in following this study, we should clearly see how the Scripture bringeth the Church to light, out of the womb of an eternal decree, and doth trace it from the first promul-
gation

gation of the Gospel after the fall, through these dark times before the flood, whilst it was but in families, and through that long trial in Egypt, and all its fettered and flourishing condition in *Canaan*, and carrieth her for-ward through all the several changes of her case, under her following decay, and in the time of the captivity, even to the manifestation of Christ, and dawning of the gospel : and as it thus taketh in within its reach the whole estate and the special events, which did befall the Church under the Law, so we may see how the Scripture also followeth the Church, through the whole time of the gospel, and bringeth her as a grain of mustard-seed from a day of small things, until it bring her to perfection, taketh her as it were by the hand from her infancy, and goeth with her through all the turnings of her condition ; through that long and dark night of Antichrist's reign, pointeth clearly out her condition, and various assaults that she should endure in that time, and that blessed victory which she should afterwards have, though not all at once, but gradually, over her enemies ; and that the Word and the Church do never part, but one walketh step for step with the other, until it bring her safe to land, and as it were put her off its hand and guard, at the coming of Christ.

7. This would also help us to sweet thoughts, and give us matter of a song in the saddest night of the Church's condition. When we see how God's great design in the World is the accomplishing of the Scripture, and know that his ends which he hath held forth therein, cannot be frustrated, it would serve to silence all our complaints, with wondering at God's way, and triumphing in the works of his hands : we should not then be afraid of evil tidings ; a stormy time would not outwit us ; being persuaded that though the earth should be overturned, it shall be surely well with the righteous, the Church must flourish,

and all her enemies be found liars, because he is faithful that hath promised, whose Word will as surely come to pass, as the sun doth return after a dark night.

VII. *It doth now more specially concern the godly in these latter times, to study this great truth of the accomplishment of the Scripture, and set about a serious inquiry and search therein, as a truth that shall yet be in a further measure discovered, and opened up, the nearer the Church is to the end of time : which may thus appear.*

1. Herein is the Word express, that one piece of the Scripture, which from former ages was sealed up, should in the latter days be clear, and easy to understand. Dan. 12. 4, 9. The seal is there put on ; *but go thy way Daniel, for these Words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.* But, Rev. 22. 9. We have that bar taken of, *Seal not the sayings of the Prophecy of this book ; for the time is at hand ;* because then the time did draw near, to which a more full discovery and opening of the Scripture was reserved, and a more large manifestation of the spirit beyond former ages. Now by the last days, we are not only to understand the whole time of the gospel, though it is thus termed in the Scripture, but the latter part of these last times, which is more especially pointed at, even the close and evening of time, that last *Epocha*, and period of prophetic chronology, to which a greater accomplishment of Scripture-Prophecies is reserved.

2. This also is expressly promised that in the latter days, the Church shall have a more full discovery of this truth, how the Scripture is verified, Dan. 12. 4. *Many shall run to fro, and knowledge shall be increased ;* which increase, as it clearly pointeth at the last times, and that bright day the Church shall have, when Israel shall be brought in to Christ,

Christ, it doth also point at and promise some greater light, and a more full opening up of the mysteries of the word, and fulfilling thereof : For the former part of the Chapter sheweth, that increase of knowledge doth relate to those things which were before sealed. We wait and believe the further accomplishment of this promise to the Church, beyond all we have yet seen ; that many Scripture-truths, now dark and abstruse, shall be made so clear, as shall even cause us to wonder at the gross mistakes we once had thereof, yea, that after-generations shall have a discovery and insight into some Prophecies now obscure, which shall as far exceed us, as this time doth go beyond former ages, which comparatively we must say were very dark. O ! when that promise of the in-calling of the Jews shall once take place, what a wonder will they be to themselves, that their understanding should have been under such a veil, when the truth shall be clear, and evident to them in that day ! Will it not be a sweet and easy work, for the godly to sort together the predictions of the Word, and the events ? And truly there is much now wrapt up in Scripture-Prophecies, not yet fulfilled, which (we may say) in aftertimes, when the event shall unvail their meaning, will exceed, yea, confound all those comments, many have had upon them.

3. Is it not also clear, that those Prophecies, which of all the Scripture were most obscure, and overclouded with dark figures and allegories, concerning which there had been such mistake and hesitation by the Church, so many perplexing queries, have a peculiar respect to the last times ? And that then they shall be made plain, and easy, when so notable a key, as the event doth open them up ; such as those of the witnesses recovering life, and rising again, Babylon's fall and ruin, Christ reigning with his Saints a thousand Years, which now are in some measure already cleared,

from their begun accomplishment, beyond former times; but we wait for a more full commentary, that time shall give upon the same.

4. It is in the latter times, that the glory of God in his truth and faithfulness, shall most eminently shine forth. That is a part of the solemn congratulation of the Church upon Babylon's fall, *Rev. 15. 3.* not only *Great and marvellous are thy works*, but, *just and true are thy ways*. For truly in this stroke of the judgment of God, and those remarkable providences concurring therewith, the fulfilling of the Scripture will be so plain and undeniable, that we may say, it will then daze the eyes of men, even greatest Atheists, alarm the World, yea very effectually contribute (we have ground so to judge) to that promised encrease of the Church, and in coming of the Jews, when in Antichrist's fall and ruin they shall see so convincing a seal put to one of the most considerable Prophecies of the Word; in the accomplishment whereof much of the Prophetick part of the New-Testament, relating to the Church's state, and her long trial under Antichrist's reign, may be seen clearly verified.

5. The Lord hath reserved his greatest Works to the latter days, wherein his judgments shall be manifest, and the Word confirmed by such solemn convincing providences, that men will not get them passed without a remark: we are this day witnesses to many such, and are looking what these times shall yet bring forth, that the great and remarkable acts of the Lord must force the World to see a divine power; and say, lo, there is an undoubted accomplishment of the Scripture.

6. The Church in these last Times hath peculiar advantages, for understanding this truth of the Scripture's accomplishment, which former ages had not.

1. A great part thereof is now fulfilled, that men may see with their eyes, if they but know how to lay the

Word

Word and Work of God together. The Christian Church had in former times but dark glances at these great things, which we have this day visibly transcribed in providence; the promises were then travelling in birth of that which is now brought forth.

2. Are we not mounted, as it were, on the shoulders of that experience and observation of former times, which hath been transmitted to us? and we must say upon that account, the Church hath now a greater seal and confirmation of the truth, then what it had in the days of the Prophets, and the Apostles, even when Christ was in the flesh.

3. The Temple of God and Ark of his Testament is now opened in Heaven, light more fully abounding, and the means of knowledge. And, O! should not this be much our study, who have a greater talent than former ages! certainly this will be a sin of a deeper dye, than in times of ignorance; since we can be no strangers to this truth, without shutting our eyes, blinding the conscience, doing violence to our light, when the Lord doth give his People such solemn confirmations.

7. I shall add, is it not clearly foretold in that *Dan. 12. 4.* that in the last times this will be one of the special exercises of the saints to enquire, and make a diligent search concerning the Scriptures accomplishment? For it's there said, *many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased*; importing, that this shall be much their study, and cause a diligent search, whereunto the great works of God in these times shall invite them: And what should be the posture of the Godly in these days, on whom the end of the world is come? should it not be like the watchman in the last watch of the night, who looketh oft what appearance there is from the east of the day breaking? a serious enquiry what of the Scripture is fulfilled, whereby we may know on very clear grounds,

if

if the night be far spent, the day at hand, & that the coming of the Lord to judgment draweth near.

VIII. *This is a great, and concerning duty for Christians to study this truth, that they may have something more than Report, how the Scripture hath a sure accomplishment, and doth take place in the providences of the time wherein we live. I must think it strange, that there is such a great help as this, so near, and yet we see it not, nor do seriously ponder the same, when the command is so express to observe the works of the Lord, which for that end are shewed forth, that men may enquire, and read the faithfulness of God therein; yea, that so great a truth, which would abide the search of all the criticks of the World, a truth wherein our blessedness through time and eternity lieth, should offer it self to our trial, and yet, is so little known! O, who can dispense with the neglect of this duty? by which we answer that solemn call and invitation of the works of God, do honour him, serve our generation, are helpers to our own faith, and are thereby helped to strengthen others, yea, are brought to see with our eyes, and from experience, what before was as a strange thing unto us.*

Now to clear how much this is a Christian's duty, to study a practical converse with the Word, and to be serious observers of its accomplishment, let us consider.

1. We are thus helped to declare the Works of the Lord, and to give him the glory of his faithfulness. And is not that a weighty duty? Which at all times, in every station and condition of life, should engage men to this study. Thus, every Christian may become a witness to the truth, and put his seal thereto; for which he should think his life truly desirable, and doth in no small measure attain the true end thereof, though he had no other opportunity, for his master's
service.

service. We may say, this truth of the Scripture's accomplishment, like a great roll, hath been transmitted from hand to hand, from one age to another, attested and as it were subscribed by so many witnesses, it doth thus come to our time, and to every man's door and require their personal witnessing and sealing of the same.

2. This should make it an easy work, to trust the Word, and to adventure thereon in the ordinary occurrences of their life. They may well trust God in a strait, who have so strong an argument to make use of, that oft they have tried him, and the truth of his Word, by many, many experiences. Will not *those that know his name, trust on him?* Which was a notable testimony from a serious Christian in a very sharp trial; "Oft have I tried God, and shall I not learn to trust him once?"

3. This doth lay the Christian in the way of that promise. *Psal. 107. last. ver.* a promise truly large and comprehensive, but little considered, that *such as are wise to observe the works of God, they shall see the loving kindness of the Lord, even in their own particular case made out to them, yea, whilst they are serious to observe his works abroad in the World, and his way to others, they shall be no losers thereby at home; but find this promise meet them and turn their general observation, into personal experience of the loving kindness of the Lord.*

4. Thus the saints by experiencing the truth of the Word, get a convincing seal thereby to their interest in the promise. For begun possession is indeed a strong witness to this right, when they can say, they have got as certain returns of the Word, which they have put to an essay, in some particulars of their life, as they are sure of any thing they did ever see; so that from unquestionable experience they may set up a pillar, and write thereon, *Hisberto habet the Lord helpt us.*

5. Thus

5. Thus should Christians, with much advantage, be helped to convince gainsayers. For it's sure, Atheism could not make so bold and publick an appearance, if men did not so much take their religion on trust. O, the serious experienced man can with an other confidence own the truth; whose experience and observation of the works of God give him an argument that none can answer, while not only he can assert, but conduct and lead men to the things themselves, that they may see, if in such and such particulars the Scripture be not truly fulfilled.

6. Thus the providence of God would have a more sweet refreshing countenance: when from this great height, that watchtower of Christian observation, we take a view thereof. And truly, otherways, men will stumble at the most ordinary dispensations, and think God's Work is a mass of confusion: but here we are taught to see, how the written Word and his way are linked in a most sweet agreement.

7. We may thus trace Divine truth, even by our sense and feeling, and joyn the Word and experience in a regular correspondence: yea, thus we should have a clear transcript of the Lord's way with his Church, taken out of that great authentick original of the Scripture, and there see on what a solid basis and foundation, that magnificent structure of providence is raised up. What a notable key should we thus have for opening the Scripture, by a serious humble inquiry after the works of God? Where not only the impressiion and sign of the power, but of the truth and faithfulness of the Lord, are so very legible.

8. This is a piece of our talent, wherewith we are entrusted; of which every Christian should study a serious improvement, knowing they must render an account, what their observation of this great truth
hath

hath gained, and what further establishment and confirmation they have thus attained.

9. I would add, the concernment and weight of this study may press it much on us. For, if the Scripture's accomplishment be an undoubted truth, O! then this is sure, the Saints have a great inheritance: they are Princes, though now under a disguise; and though yet minors, they are heirs of more than the World can shadow forth. The Christian is then more happy on a dunghil, scraping his sores, than such who are cloathed in purple, and fare delicately every day. If this be sure, we should look with compassion, rather than envy, on those whom the World doth account happy: We need not question the gain of Godliness; then it is sure, that such who sow in tears, shall reap in joy; and the righteous though now trampled upon, in the morning shall have dominion. Yea, in a word, we may then on sure ground solace our selves with the thoughts of that great change, which will be within a little time when the grave must render back her prisoners; and may with as much assurance of a blessed resurrection, lie down in the dust, as we are sure there will be a morning, when we lie down at night. O! then, there is a Heaven, and a Hell, that is certain; eternity is not a night-dream; and one moment shall shortly put an end to all our services, yea, the shutting of our eyelids at death, shall but open them in the Paradise of God.

Having touched this truth a little in the general, I shall now hold forth some arguments, whence *the accomplishment of the Scripture* may be demonstrated: they are these five, which I intend to prosecute in the following discourse.

FIRST

FIRST Argument. To prove the Scripture is certainly fulfilled, and hath an accomplishment, is this; That which hath been in all ages the testimony of the Saints; what every particular Christian doth seal, from their frequent and sure experience; what is found and proved by them, in their daily walk, upon exactest trial; yea, what as many as ever were serious in religion, do witness, must be certain and true.

But the accomplishment of the Scripture is such;
Therefore, &c.

II. Argument. That which is manifest and legible in the whole course and tenor of providence about the Church, and by clear convincing instances both of judgment and mercy is made out to the observation of every age, must be a certain truth. But the Scripture's accomplishment is such,---Therefore, &c.

III. Argument. That which hath not only the Christian's testimony from experience, and of the Church from constant observation, but is obvious even to the view of the World; that which, from the conscience of the worst of men doth force a testimony, that they can neither shift nor deny; which also may be demonstrated to the conviction of ordinary observers, and hath a publick acknowledgement from greatest Atheists and mockers of religion in every age, must surely be a clear truth.

But, &c. Therefore-----.

IV. Argument. That which was to take place in such and such periods of time, and hath accordingly come to pass, the event exactly answering to the prediction; yea, that whereof a great part is now fulfilled, and but a little at this day remaineth to be made out, must be a certain truth,

But

But a great part of the Scripture is thus already fulfilled, and but a little thereof now remaineth.

Therefore, &c.

V. Argument. That which not only is for the most part already accomplished, but is a thing whereof we have such sure confirmations, yea, so great a pledge in our hand from the Lord, that what yet remains shall be certainly fulfilled, must it not be an undoubted truth?--But the Scripture, as to these special predictions, that are not yet made out, is such concerning which the Lord hath given his People a very large pledge, and strong confirmations, now in these latter times, to believe their certain accomplishment.
Therefore, &c.

THE FIRST ARGUMENT.

THAT the Scripture of God, contained in the old and new Testaments, wherein our great hope and comfort doth lie, is certainly true, and hath a real accomplishment, may be thus demonstrated: *That it is tried, and proved in the goodly man's Experience, to which in all ages, yea, from innumerable Proofs, the saints have put to their seal, that this is a sure and faithful testimony.*

Experience is indeed a strong demonstration: and it is such a witness, as leaveth no room for debate. For here the truth is felt, proved, and acted on the heart; which the Christian knoweth well, and is as sure of, as he is perswaded that he liveth, or that the sun when it shineth, hath light and warmth therewith. It is true, the World liveth at a great distance from this; they only converse with the sound of such a thing: and we know, the naked theory of Scripture-truth hath but a short reach, and that it differeth as far from that which a serious practical Christian hath, as the sight of a country in a map is from a real discovery of the same

same; where the difference is not in the degree, but in the kind. Yet, tho' this weighty testimony of experience is a thing whereto many (alas! too many) are strangers, we must say, so much thereof is obvious, as may force its authority on men's consciences, and shew there can be no fallacy or delusion in this witness, if they but allow the use and exercise of reason: seeing it is not the record of a few, at one time, or in one corner of the earth, but a solemn witness from the saints and followers of God, whose judgment and integrity their adversaries must often confess; yea, of all the saints in every age through the whole universal Church in parts of the earth most remote from other; and this by most frequent renewed proofs hath found and experienced the truth and real accomplishment of the Word. And now, if this be not sufficiently convincing, I would but add, *O will you then come and see!* be but Christians indeed, and then ye will no more debate that testimony. And truly it is a very poor shift, for men, who have the Scripture before them, which of itself doth witness its authority, and this backed with so solemn a seal from the Lord by his works and providence, to debate the Christians witness, from their experience, because they do not see this themselves: For what is the cause thereof? is it not their choice, that they do not follow on to know the same? The truth of God seeketh credit from no man upon trust; yea, craveth no more but that by a practical converse they would put it to a trial: and then it shall not decline their judgement.

Now to prosecute this argument a little, I shall point at some special *Scripture-truths*, with which Christians have most usual trade and converse in their own case; and give in therewith their testimony, how these are clearly proved and verified by most sure *experience*. It is not to be here understood, the

the giving a particular account, with respect to persons, time, or other circumstances, how the Word doth thus take place. I think, it may be sufficiently convincing, to instance in the general such clear uncontroverted experiences, which are well known to the godly, and have by them been oft proved amidst the various changes of their life (though not by all in the same measure, but in some suitable proportion to their different sizes, trials, and wrestlings) which can witness that real correspondence, which the Word hath with the experience of the saints: and truly concerning these I may with some confidence assert, they are not naked or airy notions, but such as can witness their truth to the serious experienced Christian, whom on this account I dare attest.

I shall here instance in five special truths of the Word, which are much tried and proved in Christians experience. 1. That there is such a contrariety betwixt the flesh and the spirit, as the Scripture holdeth forth. 2. The deceitfulness of man's heart. 3. That there is a spiritual and invisible adversary, with whom we have war. 4. That the promises of the Word have undoubted accomplishment. 5. That truth also of the threatnings; I mean, such under whose reach the godly may fall.

I. *That there is a contrariety betwixt the flesh and the spirit*, a Law in our members rebelling against the Law of our mind, is a truth very clearly proved to the Christian; whose experience, though sad, doth undeniably verify and confirm the Scripture, *Gal. 5. 17. Rom. 7. 19, 21, 23.* This is a piece of the Word which holds forth man's nature in its true shape and form, whither their byas and inclination most easily turneth: yea, so marvellously answereth their experience, that to question the same, were to put it far beyond question, that they know nothing of a new nature

ture or principle of grace within. For who ever made earnest of Religion, but their first acquaintance with the peace of God was the beginning of this war? It is then that the house divideth, and corruption setteth up a standard; yea, no sooner can any begin to be a Christian, but he must be a souldier also. And we may say, none ever attained such a measure of mortification, or was so old in the grace of God, as could privilege them from the stirrings of the old man, and necessity of that complaint, *Who shall deliver us from the body of death!* But what ever advantage some of the faints have above others, yet in this their experience can witness.

1. They now know two different parties within themselves, that until once grace came they could not understand; which at the same time, in the very same action, do act oppositly one to the other: yea, that there is no spiritual duty, wherein the flesh (though not always in such a prevalent degree) doth not shew some active resistance.

2. That all the stirrings and motions of the flesh have still a tendency, congruous to their own nature, to turn the heart carnal, and to alienate it from God; so as it is easy to discern, how in these the rise and the end do thoroughly correspond.

3. That this is a cruel taskmaster, if once it bear sway; imperious in its command, and violent in its pursuit: so that their experience may herein tell, it's a sore and an intolerable thing, for a *servant to bear rule*.

4. That to things most forbidden the flesh moveth most impetuously; so, as it will even break through the hedge, though sure thereby to be scratcht with thorns: yea, it is oft so eager in its pursuit, that it will follow the bait, while the hook is most discernable.

5. That

5. That when once this doth swell, and wax fat; they may upon another interest cry, *Woe's us, our leaness!* For, like the scales of the ballance, they find a proportionable abatement and depressing of their spiritual life, as the flesh goeth up; yea, they have cause to know how every step of their heart going forth to the World, is a step that doth put them further off from God.

6. That the more closely the Law is prest in its spiritual extent, yea, the more spiritual a duty is, the more fully opposite they find their carnal heart: and though the flesh may bear up a little with the form of Religion, and hath more complacency with that way which lieth most in externals, yet it cannot endure the power thereof; it can suffer men to be Hypocrites, but not truly Christians.

7. To restrain and bring this under bondage, they find that it doth put the spirit so much at liberty, which getting loose reins for a little while will leave the soul work for many days, and with sad aftergroans pay back an hour's pleasure: yea, they also know, when the outward man is low, and under a sensible decay, it hath not then hindered, but rather effectually helped their inward joy and strength.

8. That indulgence to the flesh causeth a sensible thick interposition between Heaven and the soul; whence they are so clogged and hampered in their flight and motion toward God; yea, thus have often their choicest duties been made a sore and grievous task.

9. That this is the true rise of their usual perturbations, and doth still put some jar betwixt them and their lot, and doth hinder a satisfied enjoying of that which they have, through murmuring at that they want; yea, they know, that to please the flesh hath been oft the cause of their greatest grief and displeasure.

10. They also find how the defilement of their spirit doth help to darken it : which overgrown with the flesh, can have no clear discovery of spiritual things ; but the more separate from the body, and purged from these gross dregs, they find themselves at a further advantage to converse with divine truths, which thus they get discovered, beyond all that nature can reach.

II. *That the heart of man is deceitful, and desperately evil* (Jer. 17. 9. Jer. 4. 14. Prov. 4. 23.) *Is a Scripture truth, where to the Christians experience doth answer, as the face answereth to its self in the glass :* yea, we may say, it is so clearly demonstrated to those who were ever serious about their inward case, that while they thus read the Word in themselves, and are made to read themselves in the Word, they may with wonder acknowledge, that he which can found this great deep of the heart, and draw so vive a portraiture thereof, is surely one before whom all things are manifest ; who doth search and try the reins, and know what is our mould and fashion. This is one of the very first lessons, which practical Religion doth teach : and the more nearness with God, and further measure of grace, that is attain'd, the more clear discovery there will be of this. O what sad hours, what bitter complaints, hath it caused ? This oft doth marr the Christian's feast, and mingle their Wine with Gall and wormwood. I am sure, if that excellent company of the Saints, who have been from the beginning to this day, could be brought together, to give in their suffrage, and witness concerning the deceitfulness of the heart, there would be one joynt testimony to this truth. We should find that *Enoch* who walk'd with God, *Moses* with whom he spake face to face, that beloved Disciple who leaned on Christ's bosom, and he

he who was caught up to the third Heavens, were no strangers thereto, but could witness thus.

1. That it is within which aileth them most, and their greatest adversaries are men of their own house : yea, that in the worst of times, there is still more cause to complain of an evil heatt, then of an evil and corrupt World ; there being no worse company, than they are oft to themselves.

2. That no time of their life, but might give them some further proof, that they are fools, who trust their own heart, which oft will escape and over-reach their quickest reflexion, even when both their eyes are on it ; yea, that there is no time that alloweth the putting off their armour, or to dismiss their guard ; nor the best case, the greatest establishment in grace, nor the evening of the day, though they were within some minutes of the crown and compleat victory, doth priviledge them from the experience of a deceitful heart.

3. That under the best frame, they find, there will often lurk that which after-time doth discover, that for the present (though it had been told) they could not have believed, until frequent experience maketh them see, that the Word knew their heart better than themselves.

4. That to bring home their heart, when once it goeth abroad, or recall the liberty they have given it, is not easy ; which doth no sooner parley with a temptation at a distance or adventure to sport therewith, but it quickly turneth to earnest and is ready to yield.

5. They know the constant need to have a watch upon their senses, and to make a Covenant with their eyes, which do quickly betray their heart ; so easy it is to be deceived, yea, to grow warm, and to take fire upon the smallest touch.

6. How

6. How quickly also their spirit doth slacken, and lose its bent, even in the greatest advantage of their case; their experience can tell, that when in some measure they have been raised up in any spiritual enjoyment, they were then in hazard to be lift up to the wind, and to have their substance dissolved in the more solid part of Christianity.

7. What a sight have they sometime of themselves? such as would be a terrour to them, if the heart and motions thereof could be writ out to the view of others, or that any were witnesses to that which in one room will dwell besides the grace of God as its next door-neighbour.

8. In a word their experience doth witness, how soon the strongest resolutions will vanish; that they are not oft in the evening, what they were in the morning, nor for many hours do they keep the ground they had attained: but *Reuben's* Character, *unstable as water*, may be still their complaint. Yea, I am sure as many as ever obtain'd mercy to know themselves, can tell that it's past all reckoning, how oft their heart hath deceived them, when they trusted it most. This every day may cause them to sit down, and admire the grace of God; which can mend what they so oft marr; and is stronger to save and preserve, than they are to destroy.

III. That as there is a body of death within, they also know there is, *An adversary without*, *Eph. 6. v. 12. 1. Pet. 5. ver. 8. Job. 8. v. 44.* whose way and devices and method of tempting do most exactly answer the discovery of the Word. This is indeed a truth, which Christian, *experience* in all ages doth witness, that no sooner they had a serious look after God, but found themselves pursued by an invisible party, whose approaches, though spiritual, are yet certain, and most sensibly demonstrated; beside that

that which the *Word* doth clearly teach. Yea, it is true none of the saints were ever priviledged from such experiences, for herein doth the Christian's warfare lie. But O how sweet may the evening be, while they sit down, and can sing that song, *Our soul hath escaped as a bird from the fowler.* I shall here give in something of the godly man's *experience*, which can bear witness to this.

1. That there is surely another party than the World, or themselves, with which they have to do; an *invisible adversary without*, whom they perceive by that sensible correspondence he keepeth with their heart within, by those violent inroads, importunate solicitations, those impetuous motions, wherewith they are so strangely hurried, and oft driven over light, and judgment, yea, over their strongest resolutions, so as he may be as discernable to them, and that there is something therein beside themselves, as if they conversed with him in an outward visible shape.

2. That since the time when they begun to look after God, and to know any thing of his work upon their spirits, they have been acquainted with most affrighting, dreadful *temptations*, and do now perceive his rage, and violent pursuit to bring them back, which they knew not before, when at peace with their idols and sinful way.

3. That the mark he levelleth at, to which his usual temptations have a tendency, is their *soul* and inward man, to hinder communion with God, and to turn their heart off from him, to break the Law, and lay aside commanded duties.

4. That his ordinary approaches to the heart are oft by a very *small* thing: he needs no more but an open door, or a sinful look for the dispatch of a temptation, and knoweth by a wound in the eye, how to carry death in unto the soul.

5. That he is such a party as knoweth his *time* and opportunity, can change his weapons, and busk the hook with divers baits, and yet he is always at hand, when the heart is lifted up, when they are out of their duty, and in a carnal frame, to set in then with some temptation, and fish in such a troubled water.

6. That his way doth truly answer his name, *Spiritual wickedness in high places*; this being so discerned by daily experience, that he hath the advantage of the ground, is a most subtle observing adversary, who lieth in the dark to us, while we are in the light to him, and knoweth how to correspond with our corruption, and to suit his temptation to our natural temper (wherewith he is well acquainted) and to our calling, and our company, to the present strait, to our predominant inclination, and to our retirement and solitude; yea, that he is one who knoweth how to follow in, and play with such a gale, when we are in hot blood, or in any distemper and discomposure of spirit.

7. That he can *transform himself into an Angel of light*, and sute his temptations to the spiritual exercises and enjoyments of the saints; that there are temptations on the right hand as well as the left, which are so refined, and so like a Christian exercise, that they can scarcely discern the weed from the flower, and most dreadful errors from the choicest truths, to which they oft have a great resemblance; though at last it doth appear that the native tendency even of the most specious errors in the judgment, is to looseness in practice, and to make men religiously irreligious.

8. That he is also a *roaring lion*; which they have oft proved by dreadful blasphemous injections, these *fiery darts* which are thrown in with violence, wherewith there is no concurrence of the inclination or consent, but a discernable force put upon them, assaulting

assaulting them with most horrid Atheistical thots, even while their heart doth rise with abhorrence, and enter their dissent against the same.

9. That he is a most *restless* adversary; who is *going still about*, and giveth no cessation, but with purpose to return at some greater advantage; and is no less terrible in his flight, than in his assault; and that he can speak out of a friend, as well as out of a foe; yea, and doth then most dangerously tempt, when the temptation is least seen or discovered.

10. That his temptations do not only drive at engaging of the heart to bring sin to the thought, but also the bringing it forth to the *act*, for putting some blot upon their walk and conversation.

11. That he is one who is overcome by *resistance*, and doth *flee* before those that withstand him; which they have oft proved, that they have returned from prayer with the spoyl of their adversary, and at such a time have been made to wonder, how that which hath oft foyled them, should have been their temptation.

13. They also find by frequent observation, that though he is most subtle, being indeed one who through long experience and continued practice hath attained a great deal of dexterity in tempting; yet, he hath *one usual method*, and such device which the serious Christian, by daily experience and watchfulness, may easily discern, and perceive his temptations in their rise, and at a distance while they are, as it were, creeping up the wall: yea, thus in some measure he may find out the *depths of Satan*, and know how to avoid the net spread by that great Fowler.

IV. That the promises of the Word which are held forth to the Godly, for their use and encouragement while they are in the way, have a certain accomplishment,

ment, and are a safe ground to adventure upon, and worthy to be credited, is a truth tried in all ages; whereto experience of the saints can give a large testimony.

Now in speaking to this grave subject, it is not needful to speak any thing of the nature and diverse kinds of promises, nor whence it is that we live at so poor a rate and so uncomfortably, while such a well as this is at our hand. For it's easy to read the cause within our selves, we *sow sparingly*, and venture little out, therefore we have so small an increase; there is a *price for wisdom*, but it is *in the hands of fools*, who *have no heart thereto*. But this doth not concern us here; for I only aim to hold out this, that the promises which God hath given his People in the Scripture, are of unquestionable verity, and have as real and sure performance in the saints experience, as they are sure of that which cometh most necessarily to pass by the work and concurrence of natural causes, as that the fire doth burn when combustible matter is added, or the sun rise after its going down. For indeed this truth is so manifest, proved by such innumerable experiments, amidst the various changes of a Christian's condition, that we might summon as many witnesses as have been followers of God in the World, which are not a few, who in all ages have put the promises to an essay, and set their seal that God is true. Yea, to ask at such, if they know whether there be a truth in Scripture-promises, that cometh not to pass, I think were to enquire at a living man, whither he seeth and feelth, or if there be such a thing as motion, since they have as sure and sensible a demonstration of the one, as he hath of the other.

But ere I speak any thing particularly to this, I would first premise some things, to clear what we un-

derstand

derstand here, by the saints *experience* of the truth of the promises, in these following considerations.

1. We would consider, though the Scripture hath here it's accomplishment, and is intended for the use of the Church, and every particular Christian, while on the way in his militant condition, yet there are *some promises* of the Word (yea, the greatest) which belong to the saints, that will *not* be fulfilled, until they have *cast off their armour*, and are called to divide the spoil: their experience of which, will be the *high prize of the calling of God in Christ*, whereof, all which they now enjoy, is but an earnest.

2. We would consider that the *great intent* of the Scripture, and promises thereof, is not for contemplation, but that we may know them by *experience*, and drive a blessed trade and commerce therewith; *the merchandize of which is better nor that of gold*: for here lieth the Christian's life in the World, yea, it is a great part of their *talent*, the promises, which are not to be laid up in their heart and memory, as *in a napkin*, but they must give an account what experience they have *gained* thereby, and thus the diligent hand should make rich.

3. What ever be the different sizes, and degrees of experience among the saints, according to their growth and age in Christ, yet it is certain that the meanest who have interest in the promises, and did ever embrace them in earnest, and put them to trial, must know something of the performance of the same in *their own case*; for the Lord doth not suffer his work in his People to want a seal.

4. The godly's experience hereof, is then much made out, when they are much in *observation*; and we know little of the truth and performance of the promises, because we are not more habitually in a frame to observe. Thus he *goeth by*, and *we perceive not*; but they never wanted confirmations,

who were seriously seeking to be confirmed in the truth of the Word.

5. The special mercies and providences of a Christian life, are a certain *return* of the promise, and in that way do meet them, as the proper channel of their conveyance; for they are the *sure mercies of the Covenant*: and how refreshful is it, that all the several cases of the Saints, their meanest as well as their greatest necessities, and their outgate or relief are comprehended in the Word, and under some promise, and were all foreseen in his everlasting view, who hath so marvellously suited the same to all that his People stand in need of, as if it had been directed to such and such a Christian only!

6. This helpeth to make the mercies of the godly man to have a *peculiar* and *sweet relish*, and to be some way twice his mercy, when he gets them in so immediate a way reached to him as it were out of the promise, and as an observable return from Heaven; when thus the Lord *sealeth* his Word to him by his work, and the way of the Word he findeth hath been the way of his comfortable Relief; that when he hath had no other escape, but to turn in to the promise, and to cast himself upon it, he gained this experience, *he trusted in God, and was helped*; and can give in this testimony of him, that *he hath both spoken it, and himself also hath done it*, according to his Word.

7. It is not any extraordinary thing, we here understand, by the Christian man's experience of the truth of the promises; it is not a *rapture* or *revelation*, or such as some of the Saints have upon some *singular* and *special* account had; for we have not any promise for these things: But it is something well grounded upon the *Word*, which constantly holdeth in the Lord's *ordinary way* of procedure with his People, according to the tenor of the Covenant. For his Word doth

doth good to them that walk uprightly; and doth certainly take place in the experience of every serious and diligent Christian.

8. This is not the testimony of a few, but the record of all the Saints since the beginning, whose experience doth all most harmoniously agree, and bear one witness, that *he is faithful who hath promised*; & it is not that which a Christian hath found once or twice in his life, but the *daily food* of such as live by faith.

9. This doth put a strong obligation on the godly man to the Word, *for the time to come*; for these who have tryed it often, may with much confidence trust it in the day of their strait.

10. The experience which the godly hath of the real performance of the promises, is a most convincing *evidence of his state in Christ*. It is the earnest and pledge of the inheritance, and full accomplishment of that which remaineth; that *the Lord will perfect what concerneth him, who hath been his help hitherto*; and will be *his exceeding great reward* in the end, who hath made him find so much of the *gain of godliness* here by the way.

Now having premised these things, I shall here instance some *particular promises*, wherein the Christian's most usual trade and commerce doth lie, and to which they give in their seal and witness. I confess, if all these proofs which the Saints have had, of the fulfilling of the promises, could be gathered together, we might make use of that Divine hyperbole, *The World could not contain the books that should be written thereof*. O what an admirable volume, what an excellent commentary, and copy should this be of the Scripture, to see it thus turned over into the experience of every Christian! It would be some way as easy to number the drops of rain and dew since the creation, as to reckon all these precious drops

drops and emanations of love, these sensible returns and accomplishments of the promise, which they have had in their experience. I truly think, it could hardly be believed, though it were told, what some of the godly here have found in the way of the Word: but it is sufficient, to answer the design of this work, to shew that there is a sensible demonstration and performance of Scripture-promises, concerning which the experience of the Saints in all ages doth agree; that by many confirmations the Lord hath oft sealed the truth thereof to their souls.

There are 10 *special-promises*, held forth to the godly in the Word, which I shall here instance, and therewith hold forth what a clear testimony their experience can give, of the undoubted truth and accomplishment of the same.

FIRST Instance, is that promise given to Believing; to such who credit the naked word, when there is no probable appearance of its fulfilling, and thus give God the glory of his faithfulness; which we have expressly held out, 1 Chron. 20. 20. Ps. 112. 7. 8. Job. 1. 50.

To clear the accomplishment of this promise, I shall but appeal to that testimony the saints in all ages have left thereof; yea, to the present experience of the godly at this day, if they have not certainly found it to---

1. That when in a particular they have trusted God therewith, and got their spirit quiet in a recumbency on him, he hath dealt with them according to his word; yea, if then from clear convincing returns of the promise, they have not been made to say, it did never repent them, that they gave more credit to the testimony of God, than of their own hearts.

2. That they have not found a more sweet and observable issue, than when their help lay most immediately

mediately on the word alone; never a more comfortable Relief than when least of sense and most of faith was in carrying them through, when little of the creature and much of God appeared in their mercy, and when they were at the lowest, having no way of escape but to throw themselves on the promise, they have then had the best retreat, yea, their supply as sensibly felt, as their need and burden had formerly been.

3. That their greatest difficulties and shakings about the promise, have helped to their further confirming and establishment: so as they can say, the Lord's way, by perplexing them first, yea, to their sense losing their Hold, hath helped to fasten it better; and that which for the time did speak their case most helpless, hath made way for his more eminent appearance and manifesting of himself.

4. That their greatest venture, and giving most out, hath usually had the richest income: the most eminent experiences of their life have followed the most adventurous acts of their faith; yea, upon an after-reckoning they have oft found, that their adventuring of life, estate, and credit on the promise of God, even in these things, hath very observably been their Advantage.

5. That where they have most been a friend to their faith, there hath faith also been most a friend to them: in their standing to the credit of the promise, nor dismayed by the greatest objections and false reports raised thereof, they have found a very evident mark of God's respect to the same, causing them to see, that he will honour such who thus honour him. And it is indeed worthy of a remark, what we have of *Caleb* upon record, that he took part with the promise of God against that discouraging report which then was raised of the *Anakims*, and their walled cities; and therefore the inheritance of the Children of *Anak* was

given to *Caleb* and his sons, in their lot from the Lord.

6. That believing doth always make way for sense, and in their closing with the naked Word of promises, they have not wanted the seal of the Spirit of promise; but have found a sweet calm, their burden sensibly eased, when once they got it laid over on the word, which they can say hath been their first resting place, like the very fixing of the motion of the needle towards its right point, when their spirit had been restless and in greatest agitation.

7. That the greatest disappointments, which their hope in the Word seemed to have, they have found afterwards most to their advantage; when their returns have not only been according to their faith, but have often exceeded their adventure, and been far beyond what they believed: yea that from frequent experience they may say, the issue of trusting the Word, how long so ever they thought it deferred, yet came always in season, was never too late and out of time.

8. That this did never occasion bitter reflexions, or was their reproach before the World, that they trusted God in a day of strait and were not helped: but this testimony have all such left, who have most credited it in a dismal hour, that none should fear after them to hazard upon such a hand and venture on the promise; for their faith hath oft carry'd them well and comfortably through, where both sense and reason have been ready to sink.

SECOND Instance, Whereby we may see the performance of the promise in Christian experience, is this, *That God truly heareth prayer*; is near unto his People in what they call upon him for, agreeable to his Word, and will answer their desires; we have this promise

promise most express. *Phil.* 4. 6. *Psal.* 32. 6. *Psal.* 65. 2. *Psal.* 91. 15.

Now the accomplishing of this part of Scripture is so very clear, that I can attest the experience of all *the generation of the righteous*, since the beginning, what frequent and unanswerable confirmations they have got of this truth in their Christian walk: so that I am sure, no man ever was in earnest in the matter of Religion, and a stranger to this; yea, that he was never more certainly persuaded of any thing, than of this, that God doth hear prayer. O if men's souls were but *in their souls stead*, whose evening-wrestlings and tears the Lord hath oft turned into a morning-song, they would know this is no delusion. I shall here touch something of that experience, which by many proofs the saints can give, as a witness to this promise.

1. That when they have oft with *Hannah* gone in before the Lord in the bitterness of their spirit, they have been made to return with a sensible and marvellous change in their case; yea, when in going about prayer, they have been put to wrestle with much distemper and deadness, they have oft seen the wind discernibly change, and therewith their spirits lightened from under that burden, an observable calm and serenity following much inward perturbation; yea, they can say, that they have found their hearts thawed, and put in a flush of tenderness, upon the back of a most sensible restraint.

2. That access and liberty to pour forth their souls to God, when he hath filled their mouth with arguments, and inabled them both to wrestle and wait, they have found a favourable *Crisis*, and begun Relief, yea, the very turn of a sad case, which they have got from the Lord, as the pledge of a further answer, and that when he thus *prepareth the heart*, he doth *cause his ear to hear*.

3. That

3. That when they have been under a most dark cloud, they have found their sky clear, have got a very sensible taste of God's acceptance in prayer, and of his taking their sate off their hand, even while the matter was still in dependance before him; yea, that they have oft had such a satisfying impression of God's mind, and perswasion of his answering their desire, as hath helped them cheerfully to wait, yea, sometimes to sing the triumph before the victory.

4. That when they had been much in prayer, they must also say, it hath been the time wherein their spirit hath flourished, was most lively; yea, then they had their best days; then *the candle of the Lord shined upon their paths, and his dew lay all night upon their branches.* But they have found there is an evident and proportionable abatement of their spiritual life and encouragement in God, according to their wearing out in the exercise of this duty.

5. They have many times found, that when there was nothing left them, but to turn in to God, and they knew of no other way to come through, but to pray and look up, they never found a more sweet and seasonable relief: so that most observable times of prayer have been also the most observable times of their experience; and they can say from many proofs, it is no hopeless business, which is put over upon God by prayer, though there be small outward appearance.

6. That it is not in vain to follow out a sate before the throne, but access and interest in Heaven is as sure a way to come speed (which they know well) as greatest interest upon earth; having so evidently found, while *many seek the ruler's favour,* that the determination of every thing is *from the Lord.*

7. That prayer, with quiet waiting in the use of means, getteth comfortably through, where over-caring

caring and carnal policy, in the use of all other shifts, hath been forced to stick.

8. They know by experience, that as there are judicial times, wherein an inhibition as it were is laid on them from the Lord, in their wrestling, yea, and a fore restraint on their spirits, which hath been very sensible, so also they have found times of more easy access, and abundant liberty, a spirit of prayer let forth, before some special mercy and deliverance to the Church, whereby they could in some measure discern its near approach.

9. That on the back of some solemn address and application to God by prayer and fasting in a day of strait, they have oft seen cause even from that date and upward to date a remarkable return, and deliverance, in which even common observers might discern what an evident answer the Church's intercession with God in times of extremity hath had.

10. I may add, the saints know this so well by experience that surely God heareth prayer, even in such and such a particular, that they can with much confidence adventure, and make an errand of the meanest, as well as their greatest concerns to him; having so oft tried, and found that seriousness and sincerity in address to God was never in vain, but what ever be the times, therein this promise taketh place, *your heart shall live, that seek God.*

THIRD Instance, Is the promise of the Spirit, and pouring out of the same; which we have clear in the Word, Is. 59. 21. Job. 14. 16. Luk. 24. 49. Rom. 8. 16. 6.

The accomplishment of which is so manifest, such a sensible demonstration thereof in the experience of the saints, that I am sure this can no more be denied, than those who are warmed with the heat of the sun, can deny their sense and feeling, that the sun

hath

hath such an influence : and doth not the Christian's spiritual walk, bear as convincing a witness to the fulfilling of this promise, as any living man by walking in the way sheweth that he hath a soul and principle of life within him. Now to demonstrate this a little, I would but touch some of the ordinary experiences of the saints therein, which they do testify and by clear undeniable evidences know to be no delusion.

1. That which causeth so *real a change* upon them, which maketh them *alive to God*, who once were dead, creating them as it were of new, that which bringeth a clod of earth so near Heaven, raiseth so far above themselves to a delightful converse with things not seen, that while their place and abode is here, their company and fellowship is above ; that which maketh all things new to them and doth so far change their nature and inclination, as causeth them to find more sweetness in a spiritual life, than in the pleasures of sin, yea, reconcileth them with the Law, and exercises of a Christian, where once there was such contrariety : Oh ! is not this a real effect of the *Spirit*, and no imaginary thing !

2. That whereof they were altogether ignorant, when they were strangers to God, and *knew not if there were a Holy Ghost*, but by report, now since their being born again they find themselves entred in another World, *brought out of darkness unto a marvellous light*, and of this are sure, that once they were blind, but now they see, is not this a proof of the truth of this promise ?

3. That which maketh them see more of God in his *Word*, and *Works*, at one time than at another ; whence is this difference and inequality, the Scriptures are at one time *the great things of God's Law*, which are at an other time, but common things to them ! the object is the same, but O ! what different

rent manifestation thereof ? whence is it that such a light springeth up in the Word, that openeth up this deep, and maketh them *see the wonders of his Law*, and within a little time nothing but dark night ; do not the saints know this well, and that it is no delusion ?

4. That which maketh such sensible liberty in their soul, and *confidence* in their approach to God, after fore bondage and fear ; which raiseth them often so far above their ordinary frame as they are not only quickned and refreshed themselves, but do observably *warm others*. O how piercing, and savory are their words, which shew what difference there is oft, betwixt a Christian, and himself, betwixt a dead exercise of a gift which reacheth the ear, and that which melteth the heart, and doth even reach by-standers, with a pleasant perfume !

5. That which maketh such a *sudden change* in their case under ordinances : that their heart, that died within them as a stone, *ere they were aware* hath got life, and taken fire with a *Word* ; yea, hath been *poured out within them* so as their Beloved's voice hath had another sound ! O then they think not the time long, the Word is as the honey from the comb, so as they have oft witht a perpetual arrest upon their spirit in such a condition, that none may *stir up their beloved until he please* ! Can that be any delusion ?

6. That which bringeth in promises *seasonably* into their mind in the day of their *strait*, and causeth the Word to come in so *suitably* to their present case, with such a satisfying impression of the same, as doth give most sensible and present ease.

7. That which so *clearly* by the Word discovereth to men their own *heart*, and doth search them out in their most close and retired thoughts, that they have been

been oft made to wonder, how the Word is upon all their secrets; is not this *the candle of the Lord*?

8. That which doth demonstrate their *state and being in Christ*, by an argument which is *beyond all words*, and doth by power in an irresistible way answer all objections, and turn the most froward case into a blessed calm, and hath made a simple word more effectual in a moment, than most perswasive arguments could be.

9. That which maketh such abundant joy spring up in the heart, when there is *no visible grounds* for the same, like the dry bone gushing out water, must surely be some supernatural and excellent power, that cannot only bring it out of nothing, but out of contraries.

10. That which giveth them so sensible a *taste of the powers of the World to come*, such a ravishing glance of the inheritance, that they could hardly sometime forbear to rise at midnight and sing for joy in the hope thereof; and hath given them such a discovery of God at some special times, as hath made them judge that all they ever knew of him before, was *but by the hearing of the ear*.

11. That which is so discernable and sensibly felt at the present time, that Christ's return to the soul, and the effusion of the Spirit, hath been as *evident* oft to the saints, as to that *Martyr* who was forced to cry out at the stake, *He is come, he is come!* and hath been so *sweet* when enjoyed, that the remembrance of some of these times hath been very pleasant and refreshing; yea, this is such a thing as most observably occurs to the godly man in the way of his duty, according to the Word.

12. That is no delusion, the *withdrawing* whereof is so sensible to them, as it maketh their duty wherein they have had delight, become their *burden*; when they are put to row with oars, the wind being gone

gone; and maketh it like night to the soul, when the sun is gone down: and sad experience hath oft showed them, how the overclouding of their soul, the withdrawing of the Spirit, the comforter, doth observably follow a neglect of their duty, and yielding to any known sin, by which it is grieved.

FOURTH Instance, is that Promise for Direction, which God hath given his People in the Word; that he will guide them with his Counsel, will order and direct their steps, who do commit their way to him, and teach them the way that they shall choose. Psal. 37. 5. Ps. 25. 9. 14. Ps. 74. 24.

The fulfilling of which hath been so manifest to those who ever made earnest of acknowledging God in their ways, and committing the conduct thereof to him, that I shall but attest their experience, if they have not this testimony to give---

1. That to trust God with their case, and give him the guiding of their way, hath carried them much more *easily* through a plunging case, than overcaring anxiety; yea, the Lord's directing their steps, and making things successful, when they have committed the same to him, hath been often as *sensible* to them, as their strait and difficulty was.

2. That the way of the *word* hath been the best expedient for carrying them safe and comfortably through; and that they never repented, that they did more consult their *duty*, than inclination, when they were at a stand about a particular, and did not debate the command, even while there seemed a *lion in the way*.

3. That they were *never left without counsel and direction*, when *their eye was single*, and *serious* about it; and that it was not so much want of light, as of an heart to close therewith, that made their way *so dark*: but when they subjected themselves to God's mind,

mind, they found, that such who follow him, shall not walk in darkness.

4. That light and counsel doth meet men in following the command, and the *practice* of known duty, hath helped them to *know more* their duty; and that light did most abound, when it was most their serious study to follow the same.

5. They found, it was never in vain, to enquire after God's mind by *prayer*, and also in the *temple* to make a reference of a particular to him, when it was too hard for them; but have often seen the Word evidently *directed* to such and such a case, as if they had got a return from Heaven by an audible voice.

6. They also know, that God's following in light with a powerful impression, his *teaching the reins*, and *instructing with a strong hand* is no delusion, but the sure and well grounded experience of most solid Christians in all ages; yea, most discernable from any false impulse: and that some special piece of work and service, which God hath laid in their Way, wants not usually some *special call*, backed with such light and authority, as in an irresistible way can answer all objections, to make them go *bound in the Spirit*, about such a duty.

7. How God's special directing hand hath been oft very observable, not only in preventing and *crossing their way*, to withdraw them by some sharp dispensation, from their purpose; but sensibly *empowering them*, so that they have been plucked as it were back, from unavoidable hazard, that they could not find their paths.

8. I shall add, they have oft observably found, how easy their way was made to them when the Lord doth *countenance* and prosper the same: what sweet concurrence of providences; how then difficulties have most sensibly been taken out of the way, yea, wind, and tide going along with them, in such a manner,

manner, that they have been forced to see and confess a divine hand therein.

FIFTH Instance, is the promise of Pardon, and forgiveness which God hath given his People in the Word: that for his names sake he will *blot out their iniquity*, and *remember their sin no more*; yea, is *ready to pardon*; which is expressly held forth, to those who are truly humbled. *Mic. 7. 18. Jer. 31. 34. Is. 43. 25.*

Now that there is a real accomplishment of this, I am sure, the experience of the saints can in all ages clearly witness; what joy and peace this hath occasioned, what a sensible demonstration and solemn confirmations they have had of this promise, so as their very bones might sing; *Who is like unto thee, O Lord!* It is true real pardon doth not always infer the *sensible feeling* thereof; and when Sin is remitted in Heaven, there is not always a declaration of it in the *conscience*. But it is also sure, that this is sensibly felt, and that it is tried by all, even *all the generation of the righteous*, to have had as powerful an operation on a disquieted troubled soul, as ever wine or the choicest cordial could have on the sick, or faint. O! if those who question this, were in their case, to whom *God speaketh peace* after a storm, they would know how real and certain that is! I would offer the Christians witness to this promise, from many, many experiments, by which the Lord hath sealed it to their soul, whereby they know assuredly it is no fancy or delusion.

1. How this hath as sensible a *connexion* with the serious exercise of contrition and repentance, in their experience, as it certainly hath in the word and promise; while they find, that in silence and keeping up their case from God, their bones have been troubled, their spirit in a restless and disquieted condition, until

until once they made an address, and got their soul vented by confessing to the Lord, which was then like a kindly turn and cool of a fever.

2. They know it is no delusion, that is found so certain a cure to a wounded spirit, under the sense of sin; a wound which the world and all its diversions could never heal; whose pain and grief no musick can allay (a drop of divine displeasure being enough to turn all their pleasures into wormwood and gall) but, O! a taste of this unspeakable cordial, one warming look of a reconciled God, they know by experience, can give present ease.

3. It is no delusion, which they can not command; no more, than the sun to shine when overclouded, or the wind to blow, but when it listeth: which the most perswading moral arguments can no ways effectuate, nor all their former experience, nay, nor the letter of most refreshing promises, which sometimes are to them but as the white of an egg, without taste, until once the spirit breathe; which not only discovereth the ground of their joy in the word, but doth also cause them to rejoyce therein, when it shineth upon the same.

4. It must be no delusion, which causeth so marvelous a change, that after greatest disquieting fears they have found most sensible manifestations of love; the greatest flood on the back of the lowest ebb in their spiritual condition; which oft hath forced them to retract, what their fears and jealousies did utter; yea, hath made them enquire with wonder, whence they are so chearful to day, who yesternight were so broken and crushed? whence their spirit should be in so sweet a calm, that so lately was like the raging and troubled sea?

5. That this hath oft met them, as a blest surprisal and unexpected welcome, when they have in a backsliding case come in to God, they certainly know:

know: that when they knew not how to adventure, and at what end of their raveled condition to begin, counts having run long over; yet on their very first address, have got a sweet disappointment to their fears, been helped to their feet, yea, some times have had as it were the fatted calf killed, to make merry with their friends.

6. That which hath an audible voice within, so strong an impression upon the soul, which carrieth with it such a clear satisfying discovery of God's heart and love, is surely no delusion; while the intimation of that one truth, *Your sins are forgiven*, or any other word of promise for that end, they have found to be an argument beyond words, which they could not resist, but for the time have been as sure, they see and feel this, as that they live; yea, can no more now call it in question, than formerly they could get it believed.

7. That is no delusion, which causeth them with another kind of freedom to approach to God; maketh them know, there is a Spirit of adoption, which sets the soul at liberty from the fore bondage and thralldom, under which their former backsliding had put them; yea, a thing not only sensibly felt by themselves, but may be discerned by others, while they cannot smother the joy of their heart, or hide in their countenance such a change of their condition, that truly God hath dealt comfortably with them.

8. Hath not this the Saints in all ages witnessed, even a joy unspeakable and full of glory, which though but of short continuance, yet for the present so strong, as hath ravished their soul with the hope of the inheritance above, and clear view of their interest in it; yea, sometimes made them sing for joy, in expectation of that blessed day! But, O! this is better felt, than expressed.

9. And in a word, can that be a delusion, that hath oft turned the poor man's *bell* into a *Heaven*; which meets the Christian in the way of his duty, and the work doth so exactly answer the *promise*; most sensibly felt after greatest shakings of the conscience by the law; and can make a sad outward lot, so very sweet and pleasant; cause them to triumph over the wrath of men, to sing in a dungeon, to abound and have all things under greatest wants, look grim death cheerfully in the face in its most dreadful aspect; yea, doth make so great and visible a difference betwixt the Christian, and himself!

SIXTH Instance, Is that promise of Encouragement, and support under the Cross: which is expressly held forth in the Word, that the Lord will own his People, bear their charges, and be with them in trouble, in the day of their suffering for his truth; yea, will bind up the broken in heart, and heal their wounds. Psal. 91. 15. Isai. 43. 2. Cap. 41. 17. & Cap. 49. 14. Psal. 9. 9. Isai. 51. 12.

Now that this promise is a truth, and hath a certain accomplishment, the experience of the Saints in all ages will witness: and we know their testimony is true. What at solemn times of God's presence they have had in a barren wilderness, how great a cloud of witnesses doth seal this, and give their testimony to *the Cross of Christ*! Of which we may say, the same and sweet favour hath gone forth, and spread abroad through the Church; the Fathers have told it to the Children, and one generation to another: but how little a part thereof can be expressed! I think, it would be a marvellous record, if the suffering and prison experiments of the Saints were particularly set down, what they have found under the cross. But it is well, we know this promise hath been, and this day is evidently sealed; concerning which I dare attest the experience

experience of as many as did ever drink of this blessed cup, and were counted worthy to suffer for the testimony of Christ; if this be not a faithful and true witness---

First, that they have oft *tasted what communion with God is*, in the secret duties of a Christian, also in the publick ordinances, and in a special measure, at some more solemn times; but, O! never knew his presence and communion with him more sensibly than under the Cross: yea, have found that the work and service of a suffering-time, as it is not the ordinary Service of every day, hath also a peculiar and more than ordinary allowance.

2. That they never knew *divine strength* more sensibly, than when they have been most *pressed above their own strength*: that in the day they were cast on God's immediate care, and ordinary means of their help most withdrawn, they had never less cause to complain, but might often say this as their experience, *they thirsted not when he led them through the wilderness*; yea, that they have at no time of their life, found their mercies more observably attend them, nor more sweet and satisfying, than when by prayer and believing, they were put to dig the well, and wait for the rain coming down to fill it.

3. That they never found more true *liberty*, than in the *house of bondage*: more refreshing company than amidst their greatest solitude; while they found Him near, whom gates and bars cannot shut out: in the day when all things else seemed to frown upon them, that their *midnight-songs* have been sweeter, than all the prosperity they sometimes enjoyed; and that they have oft proved, that the deeper any are in affliction for Christ and his truth, they are also the deeper in consolation.

4. They must say, the most satisfying and clear discoveries of the *word* are under searching and sharpest

pest trials; that a sanctified exercising affliction, they have found one of the best *interpreters* of the bible, and the word *then* to be an other thing, than it is at other times; yea, even to have been that to them, which they could desire it to be, so as they are sure it hath been shap'd out and directed for that present plunge their soul was in.

5. That there is a very *easy passage* and *dispatch*, betwixt *Heaven* and an oppressed *afflicted soul*, an observable vent by prayer, and more sensible access to God's face, when other things have most frowned; yea, they can witness from experience that *he stayeth his rough wind in the day of his East wind*: that while he putteth one door, he hath set an other open; that when the storm without hath been very sharp, they have found a sweet calm and sun-shine within, to make it easy; and that when he layeth on one fore trial, he will take an other off.

6. They can tell what a sweet comfortable *parting*, they have oft had, with some sharp *trial*; which at the first was bitter as death, but in the close, after sanctified exercise under the same, they have found cause to leave it their blessing, and confess, that the alltime of greatest jealousy and fear upon their part, they have found on God's part hath been a time of greatest kindness and love; the sharpest wounds from such an hand and heart as his, have tended to a cure; yea, that circumstance and ingredient in the same, which of all was most bitter and grievous, even there they have found their relief and encouragement most remarkable.

7. That the peculiar *advantage* of a sanctified trial is not so well seen in the present time, as *afterwards*, when the case hath altered; then they found a long and rough storm reconpenced at their landing, with a rich lading of experience; an other kind of discovery of God, his way, and the certainty

tainty of his word, than they formerly had attained: so as now they can speak of him, and the good of the cross, and adventuring any thing for Christ, with some greater esteem, on an other ground, than report, or an hearing thereof by the ear.

8. I shall add what hath been the frequent testimony of those who ever endured tribulation for the gospel, that their *remembrance* and *after-reckoning* upon this account hath not been *sad* or *bitter*, when they sat down and compared their *gain* with their *loss*, their supports & reliefs with these days of trial, which have gone over their head: so that they would not then exchange their experience, or want what they have found by the *cross*; no, not for many more days of trouble and affliction.

SEVENTH Instance, is that promise of the word which integrity, in an evil time hath; that it shall preserve their steps, and be the best means to help those through, that keep God's way, yea, even in this life shall not want some witness of God's respect. Psa. 118. 25. Psa. 112. 4. Rev. 3. 10.

Now to hold forth the accomplishment of this, I may with confidence appeal to the observation of the saints in all ages, who ever made it their serious study to *keep their garments* clean in a time of trial, if their experience hath not this testimony to give.

First, that though at present, *honesty* in evil times hath brought them in hazard, and with *Joseph* to a prison, yet it hath brought them out also, with observable *advantage*; yea, how ever the Lord did order their Deliverance, they have found this did land them well, and always bring them to a comfortable harbour.

2. That honesty and faithfulness hath an *authority* even on the conscience of their *enemies*, and leaveth

leaveth usually a conviction upon them : Yea, hath forced a testimony and approbation from such men, and they have oft found better entertainment, than those who in a sinful way have sought to please them.

3. They have found this integrity always the *choicest expedient* and best policy in a dangerous time, which hath observably met them, when they had most to do ; A thing whereof they have reaped the fruits in the day of their strait, and times of judgment ; yea, though it hath *occasioned* sometime their sufferings, yet it hath been also their safety and protection from sadder sufferings.

4. That though integrity is oft under a dark cloud of reproach, yet it still getteth well out from under the same, and hath shined usually *more bright* afterward : So as they have had cause to observe, what unexpected means the Lord hath made use of, for their clearing.

5. That while their *enemies* might have (were it not for the preventing goodness of God) quarrelled upon some *other* ground, they have been observably led to pursue, and make them the Butt of their malice, for their honesty, and that wherein they have peace before God, and have been kept from hitting on the *right* cause.

6. They find how unspeakably *sweet* this is upon an *after-reckoning*, and in the *evening of their life*, that then they reap a comfortable harvest, of that they have sown with much suffering and tears. O ! then it doth not repent them, that *integrity* was their choice.

7. They have sometime found a *hundred-fold* even in *this life* ; and an observable gain in that, which they have been willing to risk and hazard most.

8. They must also say, integrity was *never* their ruin ; but an escape was oft brought about in a way they

whom all your life you have walked so cross ! O sit but with your selves alone, and consider this ; you *bate* serious Religion, and therefore you *reproach* it : will you take such a revenge on your selves, and out of prejudice to it, run on so great and eternal a ruin ? But know assuredly, it is not what you judged, and if once you pass (in this delusion) that great and last step betwixt time and eternity, you are undone, oh undone for ever ! And sure, if you admit the authority of the *Scripture*, you cannot debate the Christians experience ; while there you have so *great a cloud of witnesses*, who bear that same testimony ; but it is on your self you must reflect (not on the truth) that you know so little in this way.

Now, to leave some Conviction on the *Atheists* of this time, and those who take liberty to *scoff* at serious Religion, I would here offer some *rational Grounds* ; which even to the World and bystanders may convincingly demonstrate, if they would but consider the same in earnest, that this testimony the Saints do in all ages bear, from their experience, to the truth, can be no cunning device or fallhood, but is most certain and sure. For

1. That must be a *sure testimony*, and is no cheat, if you judge that those who declare the same, have the sense of a *Deity*, and have any *truth*, or moral candour. For it is a clear dilemma : either such, whose witness this is, are impostors of the highest degree, yea, in Atheism and gross deceit must exceed all the world beside : or, it is true and valid, what they witness. Now, for the first, I shall crave no more in their behalf, but an appeal to your conscience and sober thoughts, if you could judge thus of them.

2. This testimony must be sure, if you but allow those the use of judgment and reason, who bear it, and do not judge them wholly demented : for it

were a strange & unheard of madness, that men should pursue a shadow with so great seriousness, and on this interest venture so far, if Religion and the power thereof were not a reality. Sure, one of these two must hold; if Christians do not experience themselves what they hold out to others, that they are either in the highest measure *profligate* and *wicked*, even beyond the ordinary rate and depravation of humane nature; or they must be under a strange *madness* and *delirium*. They must either design to cheat the World, or themselves, but though their adversaries could wish to have it so, I think their malice will not make them so mad, as to own that challenge: and since these cannot be alledged, I profess were I the greatest *Atheist*, who did not own the Scripture, I could not seriously consider the way and walk of such who are tender Christians, without astonishment; or conceive how in such a world and so many visible disadvantages they should be thus engaged, on any other consideration, than the truth and reality of Christianity.

3. Do you not see, this is their testimony, who are willing to be *tried* therein, and *render a reason of that hope which is in them*? yea, do in this offer themselves to trial, and with greatest seriousness obtest the world, not to credit implicitly their witness, and take it on trust, but themselves put it to the most exact inquiry and search! And truly, if there be an appeal and reference to men's sense and feeling, which can admit no debate, I know not what ground they have to question this witness, until they first put it to an *essay*, that from *their own* experience they could contradict the same.

4. Should you not admit this for a sure testimony if you grant any *moral certainty* of a thing, that there is some case wherein a *humane* testimony can allow no debate, which in this present case must be un-

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deniable; for you know by *two witnesses* a matter is judicially *established*: but is it not more confirming when they are of known *judgment* and *integrity*? yea, out of *diverse* and *remote* places of the earth, and otherwise strangers amongst themselves, but yet more, not only when dying they own and assert this, but are willing to die upon a *testimony* thereto, and seal it with their blood, and this also through *all ages* renewed? O what can be more convincing as to moral certainty! Now I do attest the world, if this argument of Christian experience have not as full and unanswerable proofs of its certainty.

5. This witness can be no counterfeit, and you must judge they are worthy of credit, to verify the *Scripture* from experience, on whose *practice* you see it so convincingly *transcribed*. Should not the declaration of such about the truth of the *promise*, have much weight, whilst you see what a serious respect these have to the *rule*; to have their walk ordered in *that way*, where the Scripture warrants them to expect the fulfilling of the *promise*? And are not these seen to be the most tender serious Christians, whose way useth to have greatest authority over your conscience, who do most own this witness, and hath the largest account to give thereof?

6. Is not this *their* testimony also, whom on your exactest and most narrow notice, you may see study Religion in the secret and retired duties thereof? where some other interest, than the observation of men, must be an incitement. Yea, may you not observe there are such, who do seriously own the practice of these duties, when the view of those about them might be a greater hinderance and ground of fear, than any persuading motive? And whilst you challenge the light profession of many within the Church, do but also ask your conscience, if there be not others, whose way you must justify, even in spite of your hated

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and prejudice against them, that it hath a convincing favour of humility? yea, there growth under ground, and being serious and real in what they profess, may be clearly discerned from a naked and empty shew.

7. Can *those* intend, by such a testimony, to deceive others, who have oft been in so great fear and disquiet, that they be not themselves deceived? O how convincing may this be to the world, to consider what perplexing *queries* and doubts Christians have sometime about their own inward case; yea, after such sharp wrestlings, a most sweet calm and composure of spirit may be discerned. It is strange this puts not Atheists to a more serious inquiry, what such *changes* can mean, which will make men differ so far from themselves, whilst no outward cause can be discerned. It is true some matters lie much under ground; *the heart knows its own bitterness*, and a stranger doth not intermeddle with its joy; yea, the deepest plunge and exercise may make little noise without: yet this is sure, there is so much under these vicissitudes, that is obvious, even to the view of lookers on, as may leave some conviction, that their enjoyments must be true and real, when the want thereof is so sensibly felt; and the world is not so stupidly inadvertent, not to observe this, if they did not shut their eyes for fear of such a discovery.

8. Should not *their* testimony be very convincing, whose complaints and challenges you may find more at home upon *themselves*, than against others; who are oft bemoaning over those evils, which the eyes of *man* could not reach? may not the world see how some are prest with anguish of soul, to the wasting of their body, when no cause from *without* is known, and *otherwise* rational and most composed? Yea, may it not sometimes be discerned, there is more smother'd within, which gets no vent, than appears without?

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for grief in earnest wants not some peculiar marks, by which it may be witnessed to others. I think, this should put the world to such a reflection, there must be some grief and joy and a cause for it, which goes above the world or the things thereof.

9. This is their testimony, whose confidence and composure of spirit, in the greatest *exigences*, may witness to *others* that persuasion they have of the truth within their own souls. You see also at what labour and work these are in the duties of Religion; yea, when they are most serious, how native and unconstrained their motions are. O doth not this shew, the grace of God and a new nature is another thing than words; and that they must surely find *satisfaction* in these duties, which makes *that* a special delight and pleasure *to them*, which *you* would reckon an intollerable and sore toil.

10. Do you not see how these *agree* every where and at every time in this testimony, that the Scripture is verified by experience, and the breathings and *influences* of God on the Soul meet them in the way of *duty* according to the promise, even whilst they most remarkably *differ* amongst themselves in their *natural* temper and disposition? And is it not known whatever particular and lesser differences, through the prevalence of corruption, are too frequent amongst these, yet no challenge, no reflection on the truth in reality of godliness in it self, will be found when their challenges are most bitter one upon another? I must further attest your conscience, whilst you have heard the sad Moans of dying Christians about the interest of their soul and shortcoming in the study of godliness, have not these complaints been still to commend *Religion*, and the excellency thereof, and reflect only upon *themselves*? but none ever was heard to have such a complaint, that

they did cheat the world in that matter, by obtruding upon them a falsehood.

11. May you not see this testimony which Christians give to the way of godliness, that it is from those who act *deliberately* in that great interest, and have a *rational* account to give of the *grounds* on which they walk? Do you not find they are *Men*, as well as Christians; and that none are more friends to reason and the right exercise thereof, than such who are most serious in the study of Religion? It is sure, could the world have their sight, and with *Moses* such a look of an *invisible God*, it would be easy for them to be of their judgment also.

12. That you are so ready to challenge the Christian's testimony, may you not find the true *cause* within *your self*; not from your judgment, but a rooted *prejudice* and *enmity* at the way of the Lord, whereof you can give no reason? Yea, have you not oft *reproached* Christians at a *distance* whom upon a more near particular acquaintance you have from some irresistible conviction left upon you, been forced to *justify*? For godliness hath this singular advantage, to silence all its adversaries, that none will challenge or reproach the same, but those who never knew it; and should *such a witness* be admitted? O strange, with what liberty men can deride this, who yet dare not go alone to have some serious thoughts about it!

13. I know you will not deny there is such a thing as *hypocrisy* and a *false shew of godliness*; yet sure you have no ground of challenge, or to question the truth and power of this, which is so convincingly witnessed to, even by hypocrisy; for there should be no use for such a cover, no cause for that imposture, if there were not also a truth and reality therein you cannot conceive a counterfeit, but as it stands related to that which is true. If there were
not

not such a thing as serious godliness, the world could never have known how to perfonate it. Could there be a lie, if there were not a truth? You see also it is the most serious discerning Christians, that such usually do fear and have an awful regard of; for which there were no ground, if they were not conscious of the *truth* of that in others, whereof they only study the *appearance*: yea, here I must also appeal the world and ordinary Observers, if there be not even to them, some discernable *difference* betwixt the power of Religion, and an empty *shew*, though this make greater noise; betwixt those who are serious and tender in *following the Lord*, and others who *glory in appearance, but not in heart*; for the one by a convincing *manifestation of the truth* do's commend it *self to mens conscience*, hath a living air and breath, which by no art or cunning can be drawn to the life, no more than an exquisite painter with the choicest colours, in drawing a dead man, can therewith draw the vital acts of breathing and moving.

14. May you not see, *holiness* must be some excellent thing, which hath such *credit*, even with it's real *adversaries* and the worst of men, as to make them grasp at the *appearance* and shadow of that, which others know, they hate the power and practice thereof! And here I would ask the world, is it not to the *Scripture* and truth thereof, the experience of the Saints bears witness, that they do indeed feel and prove *within* their soul, what you see written before you, in this blessed record? But is it not also sure, that nothing is more directly cross and opposite to the *Scripture*, than a *false appearance*, and shew of that which is not real?

15. Can you debate whether there are such Christians in the world, yea, *many* such, whose *experience* do's witness the truth of religion, of whom it must be said (*even their enemies being judges*) their being
serious

serious in that way, and choice thereof, must be *for it self*, and hath no outward design or interest, to which it can be subservient, whilst in this oft they run the greatest hazard, and are rendred a prey to others? O must it not be a marvelous thing, which hath that dominion over the souls, to teach men the practice of *self-denial*; not only to quit but to cheerfully quit their nearest interest, to smile on the spoilers, to rejoice in their suffering and reproaches, to forgive wrongs, and take revenge by good will! this is indeed *above nature*, and is peculiar to *Christianity*, which can also turn poyson to an antidote and cure, and gain by its greatest losses.

16. You may see what *different sizes* are amongst the Saints, how great a *difference* also betwixt the *experiences* of one and another: some made to witness much bitterness in *departing* from God, and others that singular advantage in *drawing near* to him; yea, how near sometimes will great extreams in their condition border with other! At a strait to express their joy, who not long before would have thought a vent to their grief a special ease; O must not this be a matter of Reality! and when you see how much these amongst themselves do thus differ, that yet all these differences meet together and concur in a most clear testimony to the Scripture, and truth of godliness; yea, how this wonderful contrivance of the Scripture is futed to answer all this variety of changes in the Christian's case, and passeth none over!

But oh, what can be said here, where weeping should be more fit than words, to see what contempt the greatest part of men put on serious religion, which doth truly raise them above the condition of the beasts! Is not the atheism of the time at that height that we must say, the assault of the adversary is not so much at one single truth, as at the root and being of all religion? And truly we may fear some sharp and extraordinary

extraordinary cure, to recover this generation, of a disease, that would seem in an ordinary way incurable. I shall but further offer these few *queries*, and plead so far with the adversary, that they would, ere they pass them, have but some serious thoughts thereon.

(1.) If there be a *God*, or truth in any *Religion*, is it not with this blessed record of the *Scripture* you must close, as the alone *rule* thereof? yea, if your judgment and conscience be not both extinct, must you not consent to the law and doctrine therein held forth, that it is good, what ever be your aversion therefrom?--(2.) Is not an *immortal soul* and a being for ever, such a venture as is of more value, and should be to you, than the whole world?---(3.) O how can you be thus *indetermined about so great an interest*? you seem to be hesitant and unsure, if there be another world, a *heaven* or a *hell*: but oh, are you sure these are not? and how then can you be secured from such a fear, which of all fears is the greatest? (4.) What a *barrid* and uncomfortable thing is it to be an *Atheist*, which gives men no hope beyond this *present life*? Yea, what a world would *this* be to dwell in, if there were no true *godliness* in it, since without this, no comfortable humane society, no kindly and right subjection to the magistrate, can be expected from those, who have no tie from *above*, and know not what it is to pay homage to a sovereign being. (5.) Is not the native tendency of *Atheism* to all ungodliness in men's practice? yea, how far doth it debase humane nature, and level it even with the beasts?--(6.) Whilst you scoff at serious Religion, I dare appeal your selves, if in your *retirements* when you have any sober reflections, you are not forc'd to have other thoughts! and why is it, you

so much fear to go alone, and be in any measure serious with your soul; Oh what a desperate security is that?

I shall only add, is it not rare to find a professed *Atheist*, at death, when once the approach of another world does awake the sense of a *Deity*? But then it is easy to see men, who have sported at godliness in their life, weep over that wretched mirth, when it comes to death, and call for such Ministers, whom once they hated: and oh, what a dreadful cure will *hell* be of atheism! for there they know the truth in earnest, though it be their terror; it is also sure the *Devil* is no *atheist*, who believes there is a *God*, and trembles.

I must yet a little further crave liberty, ere I pass this argument, to speak a word even to those who know and have *experienced* the same, O how great should this be in our eyes, and with what astonishment may we consider it, which by so full, so satisfying a demonstration doth witness, not to the eye or ear, but to the *soul*, the certainty of divine truth, and the power and reality of *godliness*! Should we not think, if there were but *one* in an age, or that every particular Christian were but once at some solemn time of his life, *thus confirmed*, that he could say, then did he *taste* and *see* the word, and found it surely verified on his *soul*, as sure as he knoweth that he lives, at what a rate would he *value* and *preserve* so singular a *seal* and confirmation of the truth, yea, keep up the remembrance of such a special *time* whilst he lived? But oh, must it be said, that this grave witness, this clear demonstration of the Scripture and of the certainty of the words of truth, which we have by experience, doth lose its weight, and the inestimable value thereof is to be less regarded, that it is the Christian's daily bread? O what a reach hath this argument; what great things are there held forth? I think

think a serious View of the same, if it were brought near to us, might put us to question, whether we believe the same, or not? are we in a dream, or awake and see them with our eyes, which this doth so convincingly demonstrate? whilst we can so *easily* pass them, with so *little weight* thereof on our spirit. Now to hold that forth, let us but bring near this argument, and gravely consider the same with respect to some of those great truths, which, by this unanswerable demonstration of experience, are witnessed: I must say, such truths that we may wonder how men can so easily admit their being true, and in so ordinary a way look thereon without wondering and astonishment.

1. Doth not this argument of *experience*, by a very clear demonstration, witness that great truth of a *Godhead*, whereon the whole superstructure of truth and godliness doth stand? yea, in another manner do's enforce on men the persuasion of this by a more near and convincing discovery, then the greatest *works* of God, or these glorious appearances of his power and wisdom in the heavens, and earth do! It is true, these bring him near to our eye and ear; but O this brings the blessed and invisible God nearer, into the heart and soul, that we may both taste and see, that surely He is, and is *that* which in the *Scripture* he is declared to be. It is not the contemplation of nature, in its highest flight, can answer such an assault of the *Devil*, which may exercise the most established Christian about the being of God; but there is a demonstration within, which goes further than the judgment, and passeth natural understanding; whence we feel, we taste, we enjoy, yea, his voice is heard in the soul, which we surely know to be his, and this is the reach and import of this argument. There is indeed cause to wonder at the atheism of the world, since men can look no where,

without some witness of a *Deity*, to stare them in the face ; but oh, there is a more *refined* atheism, that lies in the bosom of a *professed assent* to divine truth, and is not easily discerned, though not the less dreadful that it goes under a cover, not only from the view of others, but even from a man's self--I would here offer some things, which do witness a *special advantage* the *godly* man is at thereby to believe, and to be more thoroughly persuaded of the glorious *being of God*. (1.) That he finds the believing of this is a very *great* thing, and not so *easy* to reach, as the *world* do suppose. For it is no small matter even to attain this : Oh, what ordinary thoughts have many about it, who think it easy to pass an assent to this marvellous truth, because they never considered the greatness thereof ; but it is sure, the more serious and grave a Christian is, it will give him the more work, and we may find these usually are more plunged and exercised about this, than others.--(2.) It is a great advantage, when this is so far men's *serious study*, as to be upon an inquiry after a *further establishment* in so great a truth ; O what another sight of the *invisible God* ? What a satisfying persuasion of his blessed being might we have, if our soul were indeed herein *exercised* ; and knew but how *little* we know and have reached in this, that there is a *nearer approach* to God, which should shew us, the faith of a *Deity* is something *beyond* those former thoughts we have had thereof ! We lose many singular confirmations about this, because we do not in earnest look after them.--(3.) They are at a *special advantage* to whom believing of this truth (O blessed truth, that God is) is their exceeding joy, and amidst their heaviness can say, the thought and meditation of him is sweet ; that when through a variety of temptations they are ready to faint, this restoreth their soul, yea, will cause it leap within for joy ; and is their *Enough*
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when other encouragements are furthest off, that *God lives* ! O what a thing is it in such a world, and in some deep perplexing plunge, to know that *the Lord is God*, whom he hath now for a *rock* and a *shield*, and in the close of time for *his exceeding great reward* ! Can we have serious thoughts of this, and so easily turn our selves to other things without astonishment ! yea, is it not strange, there should be oft so near and immediate a bordering betwixt our thoughts of the glorious God and the meanest trifle. (4.) It is no small advantage, where men can open the Bible and retire into it, under the sense and impression of a *Godhead*, and that near *correspondence* he hath this way with his people ; on whose soul these words have aw and authority, *Thus saith the Lord* ; yea, have that repose upon *his testimony* and *promise*, which the solid persuasion of his being and faithfulness should cause.--(5.) They have come a great length here, that in their ordinary walk are under some weight and impression of this that *God is near* ; who *knows their sitting down and rising up* ; from whose sight they cannot shift one thought ; yea, that on him they have such an absolute dependance, that without him they can not draw their breath. O where this is believed, must it not cause both fear and wondering ?

2. Is not this an argument, which by a sure and unanswerable demonstration do's witness the truth and reality of *grace* that there is such a thing, and is no empty sound, which doth *raise* man above the *natural* state of men, as far as reason puts him above the state of the beast ! It is truly strange, this should be believed, and yet is not more marvellous in our eyes, how we can be at such rest, whilst one of these two lies under debate, the reality of *grace*, or our being really interested therein. O is there not cause of astonishment, that such a product of heaven should be found in the earth, whose

whose descent and original is so clearly demonstrated by its breathing upwards after God, its native tendency and motion towards him, whence it came? Surely *grace* is a great subject to think on; and that it is not so in our eyes, it must be either because we do not believe it, or do not consider what a change it makes on the soul, which is no transient disposition, but *the seed of God that remains*. Is not this such a thing as makes spring in the winter, causeth men to grow under their greatest weights, lifts the soul up from the clay, yea does by bringing it low in its own eyes, raise it nearer God? This makes a man to have another appearance, on which the world is forc'd to look with some astonishment. One Christian doth admire this in another; and the more it shews it self, it causeth a more near approach betwixt their souls. It will cause fear in them who hate it, and hath a power even over its persecuters. Now it is the truth and reality of this excellent thing, that this argument do's witness; yea such a witness that can admit no debate, where experience makes it sure: I confess a serious view and persuasion of this might make the *Christian's* life a continued wonder: that there is such a thing, which by a marvellous surprisal did prevent him when he was not aware, hath entred him into a new world, and translated him from a state of darkness unto a marvellous light, causeth the soul to breath in another air, brings him so near that state of the angels, subdues the will without violence, and subjects it with its own consent; yea, by so strait a tie is link't with an eternal glory and blessedness! Surely this is one of the most stately pieces of the work of God, that exceeds the whole structure of the universe. O with what astonishment should we look on this marvellous thing, if we could consider the whole frame and structure of the grace of God in a Christian, and there make as it were a dissection in its several parts and

and proportions, its decay and languishing, its different changes and sizes, its vigorous actings and abatements; how it breathes, is nourished, is kept green and preserved by a continued intercourse with the fountain of its being! and lo, whilst we consider this great wonder, both in the whole and in its parts, we may see how in these it do's most exactly answer that model we have thereof in the *scripture* of God.

3. This is a great argument, and should be so in our eyes, which do's not only witness the reality of grace in its acting and exercise (which in this former section is specially pointed at) but do's unanswerably demonstrate a *spiritual life* and being, which the Christian knows and is persuaded thereof, as he is sure he breathes and hath a natural life! O what a marvellous demonstration is this, wherein sense and feeling doth in as certain a way concur, as in any discovery we have by our outward senses, that there is a *new life* and *another being*, (besides that we have by nature) which answers to a *new birth*; yea, another breathing and acting, that is also suted thereto! but oh, can it be said, we believe and know it is assuredly true, who have such common and passing thoughts thereof, and do not consider what it is whereof we are sure!---(1.) That this is so *great* a thing; it may indeed cause wonder, to think we are men, and that we have a *rational being*: but *o* a *spiritual life* is another cause for wondering, which comes not by our birth, hath no natural causes, yet a life that hath its proper *operation*, and *vital acts* put forth, as truly as these natural actions of breathing and moving are put forth, by a living man; a life that hath in as sensible a way quickning and refreshing influences, as the earth or bodies of men know the influences of the heavens; which hath a pleasure and delight peculiar to its nature, that hath

no affinity with things we enjoy by the senses, but is a pleasure do's far exceed the same! And is this a small matter to be persuaded of? (2.) What a demonstration is it, which doth witness even to our sense and feeling a *power* on the soul by the *word*, above the most persuasive words of man, and above all moral influences; by which men are not only reached, but *transform'd into the same image*; whence the Christian knows, and knows assuredly, those great truths, the *sealing, witnessing, teaching, comforting of the Spirit*, &c. are no matter of words, or some strange devised names, but are undoubted *realities* acted and verified on the soul.---(3.) If this demonstration of a spiritual life be sure, have we not thus also an eternal life and *being with God* put beyond debate? for, if we be certain of the one, O is not this undeniable, that this noble being of the new creature, this life that is here begun, must have a more full growth, & be at the furthest stature of the man in Christ; when we now see it with our eyes in its infancy, and upon a growing advance towards the same? For the one is surely as demonstrative of the other, as a young child which we see in a growing tendency towards a man, doth shew there is a man in his furthest growth. (4.) If we assuredly know this *Spiritual life*, must we not also admit the undoubted truth of *spiritual beings*, and of an *invisible world*, with which this life hath its *correspondence*; yea, thus as by a stream be led up to the true fountain, to know an *invisible God*!

4. How great an *argument* is this, which gives us such a demonstration, that *heaven* is not altogether *deferred* until we be there, but that such a thing is sure now, as the *real presence* of the glorious *God*, and a near familiar approach of him to the soul, which is *here* as really felt and enjoyed, as we can be sure of any thing? O how marvellous should this be to us! I cannot doubt but the report hereof, do's sometime dazle

dazle the *world* with amazement, and puts the grossest of men to strange thoughts. But oh, may not this make them question its *reality*, whether *those* that bear such a witness do *truly* feel and enjoy the same, who by their *way* and appearance do so little declare any *deep impression*, that this hath on them! I have sometimes thought it strange, how men are taken even in a kind of *transport* with the discovery of some rare experiment and demonstration in nature, which could make that poor man cry out EUPEKA, as tho' therewith he had gained the whole earth! but O here is another kind of demonstration, of a more *transcendent* value and interest! to know and be sure of this near approach and intercourse betwixt God and the soul; that even *with men in the earth he will verily dwell*, and have so real a converse; this do's indeed rise above *Archimedes* reach, and such who ever follow'd the search of nature in their most exact and subtle inquiry. O blessed souls, who have found it! for they have found a *treasure*; the tho'ts whereof may make it a *new thing* every day, and make them consider this with a renewed *wondering*, to know, there is not only a claim and title to the *inheritance* above, but that the *first fruits* and *earnest* thereof is got here; that as surely as there is a real and immediate converse betwixt men, they have found such a near immediate fellowship with *God*, that all the words of the world cannot express; such a meeting betwixt him and them, where their soul hath been drawn out with desire, where they have found a breaking up of the day with an astonishing brightness, after a most cloudy and dark night; O is not this a *great thing*! Have they not cause both for joy and wondering, who have fallen on such an experiment, that they can say (and not from report) I do *surely feel*, I *enjoy*, I am *persuaded this is the Lord*; and thus have come forth from him with such

a change on their soul, and *composure* of mind, that even by-standers might see *where they have been!* Now this is the Christian's witness, which all who are serious in the way of the Lord, can in some measure bear, that in a way no less sure & demonstrative than any thing here beneath can be known, they have had such a discovery: and now these strange *Scripture-truths*, the meaning whereof once they could not know (such as, to have their soul melting within at *the voice of their beloved*, to have his name as ointment poured forth, and be brought near to see his face with joy) they know well that they are as truly verified on the heart, as they are written before their eyes in the word.---I shall but add, it is a very great thing these know, who know assuredly the real presence of God here; for thus they are made sure that He is, as one may know the sun, when he feels its warming heat, and when he sees it with its own light: thus they are confirmed of the truth of the Scripture, whilst they see and feel one of the most marvellous things therein verified.

5. This is an argument that do's clearly witness a truth and reality in Prayer; which may be called one of the great wonders of Religion: That such a way is, wherein there is so near so immediate an address to the Majesty of God in all our concerns, is not this a very great thing! that poor man, now upon the earth, hath such a passage to heaven, & may speak up unto him who inhabits eternity, the glorious object of the adoration of angels, without the intervening of any creature: yea, with so sure a warrant may approach the throne of God, and there pour out his soul, and present his requests unto him who lives and sees! O with what astonishment should we consider this! suppose at some solemn times in our life this only might be attain'd, yea, that it were but in one part of the earth, should we not look

look on the whole earth besides as accursed; and reckon an abode there, were it a barren desert and wilderness, to be preferable to all other advantages! It may truly be a question, whilst we are most in the practice of this duty, if we believe the truth and reality thereof: but it is beyond question, what Christians have most sensibly found here, that they can say, if they be sure they have a soul, they have been as sure, in this blessed way, they have had their soul restored and return'd again; and under some deliquium, that by wrestling they have at last prevail'd; yea, have got an answer from heaven, as if they had got it by an audible voice. Now is not this a great and marvellous demonstration!

But oh what common thoughts have we thereof! and may not these things seem strange, if seriously considered!--(1.) That we are not more restless, to be surely persuaded, this is a truth, when we are so highly concerned therein; that we may have further confirmations about this, which we should look on as an inestimable treasure, both for our joy and establishment.--(2.) It is strange, we can find it so easy a matter to pray and appear before God; that we are not afraid, to be *hasty in uttering a matter before him*, whilst we consider *God is in heaven*, and *we are but on the earth!* It is sure, if we intend the bringing of our soul with us in such a duty, it should be more our study to watch unto prayer, throughout our walk.--(3.) It may seem strange, how easily we can step out from the world and the noise thereof, in before the Lord, without the least pause or time intervening, which the impression of so great a business should require; yea, so immediately, in our return, again step into the world, as if we had wholly forgot where we have been.--(4.) How strange is formality in such a business as prayer; which is an address to the living God, one of the most solemn acts of the soul; yea, we may call it the most natural work of

a Christian, like the breathing of the child after the breast. Alas, it's sad, that this seems rather a piece of *invention* many times, than a matter of earnest with the Lord; not so much the breathing of the soul in desire after him, as the expressing what should be our desires. O to what a class can such a piece of *Atheism* be reduced, as appears in our formal approaches to God? --- (5.) Should we look on prayer as a *duty*, and not consider it as a singular *enjoyment* also; without which this *earth* would have a near appearance of *hell*, if we could not thus solace the soul in God, and get a vent under its greatest pressures? O *prayer*! What thoughts should we have of it, if the *truth* thereof were more believed! I think, that man who is sure of the being and faithfulness of *God*, and of the reality of *prayer*, needs not be solicitous with what face the World look on him; when thus his great interest and encouragement is secure, and a well is at his hand, that can answer all his complaints.

6. Have we not this demonstration also by that *Argument* of experience, how *near* the blessed Majesty of God do's in the way of providence approach to his people, and is surely known by a real *correspondence* he hath with them in this way, in which he do's so clearly *verify his word*, holds forth *light* and counsel, and gives the *return of prayer*, sometimes with such remarkable circumstances, as causeth fear as well as joy, and will force that testimony, *This is verily the Lord*! It is true, that in the smallest things *God is great*, and thus declares himself to be God: but there is a more solemn and near approach, by some *special Steps* of his providence: yea, by the *rod* he doth sometimes speak, as with an audible voice, and with such a convoy of his power *opens the ears of men* and *seals their instruction*, as will force its passage down to the reins, and in the *hidden part* cause them to understand wisdom. There is sometime also
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so wonderful a *tract* and *series* of providences, and these so convincing, that men cannot but see something greater than man therein, whilst things have been attended with such a *surprisal*, in the very opportune time & season, that their *mercy*, though great in it self, hath not so much taken them up, as the *way* how it is brought about, and their discovery of the immediate *hand of God* therein, and the *truth* of his word and promise.

7. I must further add, O! is not this a great *Argument*, which persuades the soul of these truths by so sure a way as *experience*, that thus we have an *inward & sensible demonstration of the things of God*, that are as certainly witnessed, as these visible Heavens and Earth are to our eyes, when they are most fixed thereon! O what is this, which the Christian knows yet knows so little what he hath thereby! This is indeed a *sight*, which puts the thing seen beyond question or debates; for the *soul* hath its feeling & taste, as sure as the *body*; and hath a favour & relish of things suitable to its own nature, whereby it can discern a peculiar sweetness and fragrancy, in that which may seem bitter and grievous to the *flesh*. It is by this *sight* which experience gives, that the *Christian* is a witness *himself*, is therein *personally* concern'd, do's see these great things with his *own eyes*, and not with the eyes of others; the *consolations of God*, which are *not small*, are no matter of report to him; he knows how no mercy hath been more *sweet* and relishing, than that which hath had a *bitter* cross going before: yea, never more sensibly found his own *burden*, than he had found it *taken off*; the laying on whereof was not so grievous, as that relief and ease hath been sweet upon its removal.

Now to shut up this *Argument*, I shall but add the testimony of *two* great and eminent *Witnesses* to the truth; who after they had been helped to *serve their*
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generation by the will of God, and were dying, had a large account to give from their experience of the truth and faithfulness of God in his word, & have left a seal to the same, worthy to be transmitted to posterity. The one is that great Servant of Christ BEZA; who in his younger years, after the Lord had touched his heart by the word, was one day in the Church of Charenton, exercised with that 91st Psalm, which then was expounded, and with such power was followed, that not only he found it marvellously sweet to him at present, but was then helped to believe, yea to a great persuasion of the Lord's making out all these promises to him in his persuasion, which as he after found verified, did at his death with much comfort witness the same; that as he had been then helped to close with that great truth in the second Verse, in taking the Lord for his God, and got a sure claim thereto, yea, that he should be his refuge and fortress, he had found him that most remarkably in the after-changes of his life; that he had delivered him from the snare of the fowler and the noisome pestilence, having been in frequent hazard by the lying in wait of many to ensnare him, and sometimes was in great hazard from the pestilence in those places where he was called to reside; yea amidst the civil wars, which were then so hot in France, had most convincing deliverances from many imminent hazards, when he was called to be present sometimes with the Protestant Princes upon the fields, where thousands did fall about him; and thus whilst near his death, he found that Psalm so observably verified, whereon he was caused to hope, that he went through all these promises, declaring the comfortable accomplishment thereof, and how he had found the Lord's giving his Angels charge over him, had oft answered him when he had called on him, had been with him in trouble, delivered him; yea had

had satisfied him with a long life. And now, says he, I have no more to wait for, but the fulfilling of that last word of the Psalm, to shew him his salvation, for which in confidence he longed. This, though not writ by these who have given an account of his life in our language; yet I had the same from those most worthy of credit, who not only from some of the greatest French Protestants had it, when they were in France, as a known and sure passage, but told me they read the same there in a printed relation in that language, about his life and death.

The 2d. testimony I shall here offer is from a grave an eminent minister of Christ in our own Church within these few years, Mr. GEORGE GILLESPIE; who near his death did declare to those who were by, what a large proof he had, and assured persuasion of the truth of the Scripture from experience; that he knew so well what adventuring on the word was, and what it was to live on divine assistance, and be thus in all his concerns carried through, that he could not desire, were he to live in the world, a more desirable and satisfying life, than that of a continued reliance and depending on the Lord: and truly amongst many notable experiments that man of God had thereof, this was one very convincing, how in a strange land, whither he was called on the service of the Church, and in a grave assembly of many of the greatest divines in that age, when one day he was surprised with an unexpected rencounter of a learned Man Mr. Selden, who came on design, with some others of that party upon the Erastian interest, to debate for it, by the strongest arguments which they had then premeditated for its defence; whilst none appeared in that great assembly to give a return, though there were many singularly learned and able, he did on an immediate reliance on God adventure (lest the adversary should take advantage thereat) and gave

a short account of those arguments adduced, wherein the strength of his discourse did most lie, with so clear and satisfying an answer as astonished all; yea, did silence the adversary, with a marvellous conviction. Now this was the more convincing, that having a little paper-book in his hand, in which he was before observed to write down something, he was by some after pressed to let them see his notes, supposing the heads of his following discourse were in it, but found only in some Pages these words several times writ down, -- *Light, O Lord, and assistance*, --- his soul being then carried upward for the same. Thus did that blessed man give in his witness to the truth, when he was dying, from the sure experience he had thereof, through his life; and with much assurance of the salvation of God, died. Which, I must say, is a remark, that in many instances might be obvious; how *great peace* and an *abundant entrance*, those have found in the close of the day, who have been helped to most faithfulness in the publick interests of Christ and his Church, and to the most severe adherence to their light, about the duties of the time; which I knew in another worthy Minister of Christ, not many years since, who by some of his last words did witness an unexpressible joy he found in this, that the Lord had kept him in a time of many trials, from giving his Ark a wrong touch; which he then declared to standers-by, when he was on the very threshold betwixt this and another World. (¶)

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The SECOND ARGUMENT.

Our SECOND Argument, to demonstrate the accomplishment of the Scripture, is this, that not only Christian experience, but the observation of the Church and people of God, doth in all ages bear witness thereto, how the Lord's way in these providences both of mercy and judgment, about the Church, amidst the various changes of her condition, yea, in the most strange things which fall out in the world, doth convincingly answer the word, and verify the same.

IT is indeed undeniable that the Scripture of God, as it is written to the personal case of his people, and doth in their experience take place; so is there a part of it in a peculiar way directed to the Church, the fulfilling whereof in the providences and events of the time should be the subject of our observation, and would singularly help to confirm our faith of the truth thereof.

For prosecuting this argument I would touch it a little in these three branches.

1. How these *general promises* which belong to the Church universal, and concern her in all ages, have an accomplishment.

2. How these *threatnings* also of the word, which do not only concern the Church, but have a respect to her *adversaries*, are certainly fulfilled, and take place in men's observation, who do observe the judgments of their time.

3. How the Scripture of God doth clearly shine upon the *darkest footsteps of Providence*, even these which would seem most strange and hard to understand, so that it may be demonstrated nothing falleth out in the world, or befalleth the saints, but what is most consonant to the Scripture.

FIRST

FIRST BRANCH. As to the first branch of this argument, I shall but instance five *general promises* which we find held forth in the word concerning the *Church*; and endeavour to shew how very clear and obvious the accomplishment of them is, if men do not willingly shut their own eyes.

FIRST Promise, wherein we find the Scripture expresses, is the *preservation of the Church*: that he will be with her to the end of the World, and though he make an end of other nations, yet, will he not make an utter end of her, but while the ordinances of the sun, and the moon do last, and as the days of heaven, so shall her days be prolonged; against her the gates of hell shall not prevail. *Jer. 30. 11. Math. 16. 18.* Now that God hath truly verified this his promise, and is as good as his word, is a truth, though marvellous, yet, so very clear, and manifest, that I am sure no atheist can deny, it may be so easily demonstrated.

First, that the *Church* doth continue, and is kept alive to this day, it doth certainly prove the truth of his promise. For it can be said of her, and none can say it is a lye, she hath outlived all her opposers, the greatest of whom have found their grave in the quarrel, over whose tomb that last confession of a great adversary, *Julian*, may be written, *viciſſitandem, Galilæe!* Hath not this deadly and irreconcilable seed been perpetuated from fathers to children! but who hath prospered in that enterprise! the archers have oft shot, and wounded her sore, but her bow doth abide in strength, as at this day, this is her motto, *Persecuted, but not forsaken? cast down, but not discouraged.* She who hath brought many children, yet ceaseth not to bear, whose age hath not marred her beauty, her eyes are not dim, nor her strength failed; a sight which may cause us no less to stand and consider this great wonder

wonder, then *Moses* did, at that which was but the shadow and emblem thereof, *a bush burning, and not consumed.* For, behold, a *Church* kept alive, yet, still in the flames! and when to appearance consumed, it doth arise more glorious out of her own ashes! This is indeed the only *Phoenix*, and we know no other, of whom that can be said. Hath she not born out those universal deluges, which did like an inundation go over her head, of idolatry and paganism in the first times, and Antichristianism with Arianism in the after-ages; yet not swallowed up! Which may be no less marvellous, than when she was kept above the waters, in the ark: and though her enemies have oft sung her funeral song, and rejoiced over the dead bodies of her witnesses, yet, they have risen again; her dry bones have taken life, and come together; and behold she is alive at this day.

2. Not only the Churches preservation, but the continued series and succession thereof unto this time, doth witness the fulfilling of this promise: that in the darkest times of her condition, she hath not altogether disappeared, even, when she was so long hid in the wilderness, but still in every age had some witnesses; and though the Church hath oft cried out for the want of *Children*, and been heard weeping, bemoaning her self because they were not, yet, we may say she never wanted an off-spring to this day; she did never die without an heir, and seed of her own, to raise up her name, even since the Covenant was first made with her in *Adam's* family. And though particular Churches have their set times, which like the sun, have the usual periods, their height and flourishing, and afterwards a gradual decay, making way to the departure of light; yet, this made never void the promise of God to the *Church universal*, whose lamp was never put out, nay, shall not while the days of heaven do last.

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2. We must also say that the continuance and preservation of the Church is *peculiar to her alone*; and can be said of no other interest and party beneath the sun. For it is clear, that there was no Kingdom or Empire so firmly rooted, no society so well governed by Laws, backed with power, which hath had the best title and claim, but Time at last did prevail over it, and made the same a trope of her conquest; yea, the greatest Monarchies, and flourishing Cities have at last yielded, so as of them it may be said, *Nunc seges est ubi Troia fuit*. But time cannot to this day boast of a triumph over the Church of God: though no nation, no family in the earth could ever plead antiquity with her. This is that interest, which hath born out all those great revolutions, that so oft changed the very face of the world; yea, hath outlived so many Kingdoms and successions thereof.

4. It doth convincingly demonstrate the truth of this promise of the Church's preservation, that the World, yea, greatest Atheists may see, this hath not come to pass at an *adventure*; nay, not in an *ordinary way* of providence, but by a divine power most discernable therein: while it is so clear, (1.) That no interest, or party had ever such *adversaries*, as the Church, against whom the powers of World, and the powers of darkness have always been on foot.--- (2.) That outward *advantages* have usually been on her *adversaries* side, not only the great men of the earth, but these of greatest parts, and abilities. (3.) That their *will* was never wanting to their power, and their *design* no less than to *raze her to the foundation*.--- (4.) That this enmity hath been *rooted*, and *irreconcilable*, which time to this day could never take up. (5.) That *no other* interest did ever endure such *violent* assaults, so many *sharp* batteries: for it is observable, that most of the wars and commotions of every age have been some way stated on the *Church's* account; and what

what ever private quarrels men have had among themselves, yet it hath not hindred the pursuit of their malice against *the woman and her seed*.--- (6.) That such who have *come out of her bowels*, even the *men of her own house*, have oft been her greatest *enemies*, and lain in wait to take her at an advantage in the day of her halting.--- (7.) That her real *friends* have oft *fainted* in a time of her strait, and *stood afar off*; yea, almost none of the *Children*, which she had brought forth, have been then found to *take her by the hand*.--- (8.) That the *depths of Satan*, in her enemies, as an *angel of light*, have sometimes given her a sore assault; so that *if it had been possible*, and ordinary Means could have reacht their end, they should have *deceived the very elect*.--- (9.) I must add this further witness to the marvellous preservation of the Church, which in an ordinary way could not come to pass, that we find *no other* party was ever brought so low and near death, and be yet *alive*. The knife was once at the Church's throat in *Isaac*; she did seek to adopt a *bond-woman's* son, instead of a lawful heir, when *Abraham* agreed to *Sarah's* overture for the outmaking of the promise; how near expiring do we find her in *Egypt*, when a sentence to destroy all her male issue was gone forth? Yea, what but a miracle could have preserved her, when she was betwixt *Pharaoh* and the *red sea*? How low was the Church in the *wilderness*, and after in the days of the *captivity*, even broken to pieces with small appearance of life, when her face was all blurred with weeping, and her enemies made sport over her ruins at the rivers of *Babylon*, when the Children of *Edom* cryed out, *let us raze her even to the foundation*? Yea, could the Church be nearer the grave, than when her *bones* were scattered at the *graves* mouth; but above all in that dark night, when her *head* and *shepherd* was smitten, and her hope seemed to be buried in the grave

with a stone put upon it; when she could get no entertainment among the *Jews*, was wounded in the house of her friends, and the *Gentiles* in wrath rose up against her; that for some hundred years the great Empire, which had trod down all the nations about, put forth the utmost of power and malice for her undoing! O who could have thought the Church should outlive this? Yea, after all we find her tost and hurried by *Antichrist* into the *wilderness*, an adversary more cruel than any that had gone before, where the *Dragon* watcht to get her destroyed: but how in all these, and through that long dark night, she hath continued, and marvellously flourished, as the *palm-tree*, under greatest weights; so that we cannot but see that which her enemies (being judges) will not deny, that this promise to the Church, of her preservation, is *this day fulfilled*; yea, that it hath not in an ordinary way been brought about. Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, nor divination against Israel; all her enemies have been found liars; happy art thou above other People; for the eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are everlasting arms! Else long since she should have been swallowed up; may we not still say with astonishment, O what hath God wrought, in her behalf!

SECOND promise, which I shall here instance, that God had made to his Church in the Word, Of her Increase and Enlargement: that the Earth should be covered with the knowledge of God, as the sea of water; and her seed be as the stars of Heaven; that her bounds should be from the sea to the utmost rivers; which was promised to Christ in the behalf of his Church, and that she should possess the gates of her enemies.---*Psal.* 89. 25. *Psal.* 2. 8. *Isa.* 42. 4. *Isa.* 54. 3.

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As this promise is express in the Scripture, we must say it is no less clear and evident in its accomplishment; that surely the Lord hath kept his Word, whereto the event doth most exactly answer; and though yet it be not to the full made out, I am sure there is so much at this day manifest, considering the former condition of the Church, as undeniably proveth the fulfilling of the forementioned promise, which even to the conviction of greatest Atheists may be demonstrated from these grounds.

1. That vast extent which the Kingdom of Christ hath had in the World. For this cannot be denied, that the greatest Empire or Monarchy could never so far extend their conquest, as the Church hath done, since the wall of partition was taken down; short are the limits of the *Grecian*, and *Roman* Empire; considered with this, whose bounds have been the ends and uttermost parts of the Earth, where neither *Greece* or *Rome* did ever set up their Trophees. Hath not the Gospel, as the sun made its circuit from the East to the West? yea, crossed the seas, to the dark northern nations, thus fulfilling its course, in order to its turn again, to the place of its first rising; that it may, as we are sure it shall once, visit the *Jews* again, and the eastern places of the World, that now are buried in a night of darkness: which, I think, will be as sure a presage of the break of day, and second coming of the Lord, as the morning-Star is to the World of the Sun's accomplishing its course, and that it is returning again to the East where it should rise. Hath not the Gospel now been through *Asia*, where it did not tarry for a night; for many flourishing Churches were there, and the going back of the tyde from thence was its flowing to another part of the World: which is indeed observable of the Church as it is of the sea, that what it hath lost in one part, it hath gained in another. Did the vast distance of *Af-*

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rica, its great barren deserts, or scorching heat, hinder the Gospel's making a visit thither ! No, it was once a fertile soyle, and brought forth many famous lights ; yea, something yet doth both there and in the East parts of the World remain, to shew the Gospel was truly in these places. And hath *Europe*, though last, been least on this account ? Yea, what do mean the late discoveries of unknown parts of the Earth, but to make way for a more full performance of this promise, that the Gospel might stretch its conquest over the line ? which surely was the gold and treasure Christ design'd from thence, that even *America* might have her day also, and the *voice of the turtle be heard in those lands*.

2. Not only the large extent of the Church as to its bounds, doth witness this, but also the *great and numerous off-spring* of Sons and Daughters, which in those parts where the Gospel hath been, were brought forth to Christ. For we may say, what *John* saw in vision, hath been very manifest to after-ages, an *innumerable company, of all Tongues, Nations and Languages*, of whom it could be said, *These are born in Zion !* O how great a harvest of the Nations is even already gathered ? What a fleece hath every particular Church cast ? What a marvellous increase hath been in some places, after special tydes of the Gospel ? May we not say, that truth is now beyond debate, *that out of one, and him not only as good as dead, but truly dead, there hath come forth as the sand of the sea, and Stars of Heaven, in number !* the Church hath inherited *Joseph's blessing*, of the womb, and the breasts, in a fruitful off-spring. *The dew of Christ's youth* hath been as *the womb of the morning*. O what a marvellous and goodly company will this once be, when gathered together ! Then will the performance of these precious promises be fully manifested.

3. This truth may be demonstrated not only from the

the real conquest of the Gospel, and those excellent trophies of her victory over many *noted enemies*, who have after been *vessels of honour*, but also from the *feigned subjection*, that so many have been made to render. Is it not strange, what a multitude do in these times profess the truth, and yet hate it ; and were never drawn with the cords of love ? How very many have courted the name of a Christian, and wooed the shadow of religion, who never knew the truth thereof ? which certainly is a convincing evidence of the Gospel's conquest, that so many *knees should bow to the name of Jesus*, whose hearts were never bowed, or really subdued to him.

4. It is an unanswerable proof of this truth, that we see, the Church's increase and enlargement hath come to pass most punctually *after that manner*, yea, with all the circumstances, *as was foretold* and promised : so that the event doth in every thing answer the word. For (First) it is there held out, that from a *day of small things*, which men would be ready to *despise*, it should grow up as a *tender plant*, and spread forth its *branches* over the nations ; that *the children of the desolate* should be *more than of the married Wife*, and the *glory of the second Temple*, exceed that of the first : and O ! hath it not accordingly come to pass.--(2.) This great increase and enlargement of the church was to fall out in the days of the *new Testament* ; when *Christ should be lifted up*, that *then he should draw all-men after him*. For those promises we have thereof in the old testament, do clearly point at the times of the Gospel : and doth not the event here accordingly answer ?--(3.) The Scripture holdeth out that *the falling away of the Jews* should be the *riches of the Gentiles*, and that their rejection should make way for the fulfilling of this promise, even the ingathering of the nations : and do not men see the event, with this very circumstance ?

4. We find the *Iles*, and *utmost parts of the earth*, are given to Christ for his inheritance; and foretold as a special part of the Church's increase. And do we not clearly see, there is no place of the world, where Christ's Kingdom is more visible, where more children have been begot to him by the gospel, we may say, than in these northern places, even in these isles of *Britain*, and *Ireland*, which are almost the uttermost parts of the earth; there being but little from that, and nearer the pole, which is inhabited, yea we may judge hath been that *Tbule*, whereof the Ancients did so much speak.--(5.) Was it not also foretold that the Church should *possess the gates of her enemies*, at whose great increase the world should wonder; the princes thereof see, and be troubled, *while God is known in her palaces, for a refuge*? And doth not the event witness this, that over all the counsels and essays, which the world hath had, to hinder the church's growth, her rising hath always been upon the ruins of her greatest enemies; yea, those who have been a *terror in the land of the living*, did oft fall, & break themselves, in that attempt! Can men deny the marvellous progress of the Church, how from a small beginning she at last possessed the gates of both the east, & western Empire, her old enemies: & do we not this day see her conquest advancing on the ruins of *Antichrist*, her last, and greatest adversary!

5. As the fulfilling of this promise about the church's increase is undeniable, since men cannot contradict their sense therein, we must also say, *this is a thing great and marvellous*, which no less than some *divine* and *extraordinary* power could bring about; if we consider these things: (first) that *quick dispatch*, which the churches growth, under the days of the new Testament, hath made. O might not the *pagan* world wonder, how in the space of two or three hundred

dred years it was almost become wholly *Christian*? O strange! a *Dioclesian* and *Maximus*, so grievously persecuting, and trampling on the very name of Christianity, and yet near that same age, this great *Roman* Empire and Emperour submitting to the Gospel, which was fulfilled in the days of *Constantine*!-----
(2.) How astonishing was it, for the Church's rise and increase to be brought about upon the ruin and downfall of the *idols* of the nations who had their temples, and were *worshipped as God*; that the world should be made to renounce its Bible, and that religion which for so many ages was deeply rooted by *tradition from their fathers*; those *altars*, which were had in such reverence, demolished, and their temples made a ruinous heap; yea, that very *name of their God's* should be thus obliterated, was not this indeed very wonderful? But *Dagon* hath no strength to stand before the *ark of the God of Israel*. (3.) That it should be thus advanced by such *means*, as the *preaching of the word*, even of that which to the *Jews* was a *stumbling block*, and to the *Greeks foolishness*! how this voice should put to perpetual silence those *Oracles*, that for so many ages had given a response to the world, might be indeed astonishing; yea, that the Churches increase should thus be brought about, at no less rate, than the overturning of greatest Kingdoms, the conversion of so many nations; should tame and civilize the most *fierce* and barbarous, cause *the lion to lie down with the lamb*, and even make so great and universal a change in the face of the universe.--(4.) Doth it not speak forth some *divine* power, the carrying on of the Church's growth and increase, not only over the violence of men, but over all those *dreadful errors* and *inventions*, those thick *mists* which both in former and later times, have *ascended out of the pit*, to choke her; that we may say, the Church hath not only been helped to *tread up-*

on the lion, and dragon, but on the adder and cockatrice also; and doth carry the trophies of her conquest over all these at this day!--(5.) I would add, is it not marvellous, how the Church's increase hath been advanced in a way most *contrary* to all the rules of *ordinary policy*, by which States and Empires have risen; *not by dissimulation*, but greatest plainness and free dealing for Christ, and his Ministers did never flatter the world to embrace the truth; *not by open violence*, but a more excellent spirit and power, before which men could not stand? where *foolishness* was made to confound and outwit humane *wisdom*, and *weakness* to overcome *strength*: that we may say, O how little of man, and how much of God was to be seen therein!

THIRD Promise, which the Lord hath given to his Church in the word, is *the giving of the Spirit and pouring out of the same*; which is there expressly held forth, and promised, *Zach. 12. 10. Job. 14. 17. Isa. 59. 21.* And doth concern *all times* of the Church, though in a more full measure, to be let out in the days of the *Gospel*.

It is true, the Christians *inward* experience can best witness this; for these have an argument from within; they *know*, and are *sure they have received the Spirit* by the word, whereby they understand those things which are *spiritually discerned*. But that which here is intended, it is to shew, that the *Spirit* is truly given forth to the Church *according to the promise*. That it doth accompany the truth and doctrine of Christ, and purity of the ordinances, is a thing, which from clear undeniable evidences may be demonstrated, to the conviction of the greatest *Atheist*. For I must think, even by-standers, such who never knew any saving work of the Spirit, but live in these parts where the ordinances are dispensed with
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purity and power, if they shut not their eyes, may oft clearly see *something going forth* with the word, that is beyond words, a *divine Spirit* and *power*, which sendeth forth its favour in the daily administration of the Gospel; yea, by its *effects*, and some convincing discovery thereof, doth force this truth in upon men's consciences, who are otherways strangers thereto.

Now to hold forth the accomplishment of so great a promise, that God is faithful and true therein, I would give in these clear and convincing witnesses to the same.

1. Those excellent *gifts* and *endowments* given to the Church, are they not a visible proof of this truth? For it is undeniable, where once the Gospel cometh, that *instruments* are raised with *another spirit*; reapers sent forth, while there is a *harvest* to be gathered, and shaped for their work; yea, those who were of mean and ordinary parts, when called forth to the service of the Church, will have another lustre; that it may be oft seen with astonishment, how far not only they exceed themselves, but those who were of more eminent natural endowments. I would but seriously ask men who never laid this truth to heart, Whence is that variety of Gifts, so fitably dispensed to the various employments, and different pieces of service, the Church doth call for? How are they thus suted to the several times; yea, to the very genius and temper of such a time? Whence is it, that every gift and qualification is so fitted and disposed for its proper use; some most peculiarly shaped out to awake and threaten (those *Boanerges*) while others are set forth with a spirit eminently fitted to comfort; some mighty in persuasion, yet not so fit to expound; others most dexterous to instruct, yet not so powerful to apply; some having the gifts of tongues, and others the tongue of the learned to speak a word in season

son to the weary; to some the face of a lion is given, when a heroick spirit of courage and resolution is called for, and to others the face of a calf, for patient enduring in suffering time! Surely it were a choice meditation, to think how with as great wonder we may say of this excellent body of the Church, as of the natural body of man, how curiously, yea, marvelously is it framed; where every part doth answer another, and to the use of the whole, each hath its peculiar excellency, and something proper to every one's gift may be then seen, as well as in the face of man, by which in some things they differ from all other.

2. These more eminent extraordinary out pourings of the Spirit do also witness this truth; which at some special times, when the Churches necessity requireth it, have been most discernable. When the Lord sendeth forth his servants about a more then ordinary piece of work, either to do, or suffer; when he is to plant the Church in some place, where the Gospel will meet with much opposition; is it not then manifest, how some more then ordinary power and irresistible efficacy doth accompany the truth, before which there is no standing? The disputer is then, in his reasoning, confounded by something above reason; the untoward and rude are forced to stoop before the word, and to confess they have to do, with power, and not with words; yea, those whom the Lord maketh use of, who were feeble and weak as others, in that day are made as a brazen wall, and a fenced city.

3. Is it not also undenyable, that now under the New Testament there are *Ministers of the Spirit*, and not of a dead letter, and empty sound? That with the word there goes along a ministration of power and life; whence a Majesty and authority attending the public ordinances is oft so discernable, that even

even those who know not what the Spirit is, are made to see something therein which doth dazzle them with astonishment. Whence is it that at some times such a beauty and power shine forth with ordinances, like a glance of the glory of God, even going before men's eyes, which for the present hath made a wonderful change upon some very gross men, and put them in an other temper, yea, forced them with fear to acknowledge, that surely *God is near* in the assemblies of his people? And I would ask, whence is it the word giveth law to men's consciences? that it should speak with such an authority, as maketh them all to shiver, that even the worst of men are some times made to stand before the ministry of the word, like men standing at the barr, upon life and death, before a judge whose authority they durst not decline!

4. It is very discernable, what a *great difference* and *another appearance*, there is both on Ministers, and Christians at one time, from what they are at another, in the discharge of duty, as if these were not the same persons; which appeareth not only in the enlargement, and straitning of their gift, but also in power and life. Is it not seen, with what liberty these do some times pray, and are as a ship with a full gale before the wind? That it is then easy to preach; when at other times there is like a shut door, that even hearers may perceive a sensible languishing, and them hampered in their very expressions, yea, as men rowing against a contrary wind; the word wanting that favour and relish it hath had at other times; and this not through a natural indisposition, or want of preparation, but that which all who ever served God in the spirit must confess, hath most sensibly attended them when they have thought themselves at the greatest advantage, for going about duty: O who can deny this evidence of the spirit, a thing in all

all ages so sensibly felt, yea, even obvious to the worst of men !

5. It is also clear, that where ever the Lord hath had a Church, at some special turns of her condition there have usually been some more *solemn times* of the spirit, and *high spring-tides* of the gospel. There was indeed a marvellous flowing forth of the spirit of God after Christ's ascension, which like a mighty current did carry all before it ; at which time more success did follow one sermon, than hath been by the ministry of many others in an age ; this made the world wonder, as if some universal enchantment had fallen on men ; what that could be, which the more they sought to bear down, the more it increased, that made the rich choose poverty, and those who dwelt in palaces betake themselves with cheerfulness to the dens and caves of the earth. But besides this, it is very manifest, that in a large measure the Spirit hath been let forth to the Church in after-ages ; yea, there is no particular Church where the light hath shined, but hath had it's special times, some solemn day of the pouring out of the spirit, before the sun went down : which may be observed either at the first breaking out of the Gospel, or at some other remarkable time and change of her condition ; whence a great Flight of souls to Christ hath followed ; besides the reaching of the conscience and stirring the affection of many others under a common work of the spirit, which usually goeth along with solemn times.

6. The going back of the tide, and *visible withdrawing of the Spirit from particular churches*, where it hath sometimes in a large measure been let forth, is a very convincing witness to the truth of this promise. For it is clearly seen, at what a stand the Gospel is in those places where it most eminently shined ; that the land which blossomed, and was like a watered garden

den, hath been made as the heath in the wilderness ; and then that the ministers of Christ, whose lot hath fallen in such a time, are put to very sore work, to work (as it were) with oars for want of wind, to cast out the net all night, and catch nothing ; a shut door is upon them in the exercise of their Ministry ; duty is made burdensome, because the Lord is against them, there is an evident restraint upon the word, and its intercourse is more with the ear, than with the consciences of men : yea, any liberty they find is to execute a commission of Judgment, and to denounce the wo of the Gospel. O, doth not so manifest withdrawing of the Spirit witness the out-pouring thereof, and that it is a certain and real thing.

7. Do not the *stirrings* and *strong convictions*, which even the *worst of men* have sometimes under the word, witness a divine Spirit and power going along therewith ; that which forceth an assent from their conscience to the truth, which otherways they hate ; yea, maketh them for the time wonder they should not have been more serious in the ways of God ! Yea, it doth often put a thorn in the bed of their security ! for indeed the word and the light thereof doth torment those who dwell in the earth. And truly *this is a marvellous thing*, which getteth in upon men's secret designs and counsels, doth reveal to them the most close thoughts of their heart, which they are sure men's eye could not reach, taketh them down through themselves ; and yet, that the world knoweth not whence it is ! Yea, are they not forced to confess, what a great difference they find betwixt the word from the mouth of *some* who are holy and serious, though held out in greatest simplicity, than from *others* even of greater gifts, and accompanied with more shew of eloquence, that surely the one hath another sound and relish, speaketh more feelingly home to their heart,

heart, than the most polished discourse of greatest orators!

8. One witness more I shall here give to the truth of this promise, even those eminent *examples of the great grace of God*, which in every age have shined in the firmament of the Church; some in love, and zeal, some in patience, and humility, some in the strong acts of faith, and self-denial; which do certainly demonstrate a *more excellent spirit*, than that which is in the world; whence they appear with another lustre in their walk and carriage, and have a sweet and fragrant favour of *the Spirit*, to the very discerning of by-standers; which truly sheweth that *his wind doth blow on his garden*, when the spices send forth so pleasant a Scent.

FOURTH. We find an express Promise in the word of Deliverance to the Church in a low and oppressed condition; that surely the Lord will plead her cause, will deliver his People when he seeth their strength is gone, and save them from the hands of their enemies. Ps. 18. 47, 48, 50. Ps. 22. 4, 5. Is. 54. 17. Is. 51. 23.

It is true, this promise hath its bounds, limits, and proviso's, which should be taken along in the application thereof. We know, the Covenant of God with particular Churches is *conditional* only; he promiseth, that *he will be with them, while they are with him*: yea, it is oft seen (and there is no jarr here with this promise) that a People professing the Gospel, confederate with God following duty, have even *turned their back before the enemy*, and in the holy providence of God have for a time been given up to their fierce rage and violence. But it is also sure, that this promise hath an accomplishment, and in the day of the Church's strait the Lord hath oft appeared, by a strong outstretched hand for

for her help; his own arm brought salvation to his People, when they sought to him; for *God is known in her palaces for a refuge*; yea, surely the Church might oft sing that song on such clear grounds, as though with *Israel* she had been standing at the red sea, *Thy right hand, O Lord, is full of power, thy right hand hath dashed in pieces thy enemies*. For what nation, or People is like this, to whom he hath shewed such marvellous things?

Now to shew forth the faithfulness of God in this promise, I would offer some few things that are a most clear and undeniable witness thereto.

1. There are few ages, but we have some record of the church's condition, which hold forth such *signal convincing providences of God*, in behalf of his oppressed church and people, as may be a manifest seal to this truth. It is true, some times have been more remarkable for suffering, times of Judgment and of a growing trial, wherein this truth hath not so clearly shined forth; yea, that long night which the church had under *Antichrist*, might seem to call it in question: but nevertheless, if men take a serious View of the Lord's way, and the series of providence in ages past, comparing one time with another, what the straits and most extrem case of the church hath at last resolved in, they will find cause to cry with astonishment, *Great deliverances giveth he to his people, yea, the Lord hath done great things for them!* I am sure, were there a full record, with that true account which might be given, of those more remarkable deliverances, that *particular churches* have met with, since the first planting of the Gospel among them, wherein God's very immediate hand for their help hath been discernable, it would *nonplus* the World, and greatest Atheists, about the real fulfilling of this promise.

2. The *confessions* even of the Church's enemies hath oft witnessed this truth, that in pursuing their malice,

malice, to trouble and undo *her*, they have but undone *themselves*; how tormenting disappointments have caused their very flesh to pine away, and the close and issue of their rage forced this conviction from them at last, that the Church is a *burdensome stone*, to be lifted up; a party, with whom it is full of hazard to meddle. Have not such been made to discern something of a divine hand, so clearly against them, blasting their counsels and most promising attempts, as if their eyes with *Balaam* hath been opened to see the *Angel* of their way! Yea, in all ages it is known, how the conscience even of the worst hath oft bewrayed something of a presaging fear, they have had, of those whom they pursued with greatest malice, and a dreadful impression they had of a praying people, and their prayers.

3. This truth hath had the clearest witness *in times of the Church's greatest strait and extremity*; when difficulties have appeared insuperable, and relief in an ordinary way of providence most hopeless; when visible means have been withdrawn, *all refuge failed, and none to help*; that in such a day *the Lord hath been seen upon the mount*, and unexpectedly by very strange means brought deliverance to a broken, and almost ruined Church, even as it were betwixt the bridge and the water: so that who would have a clear view of the accomplishment of this promise, may but turn back on these more remarkable extreme exigences of the Church's condition, and there have it; how oft a sweet sunshine that followed the most dark and cloudy times, a raging storm hath resolved into a refreshing calm; yea, that with a further growth of the Church's trial, and doubling of her burden, her enlargement and deliverance hath broken out with those great & obvious remarks therein, that it was a convincing return of prayer and wrestling, with a further addition of some new and singular

lar mercy there with, yea, some eminent act of judgment upon her adversaries.

4. The greatest *advantages and victories*, which men have got over the Churches and people of God, can also bear witness to this, that *when the wicked have sprung up like the grass, and the workers of iniquity seemed to flourish*, this very way hath the Lord taken to bring about a more full deliverance: Yea, on the other hand, hath it not been very obvious how the Church's *gain* hath been brought forth out of greatest *loss*; that those wounds which seemed most deadly, by the infinitely wise providence of God, have turned to her most effectual and thorough cure; and men's unreasonable violence and rage against the Church hath oft had an evident tendency to bring about even that whereto it seemed most directly contrary, some further mercy, and deliverance, than could have been expected; as the *Amorites* refusing *Israel* but passage through their land, did prove the very mean to give them more than they sought, the possession of that land for an inheritance.

5 This witness the observation of the Church in all ages can bear to this promise, that deliverance hath oft sprung up, and been brought to her hand, *from a quarter, and by such means, as none would have expected*; by such, as *none but God could do*; a sudden report and rumour (*1 Sam. 23. 27.*) Means that have been not only small and improbable, but that looked directly *contrary*, as in bringing the Church out of *Egypt*; yea, sometime by the *wicked's being ensnared in the work of their own hands*. Is it not obvious, how the Lord hath employ'd men's *private* interests, to put them on for befriending his *Church*? and hath caused *the earth to help the woman*, and raised up one oppressor to punish another; yea, often hath prepared carpenters, whence it was least thought, to cut the horns of those who had scattered his people!

6. There

6. There is this convincing witness to the truth of such a promise, *that sudden remarkable change*, which may be oft discerned both on men's inward frame, and the outward face of the Church, when a time of mercy and enlargement is come; instruments raised of the Lord, with a discernable elevation of their spirits to act, and *do exploits*; the feeble then made *strong*; and those who sometime would have fainted at an ordinary piece of service, dare with such a gale of divine assistance *run* (as it were) *through a troop, and overleap a wall*. For indeed this may in all ages be obvious, how easy it is to move, in the day when the Lord moveth for his people, and strengtheth the girdle of their loins; that it was not their bow, or sword, which got them the victory, but the very finger of God, something above the counsels of men, or ordinary means; which hath sometimes been made clear as the noon-day, so that even, at some distance, those who are *wise to discern the times*, did see when there was a breaking out of a day of a Church's hope; how there was a previous motion and stir amongst the *dry bones*; the Lord, as *in the top of the mulberry trees*, hath been then discernable, & some promising appearance from the present disposition & temper of the Godly in that time (tho' we must grant, mercy and sovereign grace hath oft met the Church, when little of this hath appeared) which, like the breaking out of that *cloud* in the top of mount *Carmel*, to the Prophet, though at first but as an *handbreadth*, hath shewed that deliverance to the Church was not far off.

7. I would add this witness also; those *convincing providences*, which in all ages have been shewed against the enemies of the Church, such as men could not pass without some remark: what an *issue* those have had, who have sometimes been a *fore rod* on the People of God, yea, *a terror in the land of the living*

living! How they have become a most abject and contemptible party, like bees who have lost their sting; their countenance hath been changed, and they ceased to be any more a fear, when once *their work was done*, and the date of their commission for the humbling and trying of the Church expired; yea a *judicial Stroke* from the Lord hath been often seen upon their very judgment, and resolutions, which could not then serve them to trouble and afflict the Church; the day being turned, and the time of her deliverance come.

FIFTH. There is this *Promise* also which concerneth the Church in general, as well as Christians in their personal case, *That all things work together for the good of those who love God*, Rom. 8. 28. the accomplishment whereof, as it is written out in providence to the observation of men, I would here touch.

This is indeed a great and comprehensive promise, which in the constant course and tenor of providence about the Church, we may see, it doth take place; how those turnings and changes of the World, the most strange emergents of the time, the various motions and interests of men, do co-operate together, and have an undoubted tendency to bring forth the Church's good, as though they did intentionally act for the same. There will indeed, one day, be a more clear and marvellous discovery of this, when *the Lord hath perfected his work, and the mystery of God is finished*, the Church brought safe to the harbour: then shall it be fully manifest, to what end all those storms and cross winds in the counsels and designs of men were; those things, which in the time could not be understood, but seemed perplexed and strange, did really work for the Church's good. For then men will see with their eyes a full performance of the word: yet we must say, even here, in every age,

age, amidst the various changes of the Church's case, this hath so clear a Fulfilment, that there is no serious observer of providence, but may bear witness to it.

1. That not only the Church's good, but even her greatest good, hath most clearly had its rise, and been brought forth, out of the greatest mischiefs and hurts intended against her. If we search the Scripture, and will turn over those after-records of the Church's condition, we shall there find, that the most remarkable attempts and plots, such as *Pharaoh's* last essay to destroy the *Israelites*, *Haman's* great design to root out the seed of the Jews, that great Master-plot Satan once had on foot, to crush the Gospel and the Christian Church by crucifying her head, yea, in these last times *Antichrist's* killing the witnesses, have all, as if really intended by the instruments as well as the first mover, brought forth the Church's greatest good; so as the after-mercy and relief hath carried some visible proportion to her trial, and to the greatness of her adversaries design.

2. It may be also clear, if we but trace back those memorable changes, which have been up and down the earth, how direct a tendency they have had to this end. Did not the bringing down that great image of the Monarchies witness this? We find *Nebuchadnezzar* raised up as a rod to the Church, and *Cyrus* for a deliverer; we may see the *Persian* and *Grecian* Monarchies brought down, to make way for the setting up of the *Messias* his Kingdom. *Antiochus* must stand up a little for a sharp trial, and his downfall give the Church a new breathing, and hold forth to after-ages a remarkable monument of the judgement of God against his enemies. Peaceable *Augustus* must fall in with his time in whose days shall be abundance of peace. We find a *Titus* set up to execute the judgement of God on the Jews, to

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make way for a further enlargement to the gentile Church; a *Nero* and *Domitian* to help forward the Churches suffering, and a *Constantine* to give her some rest, after so long and sore an assault; and at last, the *Roman* empire mouldred down, for *Antichrist's* up setting, to accomplish what did remain of the sufferings of Christ, in his Church, by that adversary.

3. We may oft see a very strange concurrence of things! how instruments act to bring about the Lord's end, and advance his Church's interest, even while each one doth most vigorously drive their own proper end and design; which sheweth, there is surely a living spirit in the wheels, that ordereth these motions, a supream and first mover that can thus determine them, whether they will, or not, to serve his end, and to promote the Church's good, when they most directly intend the contrary.

4. We have seen how in men's plotting the ruin of the Church, there is oft an unseen hand determining their judgment and inclination, to fall upon that very way, than which we would think nothing could have been more direct for her good and their own ruin; how an *Husbai* hath been sent in, or some have been stirred up amongst themselves (upon their own interest) to break the pernicious counsels and designs of others.

5. We have also seen the personal quarrels of the Church's enemies among themselves brought to such an height, and to fall out so seasonably, that observers might clearly perceive that it hath been from the Lord; a judgement for their rage and violence against his poor oppressed People.

6. We have seen the Church's enemies raised to a strange height, all advantages favouring them, until their mine hath been ripe for springing; and lo, at that very juncture, something unexpected hath fallen

out

out, which did turn their former success to their further ruin, yea, disappoint all. This, the World is ready to call some fatal and malevolent conjunction, which cannot be resisted: and what is this, in effect, but the witness of men's conscience to a divine hand?

7. Have we not seen some fore *dash* and *overthrow* of the Church *bring forth her good*, and a *more full victory*? how visible help and means have been taken out of the way, that something *above means* might be seen in her condition, even in that day, when all hath been given for lost; yea, truth's losing the day upon the field, bring forth her triumph on the scaffold and at the stake.

8. We have seen most *despicable* and *ordinary* things made *subservient* for some *great* piece of the Lord's work; a very small thing made the *first rise* of strange revolutions; that remarkable changes have been oft lying in the bosom of a common providence: yea, truly we find both Scripture, and the observation of after-ages, Witness, that the Church's deliverance and relief did almost never come *that way*, by such a method and means, as *she* had most *expected* the same; and that *God's time* of working may be oft very contrary to *our time* of expecting.

I shall only add; Is it not oft seen (which, I am sure, all ages can witness) how men's endeavours to *darken the truth* by error, have been the effectual *means* for its further *clearing*? That the *growing of a trial*, a violent and fore exacting upon the Church, hath *kindly wrought* towards her relief and enlargement; her *meat* hath been oft brought even out of the *eater*, by means most destructive thereto; and a *sword* must pierce the Church's heart, that the *tho'ts* of many may be discovered; a time of persecution must help to cure the *divisions* amongst the godly,
and

and bring them together in the furnace, which prosperity could not do: yea, it is oft seen, which former ages can also witness, that the very undoing of the Church hath been God's blest way, to keep her from being undone.

THE SECOND BRANCH

Doth concern those *Scripture-threatnings*, which are *held forth in the word*, with a respect to the *visible Church*, and against a people professing the Gospel; that no privileges they have above others, shall exempt them from judgment, yea & from very sad strokes; he hath *known them above the rest of the World*, he therefore will contend with them most *severely*, because of sin, and such particular evils as we find the Word threatneth.

I touched a little some Scripture-threatnings, in the preceding argument, as concerned Christians in their private experience: what I here intend, is to point at this truth, as it is written in the providences and judgments of every time, to men's observation; how judgments from the Lord, which point, as with the finger, at the abounding sins of that time, do reach a *land*, and *particular Churches*, according to the threatnings of the word. This is indeed manifest, that the greatest promises made to a people, we find backed with sadest threatnings: and accordingly we find, the greatest monuments of wrath have usually been set up, where sometimes the largest offers of the Gospel were; yea, that the anger of the Lord may draw so deep, against a people professing his name as to make their land desolate, and the high ways thereof mourn; for in this precinct of the Church doth both judgment and mercy most eminently shine forth, and the Lord's way there doth differ from that he hath with any other people,

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Now to clear this grave truth a little, how those threatnings of the word, against a nation and people, because of sin, are also verified in their judgments, I shall touch a few instances, that are most known and obvious, where we may lay the word and observation of the Church together, and see how they answer one the other.

First, We find the *Threatnings of the word do point at the time of a people's judgment.* 1 *Thef.* 2. 16. *Rev.* 14. 15, 18. That when they fill up the measure of their sin, and their cup is full, the Lord will not then defer the execution; until the cup of the *Amorites* was full, he did let them alone: and we find answer deferred, to the cry of the souls under the altar, for avenging their blood on Antichrist, because that accursed party hath yet more to do against the Church, and the Saints more to suffer under their hand.

Now to witness the accomplishment of this; let us but consider what in all times may be observed. First, that there is an ordinary growth and height of sin, which a land cometh to, before destruction; some national and universal spreading thereof, prodigious outbreakings, the utter rejecting of reproof, which shew that a people's case must then be on some turn; yea, that strange and unusual sinning useth to go before some strange stroke.--- 2. Before judgment come, is it not seen, how the sin of a people hath become so daring, that it hath had a loud cry? yea, their case hath been such as did justify the Lord's procedure against them, even in the conscience of all Observers, that he did it not without much cause.--- 3. Is it not easy, for such as are wise to know the times, to see *night* coming on a land, when sin is at some dreadful height, by considering the word and the Lord's usual way with a people in such a case? Yea, have there not then been some special forewarnings, a more

more then ordinary impression of judgment upon the spirits of the godly, and the hiding of many of them in the grave; which, as threatening prelages, have shewed the near approach of a stroke.--- 4. There doth not usually want even some *Noah*, or *Jonas*, the Ministers of God sent forth to threaten, who as watchmen upon the wall are discerning hazard at a distance; yea, with an observable pressure then upon their spirit, and a more than ordinary agreement amongst themselves, to cry out, and give the people warning, when the time of judgment hath been drawing near.

2. It is clear, there are some special evils and sins of a time, which we find the word most dreadfully doth threaten: yea, in a peculiar way it doth put a mark upon them, that though the Lord should pass by many infirmities in a Church and people professing his name; yet, for such and such sins (as we find in *Amos* 1. 3.) he will not turn away the punishment thereof; but hath solemnly declared, by his truth and faithfulness, that these shall not pass without some visible mark, even before the world, of his anger. Now in this the Scripture is clear, and lets us see, there are some sins more particularly threatened, some land-destroying sins, that have as it were the mark set on them, which do especially provoke the holy indignation and jealousy of God; such as *idolatry*, corrupting the Worship of God; *Perjury*, and *Covenant-breaking*,--- Shall they break my Covenant, and escape? saith the Lord, *Ezek.* 17. 15. Also departing from God, and his way; For this the land shall be desolate, as in *Jerem.* 9. 12, 13. Yea, blood guiltiness, which the earth shall not cover, and for which the sword shall not depart, even from the house and family of *David.* 2 *Sam.* 12. 10.

Now to evidence the accomplishment hereof, I shall point at some things most obvious to the obser-

vation of every time, how terribly the Lord useth to plead, for such things, and by some exemplary stroke and judgment point them out, as we find them particularly set by themselves in the word, and threatenings thereof.

First, that in these sins, thus marked, men may see how their judgments use not wholly to be deferred to another world, but though much is oft passed here, and laid over to that last and great judgment, yet, upon such sins the Lord hath put some mark of his displeasure, even in *this life*.---2. That for these he useth to contend *before the sun*, and in the view of *men*: his judgments are indeed oft secret, and do consume as a moth; but upon such sins, we may frequently see, some publick and visible stroke is made to follow, that the world cannot pass without a remark.---3. That the Lord also useth to be a very *swift witness* against such evils. For, as we find, the oppression of the Church hath a loud cry, and the blood of the saints *a how long?* it is also seen those forementioned sins do much hasten judgment, so as seldom that generation passeth away without some witness thereto. It is rarely found, that some great revolt of a people from God, and breaking Covenant with him, doth lie long unpunished, nor doth the hoary head of the violent and bloody man go oft to the grave in peace.---4. That these sins use to be followed with some *very dreadful* and *eminent stroke*, which hath made the land desolate, their cities sometime waft, and a ruinous heap; yea, houses great and fair, to be without inhabitants; so as men have with astonishment enquired, *Why is all this come to pass!* and it was easy to answer, even for such and such evils hath the Lord done this, according to his word.---5. That a divine hand useth to be most discernable in the punishment of such sins, because of a very clear resemblance betwixt them, and the stroke; which

which hath forced their own conscience, as well as Beholders to confess the Righteousness of God therein.---6. That the Lord will put some mark of his anger on the *choicest of his servants* for any access to such sins; these to whom he hath given their soul for a prey, have yet got a fore outward stroke, upon such an account, which hath followed them to the grave; *For this the sword shall not depart from David's house*. Idolatry rent the Kingdom from the posterity of *Salomon*. *Jonas* shall not escape for his rebellion. Yea, God was wroth with *Moses*, and no intreaty shall hinder his dying in the wilderness. I may add, hath not the Lord's controversy on this ground even reached *their posterity!* Which may shew that these threatenings are sad earnest; and such sins are not more particularly pointed at in the word, than they have been in after-ages made exemplary in judgment.

3. *A people's lukewarmness, their slighting of the Gospel and not receiving the love of the truth*, we find sadly threaten'd in the word, *Rev. 3. 15. 16. 2 Thess. 2. 10, 11.* And truly we must say, they have not fallen to the ground in any age, without an accomplishment, as frequent observation can witness. *First*, how a people's entering upon a Religious way, their pursuing a form of reformation, and not thorough for God therein, but on carnal grounds, hath thus put them in a *worse condition than before*. For truly men's hypocrisy in going about a good work, doth threaten more, than the performance thereof doth promise. *Jehu* got a temporal reward, but his posterity must at length reckon for all the blood of *Jezreel*.---2. That no people use to be further from getting good of the gospel, than such who have been under most clear and greatest *convictions*; so as it is found, there is oft more access to gain amongst the *savages*, than those who have fit their day while the tide did flow; yea,

yea, ministers have found most discouragement, to labour in those parts where the word hath been long preached with power.---3. It is seen, how *light not improved* will turn a People more *gross*, and is usually followed with some remarkable *growth in sin*; that the more the word doth put a *restraint* on men's corruption, the more it *rageth*; so as it may be observed what a very black die, the powerful preaching of the Gospel hath put upon a People, as a visible mark of Judgment on such who profit not thereby.---4. Is it not seen how men's formality in the matters of God hath been oft *punished* even with the *taking away of the form*? Yea, that seldom *error* and delusion doth want a harvest amongst a People who receive not the truth in love.---5. Hath not slighting of the Gospel been at last followed with some *visible restraint* and *inhibition* both upon the ordinances and dispensers thereof, a *judicial withdrawing of the Spirit*, as to the work of conversion and conviction; whereby the Lord doth plainly *cease to be a reprove*r to such; yea, even faith, *Bind up the Law, and seal the Testimony*.

The word doth also threaten *carnal Security* (a disease whereof the Church is oft in great hazard) yea, we find it holds forth a certain connexion betwixt spiritual judgments upon a People, and some outward strokes to follow thereon; that those who are under that first wo and plague upon their *spirits*, are then near to some judgment upon their *persons*, and may expect a sharp wakening; *in hearing they shall not understand*, &c. but the close is, *until their cities be consumed without inhabitants, and there be an utter desolation*: yea, we find, judgment doth begin as a *moth*, in that 5th of *Hos.* but in the 14th ver. it doth turn at last to be a *lion*. We may truly say, the fulfilling of this hath in all ages of the Church been obvious. 1. That as the first part of the Church's deliverance is usually spiritual, so it is found the *first step of judgment*

ment, and the execution thereof against a People, hath been upon their *spirits*; that serious discerners of the time might know, the *night* was fast coming on, and some sad outward stroke on a land, by the abounding of spiritual judgments.---2. It is clear the most dreadful strokes that ever come on a particular Church, do usually find it *in such a case*, judicially hardened, and under many warnings plagued with *security*. Thus did the flood find the *old World*, and before that desolating stroke on *Jerusalem* by the *Romans*, were not the Jews in such a case? *Salvian* can tell how it was with the *African Churches*, before that dreadful inundation of the *Goths* and *Vandals*; yea, the Church's records in all ages do witness, that before any sad stroke or persecution came upon a People, a *deep sleep* and lethargy hath been previous thereto; *gray hairs* might have been seen upon them: and the Word doth even shew, that this will be the *last disease*, whereof the Church shall be sick before the great day of the Lord.---3. It is also seen how spiritual judgments, when they grow upon a people, make *great dispatch*, and do quickly ripen for some further stroke; that when men have run down their conscience, and are past reproof of the word, going on from evil to worse, the case cometh then to be clear, and ready for the final discussion of the process.

5. The word doth denounce wo against the *troublers of the Church*, and those who are her persecutors; that the Lord shall recompence tribulation to such, and plead with her oppressors: the accomplishment whereof hath been truly manifest, yea to the observation even of the world. *Isa.* 10. 5. *2 Thes.* 1. 6.--First, That eminent *oppressors* of the Church have seldom gone out of the world, without some mark of divine anger upon them. Surely if there were a record of such instances, that in every age have been con-

spicuous, men would be forced to see, and say, that the most noted enemies and persecutors of the saints have been also the most convincing and noted examples of judgment in the time.---2. That the Church's suffering useth to go before a day of vengeance on the instruments thereof. We find, *Jehu* got an outward reward for executing the judgment of God on his enemies : but as for those men who have been the rod of the Church, it hath been seen, that they have not long wanted some scourge as fore upon themselves, as they have been to his People, and that at last these have paid dear for their service.---3. We may see how this also doth help to finish the controversy of God, with men and their houses; that for this he hath taken many away in the midst of their days, and made them cease to be, who would not cease to trouble the Church, while they had a being ; yea that he had taken them in his own hand, whom men could not reach, and made their down-casting in the midst of themselves.

6. Doth not the Scripture threaten carnal confidence, in a People ; the putting of their trust in man, or in any outward instruments ? *Jer.* 17. 5, 6, 17. To clear the accomplishment whereof, let us but compare the word, and the Church's observation together ; and we shall find,--1. That outward means have never more miscarried, than when most promising, and when there was greatest expectation from the same ; yea, that very eminent instruments when much leaned to, have been observably blasted, and made to shrink under such a burden.---2. That those whom the Lord had made much use of, yea, honoured to be great instruments in the service of the Church, have oft had some discernable blot, to reprove men's overlading of instruments with their esteem ; a *Tertullian*, an *Origen* in ancient times, yea, even a *Luther*, in these latter ages must go with some halt to the grave.---3. That many

many who have been useful in the Church for a time, the Lord doth oft lay by ; yea, maketh not use of them to the end : but, the last may be made first. And truly that excess in men's esteem, putting a further weight on some means, than they could bear, hath oft helped to render many useless.---4. Is it not also seen, how one extremity is thus plagued with another ? None more ready to shrink in a day of trouble, than such who at a distance seemed most daring ; yea, none more ready to fall in to that excess of undervaluing instruments, than those who have most exceeded upon the other hand.

7. Do we not find the word threaten, and in a special way point at corrupt ministers, unfaithful watchmen, who give not warning to the Church ; those shepherds that feed themselves, but not the flock, the leaders of a people that cause them to err, and by their practice, to stumble at the law ? *Mal.* 2. 3, 4.

The accomplishment whereof hath in all ages been very discernable. First, how such have usually been most noted as the greatest and most violent enemies, which the Church hath at any time had ; yea, that no course hath been so evil and gross that hath wanted some of these to help it on, whose hatred and persecution of the Godly hath been found to exceed the most openly profane and profligate in that time.---2. That as they are particularly threatned above others in the word, so they get also some remarkable cast above others in their judgment, and having once lost their savour, become vile and loathsome, even to the worst of men ; are contemptible in the eyes of such whom they seek in a sinful way to please ; yea, have a worse savour, than the prophaneft wretches ; that being verified in them, *Corruptio optimi, pessima*.---3. That these do seldom make a good retreat from an evil way : so as it is an usual observation, it is rare for Church-men

to repent, or a fallen star to shine again.---4. Are not such oft smitten even in their gifts; which we may see wither, and dry up upon them, while not faithfully improved; yea, to the very conviction of their hearers, to have lost that edge which once they had in their ministry?--5. I must add another remark (though I desire to deal with fear, and much tenderness, in such an application of the judgment of God) how the Lord doth oft put some note of his wrath on the children and offspring of unfaithful Ministers; that it hath been seen, none more wretched and gross: whereto as their evil practice and example hath been a special help, so likewise are they thus punished of the Lord, who did not seek to beget Children to him, by the Word, but through their way did rather cause many to err and fall.

THE THIRD BRANCH.

HAVING spoke something how the Scripture both as to the promises, and threatenings thereof, is evidently fulfilled in the Lord's ordinary way of procedure with his Church, I would a litle further follow this argument, *How this also hath a manifold accomplishment, even in these most strange and dark passages of providence, whereto men are ready to stumble and challenge the spotless righteousness of God, and his faithfulness therein; but if we lay them to that measure, and line of the word which is stretched over the whole work of providence, we will see how well these do agree, and answer one to the other, yea, that all the paths wherein God walketh towards his Church, and people, are surely mercy, and truth.*

To clear this I shall point at some footsteps of the providence of God in the world, and about the Church which would seem most dark, yea a contradiction to his word, and promise, but are plain and manifest, if

if weighed in the ballance of the sanctuary, where we may have a satisfying look, and resolution of these things which other ways would be too hard for us to understand, and may see, how straight these paths are which we thought crooked; yea, how easy and passable, the greatest deeps of providence would be, both as to God's way with his Church, and in our own particular case, when once they are set over against the word. I shall touch this a little in these following instances.

1. *It may seem strange how the Church's trouble and strait is oft seen to increase, with the first stirrings of her deliverance; yea, when some remarkable mercy, and outgate is in the bringing forth, the first step thereof would seem to put her further back, and in a worse condition than before. This is indeed a piece of the Lord's way with his Church which in many instances may be witnessed, but let us take the word along therewith, and we will find.---1. How the Church is oft at the brink of the grave even when her case is upon a turn, and how it is congruous to his way (whose paths are in the deep waters, who cloatheth himself with darkness, that men should not find any thing after him, or lay down absolute conclusions concerning his dealing) that the motions of providence should be oft so perplexed, and various.---2. Did not the case of the Church in Egypt seem much worse, their burdens doubled upon them, even when their deliverance was breaking up?---3. Joseph to be sold as a slave, and in Egypt turned into a dungeon would seem steps of providence, very unlike the thing which God was driving at thereby, and yet we see how kindly these did work towards the same.---4. The Church in Micah 4: ver 10. When she was even at the door next to a deliverance, her trial was even at the greatest height, *be in pain, and labour**

labour to bring forth, for ye shall go to Babylon and there be delivered: but sore pangs in the birth do usually promise the best issue---5. It was the step of the providence of God, which of all seemed most dreadful to the Church in *Esster*, the sealing of the decree, and sending it forth to root out the whole seed of the Jews, while *Haman* still flourished, but lo this was the very step that wrought most thoroughly for her deliverance; and is not a wet mourning seed time a Scripture-prefage of a good harvest.

2. *The sore interruptions which a people's endeavors for Reformation, and to promote the Kingdom of Christ have met with*, even when set about with a clear call, yea, solemn and serious engagements to God, would seem strange, and a shaking piece of providence: and truly this is oft seen, as an usual attendant on reformation, how unsuperable like difficulties, and unexpected lets do grow up in the way thereof: thus when *Luther*, and other instruments were raised up in *Germany*, to pursue the Church's Reformation, what cruel edicts were then set forth to give it a dash? division among themselves, the rising up of the *Boors*, and *Anabaptists*: what a pure, and thorough reformation was on foot under *Edward* the sixth in *England*, and what a dreadful storm did quickly break it up, for that time? and I would add, what the present case of the Churches in *Britain*, and *Ireland* may at this day witness, where once the Lord so eminently appeared in a begun Reformation, which now is at so great a stand, but let us go in to the scripture with this and we will find.--1. There is a vive portraiture of providence in the affairs of the Church held forth in that vision which *Ezekiel* had of the wheels at the river *Chebar*, whose mysterious motions, and turnings so cross one to the other, without any discord therein, as to the end, to which they were directed, doth witness the rational, and wise conduct

conduct of providence: the Lord's work about his Church is a most shadowed and elaborate piece, which men cannot see, before their eye, as they see behind upon a review, while ordinary causes do oft vary in their operation, yea, go out of the common road, but scripture will make this very plain. ---2. Was not *Nehemiah*, *Ezra*, and *Zerobabel* at their work, and duty, and had an exprefs call for building of the temple, yet, how great, and frequent interruptions did they find, sometimes environed with difficulties, *Zach.* 4. 7. *Who art thou great mountain before Zerobabel?* Yea, they were put to hold the sword and build, to watch and work at once, because of their enemies.---3. What a very sore backset was the Church at, *Hab.* 3. *Revive thy work, O Lord, in the midst of the years.* This was both a great and long interruption, yea, do we not find her almost at a *non-plus* with a Query which no visible appearance could answer, *by whom shall Jacob arise for he is small?* 4. We find a special reformation set on foot by *Hezekiah* with a solemn Covenant, by the Princes, Priests, and body of the People, with a setting up of the pure Worship, and ordinances of God, but lo a sharp storm is soon after, by *Sennacherib*; yea *Hezekiah* scarcely is in his grave, when his Son doth bring in corruption, and persecution both at once; and when the christian Church in the times of the Apostles begun to flourish, success following the Gospel, did not a sad interruption, and scattering follow, *Act.* 8. 5. This is promised that *Zion's* walls shall even in *troublesome times* be built, and her being brought to a heap of rubbish was but making way for a further advance, that in the building of her again the Lord might appear in his glory; and is it not clear, that Christ coming in the Gospel, and power thereof to purge his Church, and carry on a reformation, *Mal.* 3. 4. proveth a searching and trying time which men

men cannot endure, for the power of the Word, and clear discovery of sin, and other shaking dispensations which do usually attend such times and torment them who dwell on the earth, yea, and put the Devil, and corruption of men aloft, with all rage to oppose the same.

3. That a sad overclouding, and darkness should come on a land after most special manifestation of the power and glory of God therein, and that a time of the Gospel with much light should be so near a forerunner of wrath, and judgment, would seem a strange piece of providence, and cause a serious enquiry how such eminent appearances of God for a people, such great confirmations, observable success for a time, with many signal encouragements, should all seem to resolve in a desolating stroke, and ruin? This may be instanced in that Protestant war in France where instruments were remarkably raised, fitted of the Lord for the service of that time, had much of his presence, and countenance, yet to resolve thus in a bloody massacre; likewise these confederate German Princes, Saxony, and Landgrave of Hesse, Men eminent for piety, carried forth with much zeal for God, for defence of the truth, yea, in the beginning of that war having many promising encouragements, yet, remarkably deserted of the Lord with very sad like consequences following the same. Let us consider also the late Bohemian war, stated upon necessary defence of Religion and liberty, and at first attended with some smiling providences, should resolve into so great a desolation, and ruin: yea, the Church of Ireland, O, what a dreadful massacre of the protestants there did quickly follow one of the most solemn times of the power of God and outpouring of the Spirit that we ever heard of since the days of the Apostles. I confess this may have a strange aspect, and is a part of the marvellous ways of the Lord, but
when

when we take it in to the word, we will find there is no jar, or discord here, for, 1. It might seem as strange, and astonishing what Baruch got from the Lord in answer to his complaint, Jerem. 45. that he would pluck up what he had planted, and cast down that which he had built, for a work to be thus thrown down, where the Lord had once so eminently appeared and given his People many confirmations might then occasion great thoughts of heart, yet the unspotted righteousness of God, and his truth was apparent therein; yea, after that discourse, and all these large promises, which Christ gave his disciples in that sixteenth of John, we find all is shut up with that, the hour is coming, and now is that ye shall be scattered.--2. What strange providences did trust the Church in the wilderness, sometime brought back to the red sea, tried with hunger, and nakedness, consumed with various strokes, and many years wandering until most of that generation, who came out of Egypt filled their graves in the journey, and yet this was after most eminent confirmations, and as clear signs of God's presence as ever People had.--3. We find a publick reformation most zealously prosecuted by Josias, which looked like the renewed espousals of that land with God, by a solemn Covenant, yet, quickly after night came on that land with a long captivity, and Josias did fall by the sword.--4. Was there not a bright sun-blink, & flourishing plantation of the Gospel in Judea a little before the desolation of that land by the Romans, yea, we will find it clear from the word that times of much light, and reformation do much sooner ripen for a stroke than any other times.--5. It is very manifest that particular Churches have their day where the Gospel hath its appointed work, and their stroke at last may reach the length of removing the candlestick. I truly think that sad instance of Bohemia's

Bohemia's

mia's case may have this observable in it, that it had longer day, & enjoyment of the light even from the times of *John Hus*, and *Jerom of Prague*, which was near an 100 years before there was any day-break on other parts, so that we would consider if their night did come soon on, that their day was also much longer, yea, the stroke might tryft with the ebb of the tide, when their harvest was much gathered in, under so long a continuance of the Gospel, though I dare not think the Lord's work is utterly extinct there, but that *Bohemia's* dead and withered root hath life yet in it and shall once again bud forth.

4. *Is it not usually seen when judgment cometh on a land, that the Godly get the first stroke?* but let us also consider this in the word, where it is clear.--1. That judgment must begin at the house of God, and the green tree; and that the Churches trouble, and persecution is a forerunner of vengeance on her adversaries, do we not find, there is a cup of the judgment of God? And O the last is of a strong composition, for the wine is red and mixed, and the dreg very thick which is reserved for the troublers of the Church, and for such who are at ease in a day of her grief, and truly they have the advantage that drink first, *Blest are they whom thou chastenest, &c. that they may rest in the day of their adversity until the pit be digged for the wicked*, yea, *Rev. 3. 10.* we find keeping of the word of patience, which doth import suffering to the Church, goeth before some more universal stroke; and in that day proveth the safety, and protection of the People of God.---2. It is also clear that men may be raised up of the Lord, and followed with success, when he hath them for a rod to his church, but that at last *Ashur* the rod of my wrath will I cast in the fire, saith the Lord, it is truly an evidence of great wrath upon a party to be made the rod, and executioners of judgment upon the People of God,
for

for they shall pay for it, by some sadder stroke than any trouble or suffering whereof they have been instruments.

5. *That prosperity, and success should follow sometimes the worst of men in an evil course, and cause*, such a concurrence, and series of providence, as seemeth to smile on them even to the bringing of their sinful devices to pass, while the People of God have been made to fall in a just quarrel before their adversary, would seem an astonishing providence, but let us lay it fore-against the Word, and there we will see.---1. That there is a prosperity which tendeth to destruction, *Prov. 1. ver. 32.* the tabernacles of the robbers prosper, *Job. 12. ver. 6.* and they that provoke God are secure, into whose hands he bringeth abundantly, but they do not see that wickedness is its own punishment, and how it is a dreadful stroke to thrive in an ill course. Was not the Church shaken with such a providence, *Mal. 3. 15.* Yea, tempted to call the proud happy, but in the ver. 18. They were taught from further observation to discern or put a difference between the righteous and the wicked.---2. Do we not find that even the signs, and predictions of false prophets, in favour of a sinful way, may come to pass, *Deut. 13. 1, 2.* Whereof the Church is there warned, and God's intent in the same cleared, that it is for the trial of his People, whether they will love and fear the Lord, and cleave to his way, when providence would seem to shine on a crooked path.---3. Did not success for a time attend *Absalom*? *Israel* as one man went after him, yea, the friends and counsellours of *David*; a fair wind did also favour *Haman* in his essay to ruin the Church. *Jeremy* is almost shaken with it, yea they have taken root, yea, they grow, and bring forth fruit. But is not this at last usually found an ominous weather breeder before a storm?
though

though the brutish Man knoweth not, nor fools lay it to heart for what the wicked doth oft spring, and flourish. I would add *Israels* falling before *Benjamin*, it was an astonishing like providence; and *Habakkuk* was put to a stand with such a thing, why the Lord lookt on, while the wicked devoured the righteous. Yea, *Jeshua* was to cry out in an amazement, *O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their back before their enemies!* But we have also the Lord's intent therein witnessed by his word, that this is to *humble and prove his People, that he may do them good in the latter end*; and thus he beateth them off from all carnal grounds of confidence; he woundeth them to a cure; that by bringing them low, he may raise and fit them for a further mercy

6. *What great disappointments hath the Church met with, when outward grounds of confidence, and ordinary means have been most promising, as it is a thing most true, so it may seem strange at the first look: but let us bring it to the word and the case will be there answered. Deut. 32. Why should one chase a thousand, but because their rock hath sold them!* And therefore their strength is gone, with the Lord's departing from them. For, when a time of judgment is come, even the mighty then find not their hands, counsel faileth to the ancient, ordinary means bring not forth their wonted effects: which *Solomon* sheweth, and after-ages have oft seen, *The race not ever to the swift, nor the battel to the strong.* It is also clear from the word, how threatening a condition that is, for the People of God to be much carried out after means, or lifted up therewith: *Isai. 30. they will ride on horses, and this shall be their punishment.* But on the other hand, the Lord's way in bringing forth his greatest works, hath not been by might and by

power

power, but oft by means most improbable, and unexpected.

7. *The long continuance of a heavy afflicting rod on the Church, without the appearance of an escape, or any return to much wrestling and prayer on that account, may seem a strange step in God's way with his People. But the word will answer us in such a case where it is clear,---1. That there are no bounds in the Scripture set to the continuance of a trial. It doth not tell how long a sharp storm may ly on, either as to the Church, or any particular Christian; for it is a piece of the Lord's secret counsel, but not of that which is revealed: it is enough, that we know from it, that men cannot make the Church's suffering longer, than God's time.---2. It was a long term that of *Israels* tryal in *Egypt*; & after under the captivity, three hundred & ninety days must the Church ly on her left side. O how many a sad-day and wearysome night was there in that word *70 weeks are determined upon thy people, and city Jerusalem.*---3. Have not the saints under a long trouble gone almost the length of blasphemy, in their complaints! *Isa. 40. 27. My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment past over from my God. Daniel,* how pressing with the Lord was he, that He would *hearken, and do and not defer!* and yet the return cometh not until the first year of *Cyrus*. Yea, that cry of the souls under the altar? *How long!* doth it not even get a dilatory answer? For thus the Lord doth oft interpose his long-suffering for some time, betwixt his people, and avenging of them.-----4. It is also clear that there are many prayers before the Throne, the return whereof is suspended, and an Answer to Christians, in their particular, until that Time when God shall *build up Zion,* and then the *Prayer of the destitute* shall be remembered, even as to Christians private enlargement, when the Church shall be raised up,*

up.--- 5. We know the Church's enemies must have time to ripen, and it is not a storm of a few days, that will *purge away the filth of the Daughter of Zion*. Too soon letting out of a sore may cause it to putrify the more, and gather new matter. And truly the word can resolve us in this, that one minute sooner than God's time would not be his people's mercy.

8. It is oft seen *when there is some remarkable work of God on foot in a land, and some great outpouring of the spirit, how Satan setteth up some usual counterfeit thereof, and bringeth forth something of his work in such a time, with a very strange resemblance of the same.* Thus, with the preaching of the freedom of grace, and a clear discovery of that truth, did *Liberitism* under a very specious pretext spring up. Thus we find the *Anabaptist*, and *Antinomian* party, set up in *Germany*, to run down a Church-reformation, under the shew of a more pure and spiritual way : and of late did not *Familism* in *England*, under pretext of a more spiritual dispensation, cast off the very letter of the Scripture, turning it over in to Allegory, and in behalf of the liberty of prophesying, cry down a standing ministry ? But though this may seem strange, yet the Scripture is very clear, concerning it;---1. That even *Satan himself is transformed into an Angel of light*, and in no shape proveeth more dangerous to the Church.---2. That the most dreadful errours and a false way will oft come near to the choicest exercises of the saints, and have such a resemblance to the same, *that if it were possible the very elect should be deceived.*---3. Was there not a *Simon Magus* with false miracles set up over against the Apostles ? And when the time of the *Messias* drew near, did not then a *Theudas* ; and *Judas of Galilee*, break forth to amuse the people ? We find also an altar from *Damascus* set up beside that which shewed to *Moses* the Servant of the Lord in the mount ;

mount ; yea, when *Moses* and *Aaron* were giving *Pharaoh* a sign, and did shew forth the marvellous power of God, then did the *Magicians* cast down their rod also, to counterfeit the same, by which the heart of *Pharaoh* was hardned.

9. *The abounding of much error and heresie, now in the time the Gospel*, with that *swift growth* thereof, which is oft seen where the *light most clearly shineth*, seems strange ; yea, is a thing whereat many are ready to stumble, and thus to challenge the way of God : But is not the Scripture in this clearly verified, so that this piece of providence, which is so shaking to many, if we take the word along with it, might be a very convincing confirmation to us of the same ? For,---1. We find the Apostles, yea, *Christ himself* hath given express *warning* thereof, that this should be one of the special and greatest tryals of the Christian Church ; whereof the Old Testament we find doth little mention, that trial not concerning the Church then so much, as these aftertimes under the *Messiah's Kingdom* : wherein the event may be clearly seen, to answer these predictions, which are so frequent thereof in the *New Testament*.---2. Doth not the event also answer the word as to that *particular way and method*, how error should be propagated, which is there clearly foretold, by subtil undermining, under the pretext of liberty, with plausible insinuations ? so that we must say, not only as to the matter, but with all these discernable tokens, even upon the manner, the word is made out.---3. Do we not find, this should be a judgment on men, who *receive not the love of the truth* ; and that after flourishing times of the Church, when he who *rideth on the white horse*, is gone forth, the *black horse* and *his rider* doth quickly follow ? And truly it is seen, that in the time of hottest persecutions, the Church hath not been so much troubled with this adversary, as when

when she did begin to get rest, and most of outward liberty, nor yet so at the first breaking out of the Gospel, as after some time of its continuance.--4. Doth not the event likewise thus answer the word, that in the breaking out of heresy in the Church, a spirit of error, the *depths* and *mighty working of Satan* should be seen; which I am sure is undeniable, how manifest the interposing of these *powers of darkness* is therein, if we consider, 1. Its marvellous *dispatch* and *growth*, like a plague, and the arrow that flieth by day.--2. With what a discernable *fury* and *violence* men are thus driven, as with an impetuous current; yea, oft a change on their very natural temper is seen most evidently.--3. Those *monstrous* and *horrid* things, which are oft brought forth, may shew whose hand is in such a birth.--4. That usual tendency, that at last error hath to *looseness in practice* which as it poisoneth the spring, and corruptieth the leading faculty, the judgment, so we see, it moveth towards the vital spirits, and doth influence the conversation; and the leprosy in the head breaketh forth in blains through the whole body.--5. And do we not see how many *gross* and *profane* have been carried away at such a time, how few have power to stand, but are still carried from one step to another? And it is clear, the world did never put out its rage so much against *that way*, as it hath done against the *truth*, except when some outward interest maketh it a quarrel.

10. *These great shakings and commotions, that use to attend the Gospel, when it cometh in power to a land* may also seem strange, yea, are ready to make many stumble. But is not the word verified herein, what great stirs and troubles did exercise the Church after great light in pouring out of the spirit? *Joes. 2. 29.* We may there likewise see, how this giveth the World an Alarm, maketh the *Kings* and *great*

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men of the earth run together, to hinder the rising of Christ's Kingdom, *Psal. 2. 3. Let us break his bands, &c.* For truly in all ages Christ's rising in the Gospel hath cast a terror to its enemies, that this should be their fall and ruin. When the Apostle hath an *effectual door opened* in his ministry, he hath also much *opposition* thereto. But on the other hand, all is still and quiet, while the *strong man doth keep the house*. Yea, it is clear from the word, that where the Gospel cometh there is a *red flag hung forth*, that if men will not receive the same, and subject to him who *rideth on the white horse*, one shall come after, whose work is to *take peace from the earth*, to put the world in a flame, and to accomplish the judgment of a despised gospel; who shall divide betwixt the husband and wife, the parents and childrea: wherein our blest Lord Jesus is express, *Matth. 10. 34. I come not to send peace in the earth, but rather a sword.* Which might seem strange from him; but it is to tell men, if they will not embrace the offer of *his peace*, they shall not have peace *among themselves*. For the message of the gospel must either be the best, or the worst sight, that ever a land had.

11. *This may seem strange how in all ages men of greatest parts and learning, are such usual opposers of truth; yea, how the most sober and calm will even appear violent in their way, the more the gospel is followed with power.* But, O! how well doth this answer the scripture? *For the wisdom of this world is enmity to God.* --- *1 Cor. 3. 19. Not many wise according to the flesh, comparatively with these who hate the truth.* -- Of all the beasts of the field was not the *serpent* Satan's choice? and if there be an *Achitophel* in the time, at him he will have a special pull; to such the *simplicity* of the gospel

pel is foolishness; whereat they stumble; to such Christ is a rock of offence. We find, the light doth torment them that dwell in the earth, will cause men to blaspheme, and discover that which would not appear, whilst they got leave to enjoy their sinful peace without disturbance.

12. Those strange judgments which may sometimes befall the Saints in their outward lot, yea, sometimes attended with some very astonishing circumstances, would at the first look put men to a stand, and to challenge the holy way of God. But let us weigh it in that ballance of the Scripture, and we will find, 1. That such hath been the complaint of the Saints, the Lord's wounding them with the wound of a cruel one; what a strange query is that in Lament 2. 20. Behold, and consider, to whom thou hast done this! shall the women eat the fruit of their womb? shall the Priest and Prophet be slain in the sanctuary of the Lord? yea, did it not even to Solomon seem strange, Eccles. 8.

14. That there are just men to whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked! 2. It looked like some strange stroke which forced David to this complaint, my enemies cast iniquity on me, and say an evil disease (or as the original readeth it, a thing of Belial) cleaveth to him. We find, Josias fell by the sword; Eli, with one stroke, hath his sons killed, his Daughter-in-law dying, and himself falling from his seat, and breaking his neck; yea Aaron hath both his sons killed before his eyes, by an immediate stroke from the Lord. 3. The word doth also shew, there is no jar betwixt this, and the tenor of the Covenant, which God hath made with his people, to punish their transgression with rods, yea, sometimes by a strange rod, while he taketh not his loving kindness from them. And do we not find, that a profitable trial may attend the saints, which the world would think a dreadful judgment; for great sufferings may

may be ordered of the Lord, to give some great examples thereby; we have heard of the patience of Job; and have seen the end of the Lord.

13. The gross falling of those who have sometimes shined with much lustre in the Church, may be astonishing; but here also we may see the scripture made out, for it is clear, First, that few instances of the most eminent of the Saints, we have on Scripture-record, but there is some particular spot and blemish also noted, a Noah, Lot, Moses and David, yea, under the new Testament that great Apostle, whose denial of his master is set forth, to shew how far some may fall, whom grace will again restore, and make up. 2. It is there clear, that some of understanding do fall for a judgment to others; that such who will stumble, whose prejudice at the way of God is their choice, may thus further fall and be broken.--- 3. The best meaning and intend hereof we may there also read to Alarm men to watchfulness, that such who stand may take heed lest they fall; to warrant also their adventuring on the grace of God, that none should fear to come in after such eminent examples.

14. The contingency of events, that we see many things in such a casual way fall out in the world, as by chance only, without the rational conduct of providence (which doth infallibly direct things to a certain end) this might at the first look, put men to a stand, yea, would seem to give Atheists some shadow to say, How doth God see, or doth the God of Jacob regard? But upon a more serious enquiry, setting the word over against it, O what a sweet exercise should it be to consider,--- 1. That though the providence of God, in things here beneath, moveth suitably to the nature of inferior causes, whither necessary, free, or contingent, not violencing them, or otherways making use of them but according to their nature, so that though the event be necessary and

infallible, with a respect to the first cause, the determined counsel of God, it is nevertheless *contingent* in respect of its *nearest cause*; yet, this also on the other hand is clear, how these smallest and most *casual* motions do certainly fall under that comprehensive reach of *providence*, that even a *sparrow falleth not the ground* by guess; *Rebecca* cometh not with her pitcher to the well, nor *Ruth* to glean in *Boaz's* field at an adventure: but in these the providence of God must reach its end, and cannot miscarry.---2. That those things which to us would seem most casual, we oft see in their tendency and product have been *intended* by the Lord, as a special *means* for the promoting of *his glory*; wherein such a wonderful meeting and uniting of things, in themselves most remote, for that end, may be truly discerned, that if prejudice do not shut mens eyes, they must confess, this can be no blind *chance* but some high *counsel*, and conduct of the same. What would look more contingent, than that *Abasuerus* was indisposed to sleep, and could have no rest in the night? Or that a reflection of the sun upon the waters, should make them appear as blood to the Children of *Moab*? But we see what great things the Lord is thus bringing about. 3. Is it not oft manifest how not the *smallest* casualty, or circumstance, providence doth pass without some *improvement* thereof? yea, that it guideth the stroke of a mans sword in the battel, and directeth the bullet to its appointed mark, and doth evidently check the stars, and control that fatal necessity, which we are ready to fear may or will follow their aspect, and doth even determine those which in themselves are most free & absolute, the heart and will of man! Must not the crowing of the cock, & the soldiers dividing of *Christ's* garments fall out for an accomplishment of the *Scripture*? And tho' it was at a *venture*, that that man drew the bow, which sent *Ahab* to his grave, yet it was no *chance*

chance did direct the arrow between the very joyns of his armour.---4. Amidst the various emergents and hazards of mens *life*, may not experience tell, that surely things contingent are not abandoned to *fortune*, but there is a *providence*, which doth *number our hairs*, & without which they cannot fall to the ground! O how astonishing may it be, to think how surprizing hazards have been oft obviated; By what unexpected means men have been delivered from violent assaults! how help unlooked for hath even come in at an extremity, yea, while their foot was slipping even betwixt their falling, and fall, they have been surprized with some remarkable cast of mercy.---5. Is it not easy to discern, how many accidents which seem most casual, yet by no humane prudence or industry can be prevented, but are observably brought about and guided to fulfil the *threatnings* of the word on *ungodly* men! How was *Sisera* led in to the house of *Jael*, by other places! How should *Haman's* suit for *Mordecai's* death, fall in with that very morning, when the *King's* thoughts were favourable to him! for it might seem, had *Haman* been one day sooner, he would have got his will.

(¶) This is a grave and serious subject, and in such a day should be much studied, when so many are ready to quarrel at the way of the Lord, and out of every thing suck *poysen*, when prejudices are now so univerally abounding against the truth: that we may see what a *witness* there is, even in the most dark and astonishing steps of providence, to the truth and faithfulness of God; yea how great a confirmation we may thence have of our faith, in such shaking times, whilst we see how these are special grounds against *Atheism*, and a most convincing refutation of the same, which are so much made use of to strengthen men in

that way. I know the holy *sovereignty* of God should teach us to adore and keep silence, when we cannot fathom the depths of providence; and on this great satisfying truth we should stay, and fix our selves, when things seem strange to us, *He is the Lord and with him there is no unrighteousness*. It is sure, the condition of the damned in hell takes not off that obligation to declare his faithfulness, and adore his unspotted justice: but O then it would cease to be hell, if such a blessed frame could have a being there. However, it is a necessary and concerning duty, when a matter seems too hard for us to understand, to *enquire in the sanctuary*; there is a warrantable search after the works of God that we may know them. Now besides those instances which have been already mentioned, I would yet further touch some few steps of the providence of God, with a special respect to this *present time*, which may seem very strange, and be amazing; but when bro't to that test of divine truth, will be found a most satisfying confirmation thereof.

1. It may seem strange, to see *the Church of Christ this day so universally brought low, and in a suffering condition, whilst the whole earth besides is at such rest and quiet*: that if we now look any where abroad, affliction and contempt from men is seen in a very great measure, to attend the profession of godliness, but more especially the power thereof; yea that almost in every place the Church would seem to be upon a decay and a declining, rather than in an advance. I confess, this may cause great thro's of heart, when we consider that inestimable value, he whose the Church is, hath put thereon; what *glorious things are spoken of her* in the word, especially with a respect to the *latter days*: and we have judged (I humbly think with a safe warrant) that this should be a solemn time of fulfilling those promises, which yet point at a more *universal raising* and

and enlargement of the Church of Christ; yea, that in so great a measure we have seen some begun performance thereof, and therefore should conclude, the Lord's work herein cannot halt, until it be at the full height and at the perfect day. *Shall I bring to the birth and not cause to bring forth? saith the Lord. Shall I cause to bring forth, & shut the womb? saith thy God. Is. 66. 9.* But let us go in to the Scripture, & there enquire concerning this, and we will find,---1. How the *Church and the World*, in that interest of their joy & grief, as well as other interests, are stated in a most direct opposition. *Joh. 16. 20. Verily, saith Christ, ye shall lament and weep, but the world shall rejoice.* It should not be expected, those can be at rest together; since the trouble and suffering of the Church, it is a part of the world's ease and quiet. What a solemn jubilee does that cause to her adversaries, when they see before them the *dead bodies of the witnesses of Christ!* *Revelat. 11. 10.* No sight more rejoicing to such, because these are they who *torment them who dwell in the earth.* But when once the truth casts off her sackcloth, and the witnesses recover their feet; O what a terror doth this cause! They are pain'd, yea, their eyes ready to consume in their eye-holes with bitterness and anguish, that they have been at so sore work, and done so much against the Church, and yet cannot undo her,---2. Should this be more strange now, than at that time when the city of *Sbusan* and whole seed of the *Jews* were in perplexity, whilst the *King and Haman* sat down to feast, and rejoice over such a threatned ruin; for this seem'd to strike at the root of the Church universal! And was not that a broad and dark cloud, when this was writ in the Lamentation of the Church, *Zion is a wilderness, and Jerusalem a desolation*; yea, *could find no rest, no comforter any where!* *Lam. 1. 16, 17.* But if such a providence

dence seem strange, that the Church now at this day should be with so violent and universal a storm run down, when so great things are *promised*, let us consider *his way*, who by the greatest downcasting and straits useth to bring about the most remarkable mercies; and do we not know the *Devil* appears with *greatest wrath*, and raiseth the forest storms, when he knows that *his time is short*.---3. If we consult the Scripture, we shall find, the adversaries of the Church have *an hour* which is *their hour*, and the *power of darkness*; for their sunshine is indeed a black and dark time; and then is there a strange astonishing concurrence of outward advantages on their side: for they are thus established for *judgment*, and the wind must serve, and the tide make, until that *that work* in their hand be *fulfilled*. They could never have been such a *rod* on the Church, if they were not *appointed* of the Lord for the same. Yea, is it not observable, whilst this *their hour* continues, there is then a *power of darkness*; such a time, when *that* hath an unusual force, and would seem to carry all before it, hath then a marvelous quick dispatch in its spreading from one place to another, to make a *dark night*, where the Gospel sometimes hath had a *bright day*! Yet we see how such a strange darkness hath but its *hour*, as to the prevalence thereof, even a *set time* for the Churches trial; and it is such an eclipse, were it never so universal, that must go over at its appointed period, and give place to light, before which the darkness can no longer stand; and then it shall be said to her, who had almost abandoned herself to sorrow, *Arise and shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen*. 4. Why should we be amazed at this where we may read so clearly something of the *Lord's design*, even by so fore and universal a stroke to *appear in his glory*, *Psal.* 102. 16. and thus *raise his Church* with an *unspeakable advantage* by such a *supposed ruin*!

ruin! The Scripture is in this very manifest, that when the Lord is about some great building, and hath some excellent piece of work to raise up, a great deal of rubbish and breaking down useth to go before. Is it not thus also he makes the *suffering graces* of his Spirit in his people shine forth; that here the *faith and patience of the Saints* may be witnessed! yea, should we not know there is in every age a *filling up of the sufferings of Christ* in his people, and a *testimony* thus required to his *truth*, which the great witness himself did once seal and confirm with his blood, even he who before *Pontius Pilate* gave a good confession, and through all ages even to the close of time, there must not want some witnesses to the same! It is known, how some times of the Church are beyond others made remarkable for *suffering*: but it is no less clear, that in these times also the *truth* hath had the greatest victory, and herein a most special clearing up of some truths, which the world hath most studied to darken. Thus we see some ages of the Church may have a larger part of this testimony assigned. Yea, this remark may not only be of some different lot and service assigned to particular ages, but to particular Churches also.---5. If we enquire about this at the Scripture, we shall find also some remarkable *proportion*, that the turning again of the Churches captivity hath to her former *bondage*. Read *Isa.* 49. 19, 20. and 55. 13. *Jer.* 31. 39. And you may see what an ample restoration is there, which as with a measuring line is made to answer in breadth and length to her former calamity. We find *Zion's* rejoicing, when her *time of refreshment comes from the presence of the Lord*, must reach all her mourners, and be as universal as once the cause of lamentation was. *Isai.* 66. 10. Is it not such an hour sometime with the Church, that a refreshing report is no where to be heard,

heard, but the tidings of the next day add more grief to the former days sorrow? Yet hath not such a time quickly followed, wherein the Church might say, *The Lord hath increased her greatness, and comforted her on every side!* And hath had a spring and reviving upon the return of the Sun, as universal, as her decay and withering once was through the dead winter, *Isai. 51. 3.* And truly, whilst we consider the time in which we are now fallen, how the Church of Christ is every where low, and in a most languishing condition, *Antichristianism* now upon a formidable growth, as if there were an universal conspiracy to return again to *Babylon*, and if we will enquire hereabout at the Scripture, as we see this sad decay, we may thence conclude a certain delivery: Yea, that even by *a day of vengeance* the Lord can bring about *the year of his redeemed*. I humbly think, we may with a safe Scripture-warrant judge, that so universal a decay, such a great overspreading of darkness over the reformed Churches through the whole World, may give us ground to believe such a breaking out also of the Gospel, and of *the knowledge of the Lord*, that shall be of as large extent, even to *the filling of the earth therewith, as the waters cover the sea*. It will not be a particular shower and sunshine of refreshing influences on some Church, It will not be the *reviving of the work of God* in these nations, I must think, will answer so broad a cloud, and so universal a vastation and lamentation through the whole Churches of Christ: But we may according to the Scripture look on this as a part of the last and most remarkable assault, that the Church universal shall have from *Antichrist*, before that full stroke on the *seat of the beast*; Yea, that this is a very promising forerunner thereof. For when this party seems now to get up, and begins to move war, we have sure ground to believe his further falling thereby, and that

that every new assault which that grand adversary makes upon the Church; shall so far put forward her interest, and hasten his own ruin. *Blessed* are they who are helped in this dark hour to *wait* and *wait* until the *vision* break out, for it will assuredly *speak* in the appointed time.

2. These *short breathings* of the Church, now under the New Testament, may seem also strange, that we see her sunshine so *quickly* darkened with clouds, and followed with showers; that any lucid interval she enjoys, wants not long a new storm. We see this very clear, what hath been the usual lot of the *Church universal* through all the times of the gospel, how sore tossed and overclouded, her rest of short continuance: and as to *particular Churches*, is it not a small period of time, which useth to be betwixt one assault and another? So that they draw but a little their breath for some new trial. I confess this would be puzzling, if such a piece of divine providence we should essay to unriddle without the Scripture; but we have the word near us, where we may see the fate and condition of the Church under the Gospel, the most remarkable steps in her way, those sharp assaults and short breathings she was to expect, most clearly foretold and held forth; yea by consulting this blessed record, we will find these.-- 1. That a more *continued* and *fixed rest*, than that which may be seen hitherto in the Church's condition, could not well be reconciled with the Scripture. There was indeed a great breathing, a most remarkable cessation under *Constantine's* reign, after a storm of some ages continuance; but O how short! And it is said *Rev. 8. 1. There was silence in heaven for half an hour*. I would here offer some remarks about the way of the Lord in this.-- (1.) That the cross and much affliction, we find, have a more peculiar respect to the dispensation of the *gospel*, than the times of the law; and

and this is specially suited thereto, To go through many tribulations. It is very consentaneous to a greater manifestation of *grace* under the New Testament, that greater and more frequent trials for its *exercise* should also be let forth.--(2.) We find, such sore and usual assaults are not only suited to the most excellent condition of the Church in regard of spiritual privileges, but do often befall the most excellent of the saints. Read *Heb. 11. 32.* (3.) This remark useth not to fail, how every particular Church, besides these ordinary changes and tossings in her lot, hath also some more solemn remarkable trials and some great assault beyond others, and accordingly hath some more singular breathings and sun-blinks suited thereto.--(4.) We cannot find any such calm and breathing, which hath not been very short, if we turn back and trace the history of the Church in former times, but the clouds have returned quickly after the rain; yea, we may observe how the most excellent Princes and Magistrates, under whom the Church hath had some sweet repose, have been oft in a very short time taken away, and have but lived a few years.--2. If we wonder at such a piece of the Lord's way, why his Church is thus tossed, doth not the Scripture shew what need she hath to be emptied from vessel to vessel; a long calm being no less her hazard, than a sharp storm; and more cause oft to watch over her outward rest, than weep over her trouble and tossings. Oh how oft hath the Church lost more by a few years peace, than a long continued war! yea, the necessity of a sharp winter, for her recovery, hath been so discernable ere it came, that if it were not for the downbearing of truth, and shaking of the faith of the saints, the continuance thereof might be almost wished as her advantage, at least is to be quietly submitted unto.--3. Doth not the Scripture also witness that continued lasting quarrel, which is betwixt the

the World and the Church, and is perpetuated from generation to generation, that time cannot wear it out; so that if she had not so great a party for her, and an immediate support from heaven, we might find more cause to wonder she yet breaths, than to ask why her breathings are so short, when there is so great a power against her? O if the Church had not this to answer all the messengers of the nations, about her security, That the Lord hath founded Zion, sure that long-breathing design for so many ages should at last have taken place, even to the razing of her foundation.--4. It is clear the most singular fellowship, and free access thereto, with Jesus Christ on the earth, is by the cross, and in that way witnessed; that it must be said, if such afflicting times did not oft return upon his people, there would be a shut door betwixt the Church and a large part of the Bible, both as to its meaning, and as to its full breaths of consolation. Are there not most sweet refreshing truths there, which the godly cannot reach so near & feeling a converse with, in an outward calm, as under some sharpest wrestlings! O what an excellent commentary hath a suffering time given upon these, beyond all that ever was written, on such a truth of the Scripture, *Persecuted, but not forsaken, cast down, but not destroyed, as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.* And thus, we see how in our stumbling at such a providence, we err not knowing the Scriptures, and mistake our own mercies.--5. Whilst we see those short intervals, which have so usually been under the New Testament, betwixt one trial of the Church and another, and the cause thereof so clear from the word; let us also consider what warrant there is yet to expect, before the end a more solemn and remarkable time of the Church's Enlargement; that not only shall be very universal in its extent, but a more lasting and continued

nued rest from the violence of the world, than hath formerly been : which I humbly judge, on clear Scripture grounds, we are to believe upon the coming of that full stroak on *Babylon*, and those solemn espoufals of the *Jewish Church* to Christ, which seems to be the most remarkable period of that time appointed for the Church's reign. And though this will not want some sharp trials, and a mixture of outward trouble, yet we find no ground from the Scripture, after the discussing of *Antichrist* and the throwing down of the *Turkish empire*, for any remarkable interruption and overclouding, or that the Church shall have any great assault until that final gathering of the world and her forces together, to the last *battel of the Lamb*.

3. Is not this a strange remark likewise, which is so usual a complaint through the Church, that with a greater *increase of light and knowledge*, there is seen a visible *wearing out of life and power* ; and now in these more knowing times, there should be so much ground to say, tenderness and the serious exercise of Godliness is more worn out, and in a further decay, than in the times of greater ignorance : let us but look through the reformed Churches at this day, and then turn home to our selves, and we shall find this remark too sadly verified ; how after a great increase of knowledge, the truths of God in such a measure cleared beyond former ages, it may be said, Oh whither is the life and power of godliness gone, and that fervour which once so convincingly appeared in following the Lord. We know, there is a sweet agreement betwixt the Christian's light and life, which have a mutual subserviency to each other, and yet to see so sad a jar this day, and so little proportion the one hath to the other, may put us with astonishment to a serious inquiry thereabout ; but the scripture is clear and makes it plain, if we will consider. 1.

consider. 1. That there is a time of a people's *espoufals* to the Lord, and then the *kindness of their youth* and a remarkable *time of love* is seen. *Jer. 21.* 2. When their affection will be aloft after him ; yea, such a solemn period of the Church's condition may be seen, when it hath not reached that light and knowledge, as after : but do we not also find, how rare it is for a people, to hold up at that rate and measure in their life and love, which at such times hath appeared, whatever advance there may be as to light : Thence we find the Church's holding up with the *name* and profession of godliness *Rev. 3.* 2. when very sore spent in her *life* ; yea, this decay oft upon such an unfeeling growth, that it will be hard to get such convinced thereof, and *remember whence they are fallen.* --- 2. If we will ask at the scripture, it will also shew that judicial tendency, which *light not improved* hath to a further *hardening* ; how under the gospel men may be made deaf with hearing. *for judgment am I come in the world*, saith Christ. *Joh. 9. 39.* which hath that effect, that *those who see should be made blind*. Light is surely one of the greatest talents of the Church, and brings with it either a remarkable gain, or loss ; nothing so dreadful as this, when it is abused. O at what a rate doth it run down and stupify the conscience ! that thus men are not only more deadened, but become the more dead and blind that they were once enlightened. -- 3. May we not thence know how this is one of the *Devil's* greatest engines he makes use of, to turn men's light against their life and tenderness, even to *incite* them, from that excellent discovery of the *grace of God*, unto *wantonness*. *Jud. 4.* and thus essay an *agreement betwixt light and darkness*. O what a dreadful poyson must that be ! which can imbitter so excellent a stream, and turn so choice and quickening a mean of our spiritual life, to be destructive thereto ! that we see knowledge, whose true and

and native tendency is to *humble* and *abase*, being thus impoisoned do's work the contrary effect, even to *swell* men and puff them up; to oppose those gifts against the Church, which are given of the Lord for its edification, and for defence of the gospel! Thus we find it clear, when *light* hath made a further advance in the Church, the Devil is there at work to destroy *love*, by many bitter, contentious Debates, where the interest may be oft seen more personal, to wit, men's repute and credit, than the interest of God and his truth. I am far from any intended reflection on that grave and necessary duty of appearing in defence of the truth, and men's stating themselves in opposition to those who are its adversaries; a quarrel, wherein they should know neither friend nor brother: for this is to stand in the breach, when it is assaulted, to contend for the faith. O blessed contention, where such with that excellent man *Melanchton* can say, *Non quæro gloriam propriam, sed veritatem.*--- Though this is a very sad and threatening symptom that *night* is coming on a Church where the *light* shines, but the *heat* and warming influence thereof is gone; yet here is a riddle, we find the Scripture do's wonderfully unfold, how the Lord makes things bring forth contrary effects, and causes a remarkable *consumption*, that seems to reach the Church in her inward and vital parts, resolve in an *overflowing with righteousness*. *Is. 10.22.* yea, thus lets us see a people so far spent in life and spirituality, that *the things which remain are ready to die*, whilst even there, the Lord is pursuing their recovery. It is herein he makes his grace marvellous, to order his people's raising to be from so low a step of their condition, and cause his Church when bro't to a *small remnant*, to take root downward, and bring forth fruit upward. *Is. 37.31.* It would seem a strange connection, but not strange to the grace of God, *Pf. 102.* that *the time of his favouring*

vouring, *Zion even that set time*, should find her in a heap of stones and rubbish; yea, that a reviving and the breaking out of her day begins there with the *weeping* of her friends over her ruins. I shall further add, with respect to the *present time*, we may believe on very sure grounds, that *godliness* and *the power* thereof will yet break out in the world, though it were at the lowest ebb, yea, as at its last breathing; that little spark now under ashes must assuredly revive and blow up to a flame; yea, send forth its heat to warm the nations; For on solid grounds we may thus reason, if such a death-like decay had a respect only to some particular Church, and if this withering, abatement and languishing of the exercise of grace, were confined but to a corner, it might be a sad presage, that their sun, when so far declined and gone down, were near to the setting: but since this seems to be a *consumption over the whole earth*, a matter of lamentation and a spreading complaint, through the whole reformed Church, we may look on it as a very promising ground, of confidence and hope of a recovery for if that be sure, the Church universal cannot die under such a disease, it is also sure, *this sickness is not unto death*; yea, so remarkable an opposition to the *power of godliness*, as is this day through the world; we may judge a very refreshing presage of some, more universal out breaking of the same, wherein God will be seen by some blessed surprisal in a very immediate way: for there is hope of *this tree*, which in a special way he had himself planted, that it shall grow, though now cut down, by the *scent of waters*, even by the river the *streams whereof makes glad the city of God*; which can in old age cause her to bring forth fruit. O what life is there in the Church of Christ, when it seems to be buried! for she is in the root, that cannot dry up; & herein must his promise & his peoples praise meet

meet, that her *dry bones shall flourish as a green herb*, there can be now no less appearance of this, than at that time when *the Lord turned again the captivity of his people*, which was so little expected, *Pf. 126.* that they knew not whether it was a *dream*, or real. It may indeed be a very humbling discovery, that we must say, *our ruin is of our selves*; yet must it not ruin our hope, since in these *great things* which the Lord hath done for the Church, the greatness of his *power* hath not been more clearly witnessed, than the freedom and sovereignty of his *grace*, that men may see, *this is the Lord's doing*, and should be *marvellous in their eyes*.

4. May it not seem strange, and be matter of astonishment, that the *great men* of the earth, and such who sit in the *place of judgment*, are usually found to be greatest *adversaries* to the Church; yea, it is too well known, that magistracy (so excellent an ordinance of God) hath been so far perverted, that even under the *Christian* Magistrate the Church of Christ hath suffered more since first breaking out than from any other quarter, this indeed may seem marvellous; I do not deny, there have been great men in the world, who have no less outshined others in fervour and zeal for truth, than in their place and quality. But oh we may say, an *age* brings forth few such; and that which *Salvian* says of his time, hath been a true remark in most ages of the world, and too frequently seen, that the contempt upon religion by those who were in greatest power had this effect, *Ut mali cogantur esse, ne viles babeantur*. I confess this may cause wonder, (if we consider for what end the great Law-giver hath designed that ordinance) how men should so far counteract his interest, from whom they derive their power, and for being subservient thereto have received it: sure the doctrine of the Church of Christ can give no ground of quarrel: & its strange these should expect from others homage & subjection, who turn the

seat of judgment to be a grievous yoke, and deny their subjection so avowedly to the great judge: O how sad is it, that none are oft such a *terror to the godly*, such a *support to evil doers*, as Magistrates, and the great men of the world so usually found to be the greatest examples of wickedness! This should indeed be matter of lamentation, yea, that those are oft times advanced, who have nothing to commend them, but some advance beyond others in a higher measure of impiety. But we must go to the Scripture, and there inquire which will shew, (1.) That it is not strange, though *iniquity have a throne*, under whose shadow mischief may not only shelter, but come that length to be *fram'd into a law*. *Pf. 94. 20.* yea, it must not be strange, that the *adversaries* of the truth be among the *chief* of the time; which complaint we find *Lam. 1. 5.* The world is not yet cured of that *madness*, of which the Prophet speaks with amazement, *Pf. 2. 1. why the Kings and rulers of the earth should attempt a vain thing*, to ruin the Church, and make his decree void, who by his word created the world. We may see, it is not of *late* the servants of Christ have been convened before rulers in defence of the truth, and have suffered by the law, where the crime was, their adherence to the express command of the great law-giver. *Luk. 21. 12.* It is also clear, the Kings of the earth for many ages have amidst all their private differences *with one consent* agreed to *make war with the lamb*, and *give their strength* for upholding *Antichrist*; yet is this nothing else, but what the Scripture hath foretold, *Rev. 17.* It was written of an excellent man in the days of *Phocas*, that after some humble expostulating with the Lord, why he set up so vile a wretch in the highest place of power that he had this return, *quia non inveni pejorem*. Herein is the way of the Lord unspotted, how sad so ever it be in itself, that those who should *execute judgment for the*

the oppressed, are in his holy displeasure made the executioners of his judgments on men, and shew themselves the greatest oppressors (2.) If this be strange to us, do not the Scripture prevent our stumbling, by a most sweet and choice antidote, that *when we see the oppression of the poor*, and such a wrathful aspect rulers usually have on the Church of God, *we should not marvel*, or be much moved thereat, even when we see those whom *death hath pluckt away*, and with shame rolled in the grave, still *return with the same resemblance in their successors*, and piety in all ages run down by power: For it is written, that *he who is higher than the highest doth regard the same*, Eccl. 5. 8. O how far are they below God, yea, infinitely below him, who are highest among men! hath not their violence and oppression of the Church *him for a witness*, whom they must also have for a judge? And the further they seem raised above human reach, they lie more near to some immediate stroak of a divine hand; that when there is *no reprover* on earth, none there to give their cruelty against the Church a check, *he sits in heaven*, who *laughs them to scorn*; which they shall find to be sad earnest, when *he speaks to them in his wrath*, and *waxes them in his sore displeasure*.--(3.) Does not the Scripture witness the Lord's blessed design in this, to make his Church *thrive another way*, when she is destitute of the help and countenance of civil authority, and thus lead her in to *him, who hath the key of David, that opens and none can shut*, unto him who is a *known refuge for the oppressed*? It is here he declares himself to be *God*, and the greatness of his power who can keep her alive, and preserve his interest in a destroying flame, and under a cruel oppressing Magistrate; yea, thus cause her to *flourish in his days*, and *have peace in his reign*, even under the grievous reign of her adversaries. Do we not likewise find (*Neh. 9. 36.*) the Church's

Church's distress there and oppression from her rulers, makes them resolve in a more near tie and conjunction with God? which is seen in the last verse, *And because of this we make a sure covenant, &c.* O blessed violence and oppression, that lands here, where the storm drives to such an anchor, as a further cleaving to the Lord, and surrender of themselves to him!--(4.) As the Scripture prevents men's stumbling at this ordinary suffering of the Church under Magistracy, it does also witness the *Lord's contending* very remarkably *against these* on such an account; and clearly sheweth, that no human greatness can secure from him who *cuts off the spirit of Princes*, and is *terrible to the Kings of the earth*; consider *Pf. 2. 9.* and *93. 4.* It is here we may read the cause of the changes of Kingdoms and states, that are so frequent in the world. Whatever influence personal interests seem to have, there is a holy revenging God, and his arm made bare therein upon the quarrel of his Church that he may *recompense tribulation to those who have troubled her*. None needs wonder, that flourishing states are broken in such a quarrel; to see the supreme head of the Church (*that in all things he may have the prebeminence*) *wound the head over many countrys*, and *rule the nations with an iron rod*, yea, turn great men out of their grandeur and authority, and throw them down: for the cause is obvious, they keep no bounds and marches, with the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, but will be over him & invade his interest, until he who must reign, and have all dominion and power subjected to him, carry that war back upon themselves, and stand up against such evil neighbours, for his own right; for which he will *strike thorough Kings in the Day of his wrath*, yea, pursue the race and seed of such oppressors, the father and the children, as a standing quarrel from generation to generation.--(5.) It is sure, *corrupt Magistracy* is one of

of the great plagues of God on the world ; wherein his unspotted righteousness, and the provoking cause from men, may be seen in the Scripture ; that when such will throw off *his yoke*, and quarrel with his authority, in subjection to which their liberty lies, they should have one *more grievous*, and unsufferable, wreathed on them, and be delivered up to the hands of such cruel exactors. I must here say, the Lord do's visibly contend, by such a stroke, with that *excessive* flattery and respect the nations gives their rulers, that *blind* obedience they give, contrary to the express will of the Law-giver, by a willing following of the commandment ; and thus writes that *sin* on their judgment, that the hand of men should be heavy and sore on their own interests, who can so easily comply with their oppression of the Church and invading the interests of God. But here is no intended reflection on that divine ordinance of Magistracy, whereon his image is so visibly impressed ; though in all ages there hath been sad cause to bewail the abuse of so great a trust and power, and to see it so destructive to the end for which it is designed.

5. This also seems strange and is a very shaking thing, to see some of *greatest* *repute* and *eminency* in the Church, who have been singularly *useful* to engage others in the way of the Lord, *change* their principles with the time, and turn at last in *opposition* thereto ; yea, make it their work to *cast down* what once with great zeal they seemed to *build* ; I confess, this may give sad ground of stumbling, and nothing Atheism takes more advantage of, to question the truth of all Religion, whether there be any thing further than a humane interest in it, when men's light in the matters of God and the doctrine of Ministers are found so cross to themselves with the changes of the time. *Blessed* are they who are not offended at Christ because of this ; but let us consult the Scripture,

ture, and then instead of being shaken or brangled we shall find this such a special confirmation of the truth, that if it were not thus, men might rather question the same. For, (1.) Such a shaking trial is clearly *foretold*, from cross tides of *Doctrine*, that should be within the Church, *Eph. 4. 14.* yea, a warning given of those who *handle the word deceitfully*, *2 Cor. 4. 2.* by accommodating it to their private interest and design, and a corrupt Application thereof : for when men do once establish the Conclusion before the premises, for compliance with a sinful course, they are then at work to *wrest the Scripture* by misapplying it. *2 Pet. 3.* which is indeed to oppose the truth against it self, and sute it to their bias, that they may save such a visible opposition betwixt them and themselves in their way and practice. And thus what ever *fair shew they make in the flesh*, they expose the word, and their parts and abilities in handling of it, to *sale* (O an accursed sale and merchandize !) Now if this seem strange and be stumbling, that amongst the dispensers of the mysteries of God ; and of greatest repute in the Church, such should be found, read *2 Cor. 2. 17.* And you will there see the cause why many *corrupt the word*, because they are *not in sincerity* and *as in the sight of God* therein, which is absolutely required to qualify a faithful Minister of Christ. Oh ! The want of that candor and uprightness of heart is a worm, which lies hid at the root of all their other parts, and as a dead corrupting fly in so excellent a box of ointment. Thus we may see, this is so far from being a cause of stumbling at the truth, that it do's most convincingly fulfil and and verifie the same. (2.) When we have so sad a discovery in the Church, have we not this antidote likewise from the Scripture, *not to be shaken or moved thereat*, *Heb. 13. 9.* But that we study to *know* and be *persuaded of the truth*, that they quiet and support the

the soul, though we should be left alone in following duty. *The testimony of God is sure, and immovable; and he is true, though all men should be liars.* We must have the persons of none in admiration which hath so usual a tendency to bribe the judgment, and betray the truth: but *though an Apostle or an Angel from heaven should come to oppose the Scripture of God, we ought in so far to let him be accursed.*---(3.) Here also is the holy counsel and design of the Lord made known, *that those who are approved may be made manifest; and such have an opportunity to discover themselves, who turn aside to crooked paths, and tread in the dark to the prejudice of the truth.* *Pf. 125. 5.* They may dig very deep to hide their opposition to God, not only from others, but even from themselves: but providence herein hath a deeper reach, and ensnares them in the work of their own hands; yea, doth thus bring them forth with the workers of iniquity, and as his greatest adversaries, who wound and betray his interest under that mask, and disguise of a friend, this is indeed a preventing mercy to the Church, whose hurt and hazard hath been more from these who walk under a cover than any other party; and here is the counsel of the Lord shew'd, that when a piercing trial comes, which will go thorow the soul like a sword, the thoughts of many hearts may be then discovered. There is a falling in of many with the Church under a calm, who must fall off with a storm. It is strange, to think how small the first entry of a further declining will be, when once there is a tendency and byass that way, how hard is it to joyn in a familiar correspondence with the adversaries of the truth without joyning in some measure with their way; yea, it is seen, these usually are more ensnared, then the adverse party by any such tampering are bettered; It is a sad truth, which is said of *Ephraim,*

im, strangers devoured his strength, yet he knew it not. *Hos. 7. 8.* It is no wonder, when men come the length of detaining the truth in unrighteousness, and withstand the giving of a testimony thereto when called, that the next step be, some appearance against it (4) Is it not clear from the Scripture, that the righteous God, doth thus rain snares on men? yea, this is one of the woes the world is under because of offences; for the fall and turning aside of such is a sad stroak on others, whilst they use not to fall alone when those become a stumbling block, whose lips should preserve knowledge, whom the people are to consult concerning the law, and thus be the greatest cause of offence themselves, whose work is to strengthen and confirm others. O what a fore plague is this on a poor Church, when it is low, to break her further, and make her distemper grow. We may truly say, it is more threatening then sword, famine or pestilence, against a nation. It is a strange ground, which is given of the departure of these from the faith, who were once in repute of the Church, yea, of the breaking out of *Antichrist* in the world, *2 Thes. 2. 12.* that it was to punish them who believed not the truth, and would not embrace the same; O it is a sad and dreadful time to live in, where such offences abound! for it clearly shews a judicially plaguing time upon the Church, and some great abuse of the Gospel which hath gone before.---(5.) When this seems strange to us, should we not learn to adore and justify him, who thus stains the pride of all flesh and will silence the confidence or boasting of instruments, that the Church may know where her strength lyes, this is a remark, though sad, which seldom fails, that the greatest endowments and gifts, where men are swelled & lift up therewith, have a more easie and native byass against the truth, then for it, and threatens the Churches hazard, more than any advantage the exercise of

of these gifts can promise and the greater *repute* men walk under, where humility keeps not low, lays them the more near some humbling stroak, to bring them low, ere they go off the stage, *that no flesh may glory in his presence*, 1 Cor. 1. 26. We must say, the greatest *Hero's* in the Church of Christ, who have shined, even to their setting, most brightly, have been also the most *humble*.---(6.) As it is clear, there is no jar betwixt the Scripture and this, but it is so great a *confirmation* thereof, that it should further strengthen and establish us in the way of the Lord (for the *falling off* of such from the truth is a trial most expressly foretold, and a convincing witness to the truth of the Scripture) so this also must be granted, that *there are Ministers and watchmen* in the Church of Christ, in all ages, found *faithful to their Masters interest*, who have been not only helped to confess the truth, and deliver the counsel of God to the World, but to witness their adherence to and persuasion of it by *suffering*. O can the World debate this, that such in the worst of times are found to drive a treaty of reconciliation betwixt Christ and sinners, who are in earnest, and have a weight of that work on them, without respect to outward encouragement? O happy Servants of so great a Master who consider that they shine with borrowed light, and derive all from him, whether as to grace or gifts, that therein they may return to him again, by a faithful improvement of their talent; who reckon they cannot be low, where he is exalted; they cannot lose where the gain is his; but in this doth rejoice, to see him increase, and his Kingdom on an advance, though they decrease, and be darkened with the brightness of his rising!

6. I know this is an astonishing thing, which many pretend a cause for stumbling, to see how some have walked, and at what a rate, under a profession of godliness, and for so long a time have had the appearance

rance of being *serious and tender*, yea, have thus performed the walk of a *Christian*, whom an *after-discovery* hath proved, not in some particular only, but in the main interest of religion, to be *without reality and truth*. This may indeed seem strange, and be cause of wonder, that men having the use of reason should be at so sore a toil, to hold up a *form of godliness*, and the external exercise of Christian duties, only for a form, who, might with another kind of facility and unspeakable pleasure have reached both the shadow and the substance, by being truly serious: and it is sure, if such get not the impression of a Deity razed out of the soul (which is impossible) there must be sometimes terror in their approach to God; though not in any *secret* retirements, (for this should be a piece of their torment, to come so near their conscience, and be alone with it, lest it flee in their face) yet *with others*, when such a witness they have within, that it is their deliberate work, to *deceive* at once, the great God, their generation, and their own soul! But oh this is not more strange, than true; yea, many such pretenders are, and will be, within the pale of the visible Church. And is there not a *divine band* marvelously oft seen in *rending that vail*, and *bringing those forth to the light*, in such a way as may witness that this is from the Lord! Now there is no ground of challenge or reflection here, on his holy & unspotted way, or the reality of godliness, if we will but seriously enquire at the Scripture; where we have this (1.) expressly foretold, that men should have a *form of godliness*, and *deny the power thereof*. 1. Tim. 3. 5. *profess to know God*, being *abominable, disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate*. Tit. 1. last ver. *Yea, will come in sheeps clothing, yet be ravenous wolves!* Have not some of the Church's; sharpest trials been in such a way ushered in, even under a false shew? and have not the most cruel persecuters entered the stage as friends; You

You know how *the man of sin* did first step in ; was he not thus masked ? and is not the Scripture clear, that to seek a Church free of such a mixture out of heaven, is to seek that which we will never find, for it is there only, *no unclean thing can enter*. --- (2.) Do's not this blessed record of the scripture shew, with what *singular art and advantage* such may act that part, and with *Jehu* enquire, *if the man's heart be right*, whilst his own is most *false* ; what a strange confidence will these have, who *glory in appearance, and not in heart* ? Will they not *cry unto God, and make mention of him, but not in truth*. *Is. 48*. Yea, should we wonder, though such be found, who can mask their private interest with such an appearance, even whilst they seek a rule for their religion out of *Matchiavel*, but not out of the Bible ! --- (3.) If the length that these may come, seem strange, will you consult the Scripture, which goes as great a length in its *discovery*, and you will know how deep it works, sometimes not at an ordinary rate, but they will invite the world to *see their zeal for God*, who dare not endure the view of their own conscience. Therein you may find an *Apostle*, and *one of the twelve*, and yet a *Devil*. To witness this, should be no reflection on the Church of Christ, though an eminent Minister thereof be found rotten and unsound, who hath made *a great shew in the flesh*. --- (4.) Do's the Scripture *allow or flatter any in such a way* ? You cannot there have one line for its encouragement : but whilst human law do's not reach this, divine Law most severely threatens, *Job 8. 13. &c. Matth. 7. 15, &c.* And there you may see it in its own colour, how horrid a thing it is, which the more near it do's approach Religion (that is so excellent and lovely in itself) this false shew thereof is the more hateful and loathsome. Yea, even these who comply with it in *themselves*, are made to loathe it in *others*, which is in the highest measure a falshood and lie,

lie, because a lying to the God of truth. (5.) You cannot challenge the *Church* and followers of Jesus Christ, that *by them* any such thing is *owned or justified* : but it may be seen, what an *offence and wound* such a discovery will prove, to these. It is indeed a cause of grief, but no cause of reflection on the truth of God : for in so far this is verified, *They went out from us, because they were not of us*, *1 Joh. 2. 29.* --- (6.) Is not that *horrid and black roll* mention'd by the *Apostle*, *1 Tim. 2. 3.* claspt as it were betwixt these two, *a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof* ? It is not strange, when Religion is attended with much *power* in a place, that *hypocrisy* is found there also : but it is clear, what remarkable *discoveries* have been made thereof, that seldom such who have most industriously studied that accursed art, have gone to the grave under this cover ; though I deny not but some may. I must further add, that some special incitement and concurrence of the *devil* is here oft very manifest and *his power* as remarkably put forth, as in any *lust of the flesh*, to put some forward on such a design ; yea, even may be subservient to them in the exercise of common gifts, that may deceive for the time very discerning Christians. I cannot question the truth of this, having ground to instance such, who have been in an express *covenant with Satan*, and have after acknowledged his help and assistance, for their dexterous managing so dreadful a design : if you think this strange, you may consider, that the *devil himself is transformed to an Angel of light*. But it is well, the grossest defilement of men can no ways stain Religion, and the way of the Lord, which is pure and undefiled.

7. Those sad *jarrs and divisions*, which are so frequent in the *Church* of Christ, may seem very strange, and be the cause of stumbling & offence to many ? that whilst the *World* is at such an agreement, and of one

mind to oppose the truth, those are oft found at war, most bitterly contending amongst themselves, even those who should stand in the breach, for the truth and in defence of the Gospel, the fellow-servants at strife and smiting one another, when they should be striving together about their Master's work. I confess, this is sad, and is a rock whereon many have split; of which they have made that use to a further heightening of their prejudice against the truth: Yea, it is strange that this destroying plague doth so observably attend any peace or calm, that the Church hath in her outward condition. But there is no cause for such stumbling; if we will allow it some serious thoughts, it may rather help to fix and establish us in the way of the Lord, and in stead of being a poison, may be an effectual antidote against the same, I mean the *Atheism* of the time, which pretends so great an advantage from this. For the Scripture is clear, (1.) Tho' it is a sore stroke on the Church, and the most sad departure of God from a People, which we have upon divine record, we find usually attends them in such a torn and divided case; yea, though in all the records of after-times, this may be traced in the breaking out of a judgment, as a very immediate forerunner thereof: yet, *have we no warrant to expect the Church militant shall be in that condition in which there shall be no such discord and breach.* No, that is heaven, and it is there only that perfect peace and concord will be found; read, 1 Cor. I. 10. Rom. 15. 5. And what an early trial was this to the Church which did occasion that grave and solemn meeting of the *Apostles and Elders* (Acts 15.) to let us see how the Lord can serve himself of the greatest evil for the advantage of his truth.--(2.) There is no cause of challenge here or reflecting on the truth, whatever be on those who profess it, since the Scripture shews that we know but in part, and prophesie in

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part, and such a prevailing mixture of corruption, that some will preach Christ out of strife and contention, not sincerely. Phil. I. 15. Yea, whilst there are such different sizes amongst the Saints, that those who eat not, are ready to judge them who eat, and those who eat, are ready to despise him who eateth not. (3.) If we consult the Scripture, we shall find that peace and concord within the Church, which is so excellent in it self & desirable, must be severely qualified with a respect to holiness. Heb. 12. 14. For else such an agreement would not be the true peace of the Church, but her plague. And is not that wisdom, which is from above, first pure, and then peaceable? It is sure, they are its best friends, who have least latitude to take or give in the interest of truth: but it is oft found, how such indirect tamperings for peace, have in the judgment of the Lord caused a further breach. There is no true jar betwixt the zeal of God, and an ardent desire and endeavour for peace, but what our corruption causeth. O this is a blest peace-maker, who can go the furthest length to yield in his own things, whether credit or private interest, yea, overlook the most sharp personal reflections, to promote that excellent design; but hath nothing to yield or quit upon his Master's interest, and can resist, whosoever they be that would prejudice this, even to their face! have we not that Heroick practice of the Apostle (Gal. 2. 5.) upon divine record to this day? *to whom we gave place no not for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.* Is not that also a special remark, that those who cause division in the Church, & were therefore to be noted (Rom. 16. 17.) it was these who did oppose the doctrine of the Church? For it is men's falling off from the truth, which is indeed the cause of a schism and rent; but not their adherence to it, tho' for this they should be men of contention and look't

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on as signs and wonders in the time.---(4.) Whatever advantage some may take to challenge the way of the Lord, from these breaches, I am sure, they cannot deny, there is a fellowship and concord in the Church of Christ beyond any in the world. There is a communion of the saints, even here, with one heart and mind; yea, in such a measure as may shew the world this is a bond that exceeds the most near and strait ties of natural relations. *Epb. 4. 3. 16.* and truly every jar and difference amongst the followers of Christ, make not a breach.

8. I know, that this will seem strange and astonishing in the way of the Lord, that when the Church from her adversaries without is oppressed and brought low, his hand in a very immediate way also is so heavy, yea, seems more fore upon his people, than the hand of men; and do's even by some sad strokes in their private interests, and upon their persons, appear more remarkably against them, than against any others. this may occasion great thoughts of heart, when we consider that tenderness which the Lord doth witness towards his people, that he stirs not up all his wrath nor will lay upon them above that they can bear, but stays his rough wind in the day of the east-wind, and hath promised to be a sanctuary, and hiding place, when they are scattered by men, *Ezek. 11. 16.* And with another party the Church might debate, yea, hold her own with her greatest adversaries: But oh! 'tis time to flee, and there can be no standing, where the Almighty pursues. There is then true cause of fear and terror, when he becomes his people's party! Yet let us consult the Scripture, that great interpreter of providence, & of every step of the way and procedure of the Lord with his Church; and it will let us see, (1.) That it is no strange case, or untrodden path, but we may find the Prophet, *Jer. 17. 17.* at such a grievous cry, *Be not a terror to me, thou art my hope*

in the evil day. And had not the Church the same cause of complaint, *Jer. 30. 14, 16.* that the Lord seem'd to wound her, with the wound of an enemy, and the stroke of a cruel one. It was the appearance of this, that was a very sad addition to her trial beyond any other thing, *Is. 63. 10.* that they found the Lord turn'd to be their enemy, and in an immediate way seem to fight against them.---(2.) Do's not the Scripture shew that the rod may have a dreadful appearance, and the way of the Lord by some strange and singular circumstances in dealing with his people may be matter of amazement, when yet he designs a further increase of their grace; yea, their trial, more than their punishment? This is indeed one of the deeps of providence, which we have discovered in, *Job 1. & 2.* Chap. how by a divine permission Satan may very effectually concur in a stroke on the Church, or some particular Christian, and thus cause strange concurrence of bitter things, that in such a case the hand of the Lord would seem very terrible, whilst he only minds his people's trial: and it is clear, that the fiery trial, mentioned by the Apostle, *1 Pet. 4. 12.* may have such strange and singular circumstances, that the godly will be at a question, if such did ever befall others, and yet you see it there held forth more as a ground of joy, than of fear. Oh how deep, in afflicting times of the Church, may the plot and contrivance of the Devil be! which yet in the holy counsel of the Lord is oft forced to run against its own byas, & to bring forth the very contrary effect!---(3.) If we understand the Scripture, we may there know, how the trial of the Church hath its appointed bounds and measure; yea, by some remarkable steps will grow that length, and have such an advance, until it surround them on all hands, *Lam. 2. 22.* *Thou hast called my terrors round about, as in a solemn day:* Yet, when it is so, we find it is not without cause, but may be needful for the Church and

particular Christians, to be in *heaviness* through manifold temptations. 1 Pet. 1. 6. And truly in such an unusual coincidence and variety of straits, the tendency thereof is oft seen to be for as manifold *use* and *advantage*, as the many afflicting ingredients in that trial have been remarkable.--- (4) We may also see from the Scripture what an usual *resemblance* there is, betwixt the *publick* lot of the Church in suffering times, and the *private* case of the saints: how under some sad trial and departure of the Lord from his people, his dispensations are many ways *corrective* and *judicial*, that do then reach them in all their personal interests; there is a *backsliding* time, and a day when judgment particularly points at the *green tree*, which useth not to be a comforting time, that then *Satan* is more observably *let loose* to afflict, and few will miss some touch of his hand. Read *Lam. 1. 2.* where you find *the sword abroad devouring*, a time of publick judgment, and then it was *at home also as death*: and in the 16th V. under such sore afflicting strokes there is one further held forth, that was most imbittering of all to the godly in that time, that *the comforter who should relieve their soul, was far off*. It is clear, nothing does more endear a mercy and make it sweet, than the Lord's immediate appearance therein: and nothing do's more imbitter the rod, which put *David* to that cry, *Psal. 39. Remove that stroke from me, I am consumed by the blow of thine hand.*--- (5) Upon a serious inquiry about this strange thing, may we not understand the meaning thereof by the Scripture, why in some trials the Lord does thus shew himself his people's party, and his hand more heavy on them than on others, *that there is some provoking cause, whereat these providences clearly point?* When the godly are pursuing their ease and satisfaction under the rod, more than to answer its design; when they are ready to take mortification and a humble stooping under trouble for *acouching underneath their burden,*

den, it is not then strange tho' that sad *Wo, Amos 6. 6.* do so far reach them, as their personal *ease* makes them forget the affliction of *Joseph*. For thus the righteous God, sutes their stroke to the sin; and keeps such a proportion, that a light burden of the care of the Church should make their care *otherways* abound, and in their own things press them with much trouble, when these go betwixt them and the interest of Christ. There is a very *unseen* cause oft, why many of the saints may be *sick* and some *fall asleep*. Yea, this truth must be likewise verified, there is a *saving* of things, by which we put them in further *hazard*; and a *securing* thereof, by a surrender to the Lord. An immoderate fear of a stroke from *men*, to the prejudice of present and necessary duty, may bring with it some sad immediate strokes, in the displeasure of the Lord, from *his* hand; yea, that he should thus bereave his Church of many choicest instruments by his very immediate hand, to make it appear, the anger and jealousy of the most high God is more to be dreaded, than the wrath and violence of all our adversaries. But yet in the *close* of these judgments, even when a Church may seem quite consumed, and her strength worn out, have we not there some ground of hope, that the Lord may prevent his people's thoughts, by as marvellous, as immediate *restoring* providences when he sees their power is gone, and that there is none to help? yea, is it not easy with him, and like his way, to return and restore what the former years have taken away, by the locust and caterpillar, &c. which he had sent amongst them? *Joel 2. 25.*

9. There is a step of the holy providence of God and his unspotted judgment, which would also seem strange and amazing, that which is inflicted upon the soul and conscience by an immediate stroke of judicial *induration*, and is very evident, Oh how undeniably evident, and clear at this day! that men under great

light, some special discoveries of God, after known convictions and wrestlings of conscience, yea, after solemn engagements and their declared resolution to follow the Lord in his way, have yet come such a length and degree in a deliberate resisting and opposing themselves to him and his truth, without the least appearance of a check or trouble! I confess, this is one of the *marvellous* things of God, and a very visible demonstration of his being, who hath such a dominion over the soul, both in its hardning and softening: but no cause to *stumble* hereat. It does truly call us to fear, and is a stroke that may force on Atheists the awful conviction of a Deity; or though it is not felt by those who are under the same, because the want of sense and feeling is a part of that disease, yet all who look on (if they did not shut their own eyes) may learn to know that this is the very *work of God*, and a piece of *his judgment which he makes known in the earth*. But let us ask the Scripture, & we shall find, instead of any ground for stumbling, what a special confirmation this should be of the truth: since it is clear, --- (1.) How in this the way of the Lord is *holy* and *righteous*, who is under *no debt*, no obligation to the sons of men, *Rom. 9. 18.* but is absolutely *free*, to let forth grace to, or withhold it from, whom he pleaseth. His blessed will being the alone rule of righteousness, he comprehends the reason of all his counsels and judgments, which are to us incomprehensible: yet do's he so far condescend, to let men see, his unspotted Justice, as well as his Sovereignty, in this shines forth, *that they who are unjust* by a deliberate choice, should be *unjust still* by a further arrest, *Rev. 22.* and those who will not hearken and will have none of him, should be delivered up to *the lusts of their own heart*. *Pf. 81. 11.* We see in what a measure *Pharaoh was hardened of the Lord*, which was a plague worse than the other ten: But we find *Exo. 6. 34.* that *Pharaoh hardened*

dened his own heart; and thus was a stroke suted to such a resolute resisting of light. (2.) Do's not the Scripture shew the marvellous conveyance of this judgment *If. 6. 6.* how this sad sentence is more immediately passed on the soul; yea, by those most singular means, the *word & ordinances* for enlivening, is it executed thereon; men *preached* deaf and dead, where others find life; this is a stroke, that does not draw a bar betwixt them and external fellowship with the ordinances, but O it draws an invisible bar betwixt them and the power and efficacy thereof. It is a judgment that walks in the dark, and binds where none can loose; it killeth without a cry; yea gives men a death-stroke when the pain of that wound is not felt. (3.) Do you not see how this strange judgment is inas great a height and measure held forth by the Scripture, as you see it in any example before your eyes, that *men* will be mad in their *opposition to God*, even when *he* is most remarkably *opposing them*? such as *Abaz* who did *trespass the more*, the more he was *distressed*, *2 Chron. 28. 22.* Yea, such who with these men of *Sodom* would *grope after the door*, & persist in that wickedness when God hath immediately *smitten them with blindness* for the same. O what may be the next stroke, where men renew their assault against God, after he hath once and against smitten them; who, in stead of repenting under his sore plagues, turn enraged to *blaspheme* him, who hath power over the same! Is not that a strange degree of judicial induration, *Act. 7. 57.* that when they *saw the face of Stephen shine*, and looked stedfastly thereon, they did *then* run with fury against him! Yea, it may be seen in all ages, that such a length this judgment will come, to look on the most convincing extraordinary judgments of God on *others*, and yet not be moved therewith themselves; that *when his hand is lifted up, they will not see*: but the posterity take up the same quarrel, & pursue it wherein they

they have seen their fathers fall, under the stroke of an avenging God.---(4.) We may also know from the Scripture, how deep this judgment may draw in its *dreadful effects* : what a judicial arrest is thus served on men, by which they are bound over to *destruction*, and *their bands made strong* on them, as that they can neither stir nor move, but as malefactors shut up in jail, and under fetters ; which is not more evident before the execution, than this arrest on their soul is by obduration before some further stroke. Thus they ly near *sudden destruction*, and a blow that is irrecoverable, who have *hardened themselves under frequent reproofs*. (Prov. 29.) It is known, what *Pharaoh's* last rebuke was, after he had rejected many ; it stands upon publick record to after-ages. I shall add, is there not something of *hell* here, and of those everlasting fetters, in some measure made visible in the earth ? For where light and conviction do resolve into rage and malice against the truth, nothing can be more like hell, or have a more near resemblance to the devil.

10. I shall add one instance more, which may seem also strange, and a marvellous piece of the providence of God, *that the righteous should fall*, and *have one event with the wicked* in a time of judgment ; whilst we see some *notorious for wickedness*, and their horrid actings in opposition to the Church, *go to the grave in peace*, as to any remarkable stroke from the Lord upon them. I know, men are ready to wonder hereat ; yea, thence an Atheist will infer, things must fall out at an adventure : But O if these would bring this to the Scripture, and set it in the light of the word ! they should there see how convincingly it is verified, and that there is nothing here which do's not clearly agree with that blessed record. For it shews, (1.) That by no *external* providences, or any thing dispensed within time, yea, by no affliction obvious to sense, the way of the Lord and his respects

to his people can be judged, even amidst the great variety of events, which here fall out : But we are in this obliged to adore God, whose judgments are incomprehensible, when we see at the same time *a just man perish in his righteousness, and a wicked man prolong his life in wickedness*. Eccl. 7. 25.--(2.) The Scripture gives us this return also about such a providence, *why the sword devours both*, and as *Saul and Jonathan* fall together, that there the Lord does in a *special way difference* betwixt one and another. *Josias* died in peace, as was promised, [2 Kings 22. 20. yet he fell upon the high places of the field, in the common judgment : But he was then taken from the evil to come ; yea, thus was delivered, even by a stroke of the hot displeasure of God, on others. It is not strange, that some may be hid in the grave from a further storm, by the same judgment wherein the Lord is pursuing the land, in which they have their abode.--(3.) It is clear from the Scripture, how *small an accession* to a sinful course may in the holy displeasure of God bring some of his people under the same stroke with his adversaries, and so far involve them in that judgment. We find *Pf. 1. 1.* there is a *standing in the way*, and *joining in the counsel of the ungodly*, held forth as a *partaking with them in their sin* : and *Ezek. 9.* tells us, that *not mourning for*, and witnessing a dissent against the national sins of the time, puts men far out of that blessed roll of those whom the Lord does difference from others by a *mark* of his preservation.--- Now as to that other, how it is the *wicked prolong their days* in wickedness, and may go in some external peace to the grave, do but enquire at the Scripture ; and it will shew. (1.) It was no less strange to the Prophet *Jeremiah*, Cap. 12. *They prosper, and have taken root*. Did it not amaze that blessed man, *Pf. 73.* that not only *their eyes stand out with fatness*, but they *have no bands in their death* !--- But (2.) Is not way of the

the Lord in this manifest, how graciously he prevents some by a sad *temporal stroke*, and can serve himself, of a scaffold or gibbet to bring about their mercy; as he did to the *thief on the cross*, whilst he plagues others by a long *forbearance*, and his holding off such strokes, *Eccel. 8. 11.* the dreadful effects whereof are held forth, *because sentence is not speedily executed against wicked men, their heart is therefore set on mischief.* --- (3.) As in every age we are called to adore the Sovereignty of God in such a thing, he gives men also cause to observe his *great judgments*, some remarkable strokes on his *adversaries*; which they cannot pass without such a remark, *Behold a man that made not God his strength ! Ps. 52. ver. 7.* But we must further wait for that full *discrimination*, which the last sentence of the judge shall put *betwixt those who fear the Lord and those who fear him not.* (9)

THE THIRD ARGUMENT

FOR the Scriptures accomplishment is this; that which not only the Christian's experience, and observation of the Church, bear witness to, but is also a truth which even to the view and conviction of the World, may be demonstrated from whom it doth oft force a testimony, yea, in every age the worst of men have been forced to acknowledge; it must be a thing every evident. But the accomplishment of the Scripture can be thus witnessed; therefore, &c.

It is true, those sweet and sensible enjoyments, which the Saints have of this truth, the World cannot reach; but it is also sare, that in every age, the works of the Lord, and some more remarkable convincing providences, both of judgment and mercy, do solemnly invite men to observe the accomplishment of the word therein; yea, no time hath wanted something of

of a publick witness from *ungodly men*, even greatest mockers of Religion, who under that constraining power of conscience at death, or in some day of their strait, have been forced to seal the truth, by a very open confession of the righteousness of God towards them. And this is indeed the Lord's blessed design, in making his works sometime so conspicuous, that they may not only confirm the faith of his people, but render *Atheism* inexcusable; that the glory of his faithfulness, as well as of his power, and wisdom, may shine forth before the sons of men. I confess, we may wonder why the World looketh so little upon this; and how the conviction of so great a truth, which they cannot shun, doth not more press them: but the *Holy Ghost*, doth fully resolve this, *The brutish man knoweth not, neither do fools lay to heart*, how the Scripture taketh place, *that flourishing of wicked men is but in judgment* for their further ruin.

To prosecute this argument a little, there are some *special truths* I would instance, wherein the faithfulness of God in fulfilling his word may be seen by the World; yea, is obvious to the most ordinary observers. And though they be but a few, which I shall here touch, yet I may say, they are such concerning truths, and have so near a reference to the foundation of our faith, that men cannot acknowledge the same, but must also confess the Scripture's Divinity, and that there is a truth and reality in godliness and in Christian Religion. I may truly here with some confidence challenge the greatest *Atheists* yea, appeal to their conscience and serious thoughts, if in these following instances (though but a little of what might be said on such a subject) the truth and accomplishment of the Scripture be not very manifest.

FIRST,

FIRST. I shall first hold forth this truth, that man is surely fallen from that excellent estate wherein once he was formed, (Rom. 5. 18, 19.) and now is not that which he was at the beginning. A truth so clear that we may say, even without the discovery of the word, might be easy for any serious observer to discern the same; yea, had not even *heathens* some glance at this? The evidence whereof they could not altogether shun.

It is true, the cause & original of this dreadful contagion; how *sin entered into the World*; how it is derived to the whole race of man, by imputation, as well as infection; how that poison is carried from the fountain to the cistern; this the Scripture doth only discover: but this, I am sure, may be obvious to all, that poor man is thus sick & diseased, & now beareth the marks of such a fall and ruin, as we read of in the word. I confess, it is strange, that when this is so very convincingly manifest, it should not force men to some more serious enquiry, whence such a thing is, or whether there can be a recovery of so sad & desperate like case. But to clear this a little, I would offer these three things to be considered.

1. That there is some remainder of that excellent *fabrick*, which may yet appear among its ruins! some print and appearance (though dark) of that primitive lustre and beauty; some draughts, which *sin* hath not wholly worn out; that may clearly tell what man *once* was, and point out his former excellency, that he hath been an other creature, of whom *Absalom's* character might be truly said, *without all blemish from the head to the foot*. For we see the deep impressions of a *Deity* still rooted in men, even among the most wild and savage, which no invention can utterly raze; we see some common principles of *reason*, that are imprinted in the most rude and ignorant;

ignorant; some innate notions and Ideas, which the soul hath of good and evil, among all, and in every place of the earth; likewise those natural truths KOINAI ENNOIAI, which we may see are no ways impress'd on the soul from any objects of *sense*, but such whereto men by an unavoidable necessity are forced to assent: and besides, what meaneth the witness of the conscience, and authority thereof in every man, which they cannot possibly decline? O do not these witnesses, that from some great height poor man hath fallen.

2. Doth not the present appearance of man's nature clearly shew, that he is fallen into some dreadful disease; that it is surely overspread with some horrid leprosy and contagion, the symptoms whereof now are most discernable? O what an exorbitancy doth appear in his desires? with what contrary tides is he hurried? still at jar with his present lot! his reason and will, once in a sweet league, are now at war, betwixt which he is oft rent in pieces, as one betwixt wild horses. How is he now restless in an unreasonable pursuit? he laboureth in the fire, and for a shadow: yea, what do these tumults and commotions of the earth mean? men upon the smallest account sheathing their swords in others bowels, *homo homini lupus*; ruptures in families; unsatiableness in revenge, and the earth so oft in an uproar as a raging sea. O do not these too visibly witness, what a dreadful disorder and perturbation there must be within, impetuous boiling of man's lusts! so that here we may see a very manifest rupture and breach of a building, once well knit and framed.

3. I would ask, wherein man's true advantage and excellency, above others of the creatures, can be seen, if not with some respect to what he *once* was, and that blessed restoration by grace: For his Knowledge doth oft serve but to increase his sorrow; to shew the

the good he wanteth, and the evil he is subject to. Is there any of the creatures subject to such outward misery & pain! to so many diseases! yea, as to a sensual life, may we not say, the *beasts* have even some preference! Or are these so *unruly*? do they so much go out of their bounds and station? which the many laws made for man in the world, with the convincing necessity thereof, can witness. We see also that *fore travel* is appointed to man; at how much toil he is for an outward substance; how he doth oft sow and not reap; the *beasts* withdraw from the yoke; those over whom he had dominion, ready to assault him; how women bring forth their children in sorrow; the men are attended with fear, their life oft made bitter with care and labour; yea, as men increase in the world, their care & discontent increasing therewith! But besides all, is he not in the greatest *slavery*, of all the creatures, through the violence of his *lusts*? that make him pursue the bait, though he knoweth it will undo him; while his corruption doth oft like a strong man bind him in fetters, and his flesh imperiously drag him at its heels! O may we not say, was poor man thus framed at the beginning? or raised so far above the rest of the creatures, only to make him the more miserable! For truly if a lively portraiture could be drawn of sinful depraved *nature*, there is none so gross but should abhor, yea, be affrighted, to see that in the third person, with which (alas) they are so friendly to in themselves.

SECOND. That so great a change is truly wrought upon men in Conversion, (as the Scripture doth promise and hold forth, *Joh. 3. 3, 6. Eph. 2. 1, 5. Coloss. 3. 1, 2.*) wherein something above nature, even the marvellous power of the grace of God, may be seen; is a truth I am sure, known, and undeniable to the world: yea, the greatest mockers at religion must

must confess, can be no delusion, but is indeed real and certain; upon these following grounds.

- (1.) That the most *gross*, who in their practice have been openly profane, in the place wherein they lived, it hath been seen how *grace* hath reached them: and thus the *Leopard* hath been made to change his spots, and such who were accustomed to do evil, have learned to do well. O! Do not many famous instances witness this, in every age?---(2.) That also men most principled in their judgment against the way of God, who were wont to deride holiness as a fancy, even on such, so great a change hath been wrought as hath made the world to wonder: but then they were forced to lay down their prejudice, yea, to wonder at themselves, how they could stand before the truth so long, whereof they have got such an impression. Sure, Atheists must grant there have been as profess Atheists as themselves, who have been made eminent examples of grace.---(3.) That such even in the height of their wickedness (like *Saul* breathing out cruelty, and of late *Vergerius* while he was writing against the truth) *grace* hath sometimes reached them. It hath been found, that of Christ's greatest enemies some have thus fallen, upon their high places, before the power of the word; some such trophies of the gospel's conquest have been conspicuous in every age: yea, it is oft seen that some remarkable height in sin hath proved an evident *Crisis*, and turn in men's condition, either to judgment, or mercy.---(4.) That some of the most eminent adversaries of the truth have, through grace, been made eminently useful instruments in the Church, the world cannot deny; that there have not been choiser vessels of honour, more zealous for the Lord in their time, than such, who were once most violent in their opposition.---(5.) That such whom the world did reckon most wise and discerning, yea, that did want no judgment to know

know the value of *outward* things, as well as others, *grace* hath reached. Can the Atheists object, *Do any of the rulers, or Rabbis believe in Christ*, or follow that way! when it is so clear, that not more wise, learned, and judicious (even themselves being judges) have been in their time, then some who are most serious in the matter of Religion.---(6.) Hath not this change been made discernable upon the *simple*, the most *stupid*, and dull, yea, upon some such as their natural incapacity might have obstructed the work, if something *above nature* had not carried it on! which may be also manifest by some change even on their *understanding*, to shew that this can make wise the *simple*, and in the way of *holiness*, the way-faring man, though a fool, shall not err.---(7.) That by a very *improbable* mean, the word, and that sometimes by *weakest* instruments, we see this great change hath been wrought: and it is remarkable, how little of the work of conversion did follow the putting forth of *miracles* in the primitive times, but by the *simplicity of the preached gospel* much more. For indeed the conversion of a soul, and such a change is it self some way a miracle.---(8.) That they are not a *few*, on whom this change hath been wrought, is undeniable: and truly, besides these ordinary proofs, I think, it is a great defect there should not be some more special *record* by the Church, of these illustrious and eminent instances of the grace of God, which have been in such an age, as well as remarkable instances of judgment. (9.) Men must see this fall-eth not out at an *adventure*, which is wrought upon *one*, and not *another*, whilst both are alike discerning; yea, some who seem furthest from the grace of God, very gross and rude, have been taken, when the more civil and refined, and of a more promising natural disposition, have been past by. O doth not this witness the grace of God, and sovereignty thereof!---

thereof! (10.) Is not this change oft discernable upon men in a time while no advantage from without doth appear? even times of persecution and hazard, from which many have dated their first acquaintance with God; when they could expect nothing but a suffering lot. Sure there must be something above nature in it. (11.) It is also known how *great a cloud of witnesses* have sealed this truth. O! can there be such a universal enchantment, that in every age, in several, yea, in most remote places of the earth, hath fallen upon so many, who have witnessed the power of the Gospel? or can all these be void of understanding? What gain or outward advantage could they design in that which is so usually attended with outward hazard and loss! or what credit from men, while it maketh them the very butt of the world's hatred and reproach? Yea, can it be thought that all these could have combined to conspire into so great a cheat? I must appeal Atheists to their serious thoughts of this matter.---(12.) The marvellous *effect* of this change, doth it not witness that this is no fancy or delusion; when men are reached with such a stroke, and by one word, as hath made the stout-hearted and most daring to tremble, and to shew by their very countenance, that there is another tribunal than man's, before which they are arraigned? Must it not be sad earnest; and a marvellous power, that can make so willing a divorce betwixt men, and their *idols*, which were once as their right eye to them; and beat them off that ground of *self-righteousness*, which they had been so long establishing to themselves; that should cause them also *chuse* the reproach of *Christ*, and his *cross*, before any outward advantage, and abandon that society, without which sometimes they could not live? Must not this speak forth something above natural reason! O! may not the world oft wonder what is become of their old friends! though I confess, this should rather

rather put them, with wonder and astonishment, to some serious inquiry whence so great a change can be!

(¶) It is strange, the World, does not more wonder at *Conversion*, which is so great a *miracle*, yea it may be said, one of the *greatest* hath been in the earth; since it is no less marvellous, than to raise out of the grave such who are truly dead. O how convincingly demonstrative is this, of the truth and reality of grace; yea, even to the view of the World, do's witness an irresistible efficacious power with the word, that *converteth the soul, enlightens the eye, and maketh wise the simple*, *Psal. 19. 7.* Should we not with astonishment look on a Christian, if we did seriously consider what a change the *grace* of God makes here, from that he *once* was, and how great a change *glory* will ere long make from that he *now is*! I know, there are many things we wonder at from our *ignorance*. But oh! it is men's ignorance and estrangement from this, makes it so *little* their wonder. For, if we be assuredly persuaded of the truth of *Conversion*, which the World cannot deny without a contradiction both to sense and reason, we have then three great truths unanswerably demonstrated. 1. That the *Scripture* of God is faithful and true, which holds this forth. 2. That there is a divine *Spirit*, and a power above nature, that do's certainly accompany the same. 3. It is then clear, there are two *contrary states* in another World, since they are here so manifest. Now, besides these evidences already mentioned, I would here offer some further upon so grave, and weighty a subject, to shew how very clear and convincing the demonstration of this truth is, that the World cannot but see the very *immediate power of God*, and something above nature in *Conversion*, if they do not shut their eyes thereat. Consider but these,---

(1.)

(1.) Is it not a strange and marvellous thing, that could change one *species* of a creature into another, turn a wolf or tyger into a lamb, sure this would be astonishing; yet such a change is here, which makes so vast a difference betwixt one and himself, takes him off his former delights and exercises, his old friends and society, with whom he once thought the time short, yea, makes the man who was a persecutor of the truth, and took Pleasure therein, now rejoice to suffer persecution on that same account! I think, the World will not debate, where so many known instances are at all times obvious. (2.) Is it not marvellous, which can *estrangle* men from their worldly interests, and take their heart off that which was as their *right eye*, and subdue under them that which once took them captive at its pleasure? O does it not shew, they have got their eyes opened to see things, which were formerly hid! Yea, how strange is it that those whose predominant Sin was love to the *World*, and have been in their natural disposition most narrow and griping, that they could not allow themselves the comfortable use of that they had, even these this change hath so powerfully reached, as to cause a willing surrender and quitting of all for Christ! I could offer known instances of this; and those at as great an advantage then, in the exercise of their judgment and reason, as ever, whom the World might see were most serious and composed therein. (3.) Would you debate the efficacious *power* of that which should melt and dissolve the hardest *stone*? and may you not wonder what a power this must be, which will make men *melt* and dissolve in tears, and stand *trembling before the word*, who through their life were known to be most obdurate and stupid? Yea, is not this great change sometimes with such *terror* and *downcasting* ushered in, that may convince observers, it is a matter of the greatest *earnest*, and no counterfeit? and surely these

these must be reached by some power, before which there is no standing.--(4.) How great a thing is that which takes men *unawares*, beyond their thoughts and intention? *Mathew*, and those other disciples, did not know in the morning what should befall them before night: it was indeed a happy day, when on their return they had that account to give, *We have found the Messias!* and it is sure, many since have been thus surprised; yea, in *one hour* have got such a sight, which will never go from their heart; they now see what report could never have made them believed; they now know what it is to be taken out of a dreadful gulf of darkness into a *marvellous light!* And truly there is this usually discernable in it, how some *one word* will force its passage, and take fire within, as a word beyond all others *fitly spoken*, and fitted by divine appointment to *open the heart*.---(5.) It is a marvellous change, which do's even reach *young ones*, and these sometimes of an age little above *infancy*. For it is certainly known, how such whose *years* might shew there was no design to cheat the world, yea, sometimes in a family where little advantage for their *education* hath appeared, have given evidence of this wonderfully, above themselves and their age; yea, at *death* have witnessed some power of the grace of God, and his Spirit on their soul, their *hope* and the *grounds* of it, with such *judgment* and *seriousness*, as hath forced on by-standers this discovery of an *immediate teaching of the Spirit*, and of a *mighty power of God*; that can witness in these, ere they can well speak or exercise reason, the power of Religion. O whence should this be! and truly for the truth thereof I could offer known *instances*, if it should be brought on debate.---(6.) What a change is it that do's also reach men in their *old age*, who have been long rooted & inured to the world, who have sat out many a *call*, in their resisting the Gospel; yet is it not

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seen, how these in their *gray hairs* have been made to weep and confess, after sixty or seventy years living under the Gospel, that then only they *begun* to know what it is to be *Christians*. I confess, this is one of the *rare trophies* of the grace of God; yet no age wants some such instances, to prove, how far *grace* can prevail over *nature*, *custom*, *education*, and all those *disadvantages*, which use to attend the time of old age.---(7.) What a strange power is it, which hath been so evidently witnessed on some *horridly flagitious*, who have outrun others in all manner of wickedness; yea, even then whilst *justice* was crying for punishment to cut them off, *grace* hath stepped in to save, and reached them at a scaffold or gibbet! It is sure, the world cannot question this truth: and O should it not be convincing, to see *two* brought to a publick *death* for some gross crime, who have the *same hazard* before them, and the *same means* made use of for their conviction; yet the *one* melting in contrition, & the *other* most hardened! You cannot say, that this is from a different nature and constitution, since sometimes those of a more promising nature, and better disposition, have been seen further off, than such of whom least was expected.---(8.) Is it not a strange change, which even on those where *no ordinary means* could be subservient, can be witnessed? where no company, no example, no usual way for instruction, can be alledged; so that it may be seen, they have been truly *taught of the Lord*; that there is such a thing as his immediate teaching; that in a very extraordinary way, by means most improbable, he can convey himself into the soul. In a word, this can be no result of one's natural complexion; for then it would appear in, and accompany, their *younger* years in some measure, and grow up with them. This change also, in those of most *different natures*, most unlike and cross to others hu-

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mour and disposition, is made discernable. Yea, must it not be something above *moral swasion*, or any persuasives of humane eloquence, since here *the foolishness of preaching* is found more effectual, than any such way? Yea, it is seen how the most sublime and polish'd strains of *oratory*, and greatest gifts, have oft come short of that *success*, which hath followed more improbable means. I shall add, O is not this something above nature, which makes men partake of the *divine nature*, and do's so visibly impress the *image of God* on them!

I shall shut this up with three remarkable *Instances* of the power and efficacy of grace in *Conversion*; of which in every age there may be a large record. First, that excellent man JUNIUS; whose life we have in some measure set down by himself, with many notable remarks of providence, and therein shewing the Lord's engaging him at first; how being very loose, and carried away with evil company, yea, tempted to *Atheism*, he was one day moved to go and read the *Scripture*; and at the first opening, accosted with that of the first of *John*; which whilst he read (as he says) did suddenly *astonish* him, and leave a marvellous *conviction* on his soul, of the divinity of the subject, the Majesty and Authority of the writing; so that all day he knew not where, and what he was: but thus turns himself with these words to the Lord, *Thou wast mindful of me, O my God, according to the multitude of thy tender mercies!* Yea, gives this account, that he then had a *sight of the Scripture*, which made him see it did exceed all humane eloquence; and this was followed with such *power*, that his body *trembled*, and his mind became *astonished*, with such a surprising and *marvellous light*: and from that day he begun to be serious in the way of the Lord.

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A second instance I shall offer is, the remarkable *Conversion* of worthy Master BOLTON, a choice Minister in the Church of *England*; in whose life this is recorded, that being eminently prophane, a horrid swearer, and much accustomed to mock at holiness, and these who most shined therein, and particularly that excellent Man of God Mr. *Perkins*, then Preacher in *Cambridge*, whom he much undervalued for his plainness in preaching the truths of God; yea, was near the length of *Popery*: but on the Lord's gracious appearance to him, was put to have other thoughts, with a very remarkable change upon him, though with that *terror*, that (as he said himself) the Lord seemed to *run upon him, like a giant*, throwing him to the ground, and with such a terrifying discovery of *sin*, as caused him to *roar in anguish*, and oft rise in the night on that account, which continued for diverse *months*; Yea, these assaults in the pangs of the new birth were such, that it might have been said, *Ue nec color, nec sensus, nec sanguis superesset*. But at last a blessed sun-shine brake out, and he after his old age proved a burning and shining light.---Now besides these two great men, I think it not unsutable, (since it is to commend the grace of God and witness the reality thereof, who of all kind of sinners, as well as of all kindreds and nations, hath brought some to glory) that I set down one very strange instance in this country, of a poor *Buggerer*, who not many years ago was put to death in the town of *Air*, for that horrid wickedness. He had been a most stupid & *brutish person*; such an one who looked, to all who knew him, as if he had been above the reach of ordinary means: but in the *prison*, the Lord did marvellously witness the power of his grace, and in such a measure discovered to him his sinfulness, that after much serious exercise upon his soul, and fore wrestling, a most kindly word of *repentance* did appear

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pear, with great assurance; so that when he came to the stake, he could not cease from crying out to the people, under the sense of pardon, and that comforting sunshine of the presence of God; *O he is a great forgiver! He is a great forgiver!* and had therewith these words; *Now hath perfect love cast out all fear: I know, God hath nothing to lay against me, for Jesus Christ hath paid all, and those are free whom the son makes free!* Thus, in a transport of wonder and joy, did he die; the marvellous grace of God raising him then above other men, who not long before seemed, in some respect, below a beast. (¶)

THIRD. That the communion and fellowship with God, whereto the Saints are in this life admitted, and brought near to him in the spirit, is a most real thing, and no delusion; is a truth which may be very convincingly demonstrated, even to the view of the World, and to such who are but Spectators of the same. *I Job. 1. 3. Phil. 3. 20.* I know, this is a truth that must be spiritually discerned, and therefore the world cannot know it, or reach that unspeakable joy and delight, which is found by the Saints in that sweet path: yet I must say, there are some things, and some such convincing evidences, as may witness to men, and rationally demonstrate the same; the conviction whereof they cannot possibly shun, if they but come near, and in their serious thoughts consider, ----

1. How great and excellent a company do bear this testimony, even as many as in every time did ever serve God in the Spirit. Is not this transmitted by the father to the children, as their experience? And as certainly tried by succeeding ages; a truth which is not once, or twice proved in the Christian's life! For the proofs thereof are innumerable, and past reckon-

ning, which they have had; yea, amongst all the Saints since the days of *Abel*, to this present time, there was never one contradictory witness could be produced.

2. Are not those, who do thus testify what they have oft found in secret retirements to God, such whose testimony, in any other matter, the world of men could not refuse, or deny to be famous? I am sure, the World is convinced, that the followers of Christ dare not, yea, use not to deal falsely in other things with those they have to do with, however their malice carry them to reproach them; yea, that they are more to be credited, than such, who make a scorn of Religion.

3. Have they not had as great interest, and share of the World as others, and been of as discerning spirits to know the true value of things, who from their experience do not only declare, there is an undoubted reality in converse with God; but that the joy and delight herein, which they have found, is above all the pleasures of the flesh? O! what must that be, which could make such, who wanted no outward allurements, who had not lost their taste, and were flesh and blood as well as others, to turn their back on all for Christ, and by their walk testify they have found some more satisfying enjoyment in fellowship with God?

4. Must not this be very obvious, and convincing, that when men once become serious in the way of God, they have got some new acquaintance? that sure there is another world, and some other society, than that of men, with which they have intercourse. Whence are these frequent retirements, from which they have been seen so oft to come forth with greatest satisfaction, and with some remarkable change in their case? Doth it not thus appear, *They are not alone, when they are alone*; yea, in such a solitude must find something very desirable?

5. Is not this also testified, in *times* when men could not well *dissemble*, or be suspected of deceit? in times of great outward affliction; when the World also hath been most tempting them with its offers; yea at death, when they are stepping over that threshold; a time, wherein the words of dying men are of greatest weight and credit, the spirits of such being then more unbyassed, and free of those ordinary temptations wherewith others are swayed! How oft have they at *such times* declared, that surely God is familiar with men, which they have found, and though they were going to change their place, yet were not to change their company!

6. Can that be a delusion, which is so *sensible* at the time present? When the Saints are not more sure that they live, than they are sure of this truth, what near approaches and refreshing views they have got while *God hath come near to their soul*, what a discernable elevation of their spirits doth go along with this? Yea, on the other hand, as the *withdrawing* hereof is very sensible to themselves, is there not something of this even obvious to those about them, how great a change and difference this will make in their case, from other times, which they cannot get hid?

7. Doth not something of this truth appear on the very *countenance* and *outward carriage* of Christians? what a lustre, and resemblance of *Heaven*, a holy *stayedness* and *composure* of spirit, when they have been brought near God, in secret converse with him, and taken up to the mountain! In a word, doth not the walk of a serious mortified Christian convincingly witness this? yea, it cannot but be some way astonishing to the *World*, what should make them look so well, and with such satisfaction, when no visible cause for it, when shut up in prison from converse with friends, and acquaintance? Sure, men will not think a rational spirit

spirit so demented as to quit their former pleasures, and chuse the cross, that they may only deceive the World with a counterfeit joy and satisfaction, if they did not really find the same. And while it is too too evident, what a dreadful society and commerce many have with the *Devil*, should any question or debate; whether the Saints have truly communion and fellowship with *God*, the Father of Spirits, whom they serve and worship.

FOURTH. *That the righteous is more excellent than his neighbour*, Prov. 12. 26. And hath another spirit, which is greater and more choice, than that which is in the World, is a truth, which, I am sure, men (notwithstanding all their prejudice) must needs confess; and that therein the Scripture is truly verified, when such clear and convincing evidences do stare them in the face. I confess, the Saints are much under a dark cloud here, thro' the prevalency of corruption; yea, are oft accounted as *the filth of the world*: but when grace in any greater measure, and in vigorous exercise, doth shew it self, then there appeareth so much as will darken all the grandeur of this earth, and force men to see an excellency upon the saints, beyond any others. They cannot altogether shun such a conviction,----1. What an evident difference is betwixt their way, who walk with *God*, and that of the most polished *moralist*. Something is in the one, which doth witness a more excellent spirit, a higher elevation, a sweet harmony, and equability in their way, that they move in some higher sphere, act from other principles, with a respect to some greater interest than any thing here, have more of a large heart to serve their generation, than these whose self-interest is seen to be the first and last in all their motions.

2. May it not also appear to observers that tender serious Christians who live *near God*, do truly witness their *resemblance* and *likeness* to him ; to whom they move, as to their great and last end? yea, do evidence a more true excellency of spirit, what a sweet calm and serenity they have within, while going through things that are most cross and vexing ; with what discernable quietness these can look upon most affrighting revolutions in the world, as such whose treasure and great interest is beyond hazard, though the earth were all turned to ashes.

3. Is there not so much in the way and carriage of the *saints*, yea, such a *majesty* and *authority*, that attendeth *holiness*, and doth force *respect* and *fear*, even from those who most *bate* them ; yea, and doth force men to justify such in their conscience, whom they openly reproach, and persecute ; Whence it is, that a serious tender Christian is oft a scare crow and terror to the prophane, when there is no outward cause for it, but that they are struck with the conviction of a more *excellent spirit* in these, carrying such a resemblance to the *image of God*, as forceth fear and subjection from *that spirit which is in the world*.

4. Doth not a Christian and holy walk cause men to *shine as a light in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation* ? Yea, darken all their neighbours ? And in the darkest night, is it not seen how grace shineth with the greatest lustre ? what a sweet and odoriferous scent doth this send through the country, where they live ; that may shew to all, how great a difference there is betwixt such, and those who are wallowing in this puddle of the earth !

5. Is it not obvious, what a lustre and beauty, yea, something more becoming our immortal soul, that is in the *self-denial* of Christians, their bearing injuries, forgiving such as injure them, without reviling,

viling, than in that proud vindictive *spirit that is in the world* ; that sure such walk by a more excellent rule, and move from a higher principle !

6. It may be also evident to the world, what another spirit is in those who do not *run with the current of every time*, nor *yeild to men* because of their *outward power*, than in that spirit which is in the world ? that while the one doth press men to save themselves on any terms, the other doth cause the Christian to *take up his cross*, yea, *lay down his life*, to save his conscience ! And whence is that patience, and resolution, by which the godly in times of suffering have overcome their persecutors ; their bold avowing of the truth before men, when hazards are most obvious ; and that advantage, wherewith they appear above others, in such a time ? O ! doth it not clearly witness, they are of another mettall, who do thus abide the fire ; yea, become more bright by that wherewith others are consumed ?

I would add, that which the world cannot deny, how *this spirit*, which is in the *Saints*, hath prevailed over the greatest *entisements* of carnal gain and pleasure, which to many may seem a wonder : as the Popish party did once say of *Luther*, *Bestia hec non curat aurum*. That which they did speak in contempt, that it did prove him a *beast*, did in effect shew him therein to be something above men ; for that is a thing before which the *spirit of the world* could never stand.

F I F T H. That the promised encouragement, which is held forth to the People of God under trouble and suffering for his name, is a truth, and the Scripture herein verified, I am sure, not only Christian experience can witness ; but may even to the observation of others, be demonstrated from very convincing grounds, that it is no fancy or delusion. Ps. 9. 9. Is. 51. 12.

1. The very countenance and outward appearance of the godly, in a suffering time, doth oft declare the peace and tranquillity of their soul, so as surely they must have joy and satisfaction from whence the world doth not know, and have some other correspondence, than with things visible. For it may be oft said, as of *Daniel*, and his fellows, that under greatest pressures and a very mean condition they look as well, yea, with as much cheerfulness, as those who live on the *Kings allowance*.

2. It can be no counterfeit, which should thus reconcile the christian with a suffering lot. For it is known how very searching affliction and trouble proveh; which oft doth broach the vessel, and bring forth what hath formerly most closely lurked. And O! Doth not that holy confidence and freedom, which the Saints have evidenced in confessing the truth, before the princes of this world and their most cruel adversaries, yea, that cheerfulness which in most extream articles of suffering they oft do witness, even when they are resisting to the blood; doth not this speak forth something beyond the gallantry of a natural spirit, that far exceedeth the ordinary way of men, and is a thing the world cannot but wonder, and whither they will, or will not, see God's very immediate help, and hand in the same, according to his word?

3. Is it not seen, how the cheerful way of the Godly under suffering, while there is no outward ground for the same, doth not only astonish, but is an exceeding torment to adversaries? when they are forced to see, how all their endeavours (when their wrath and malice hath been to the utmost put forth) have yet been in vain, either to turn them aside, or to ruin their encouragement; but that the most sharp sufferings of the Godly do still give them the forest dash, help to strengthen others, justify God's way, and that tender respect

respect he hath to his suffering people, even before all observers!

4. Is it not also manifest, that such whose natural disposition was known to be very fainting and imorous, yet when called to suffer for the truth, have with out the least appearance of discouragement, showed an invincible resolution, and not only their own fears, but the expectations of others have a marvelous disappointment! O is there not there a visible fulfilling of the Scripture, that shaking reeds should be made to stand, were strongest cedars have bowed; yea, some of very mean and ordinary parts have been so discernably raised above themselves, as they were made to confound the wise and learned!

5. Must it not be confessed, that the zeal and resolution of the saints did never more appear than in times of greatest opposition? that at no time they have looked more like Christians with more advantage, and with some peculiar beauty and lustre of the grace of God, than under suffering! a thing, which as it eminently doth commend the gospel, hath also so far convinced their enemies, as in some measure it hath blunted their edge, and taken off their prejudice against the way of God, and followers thereof.

6. I may appeal the greatest Atheists to their conscience, if any moral arguments, (whatever influence they may have upon men's patient enduring) could ever produce such effects, as rejoicing in tribulation, ever produce before sin and all its pleasures; the choosing affliction before sin and all its pleasures; making men to triumph over persecutors, and to go with such a calm and cheerfulness to a scaffold, to sing amidst a dark prison, yea, and to abound, and have all things, under greatest want? O! whence is this! Sure, something above nature must be here, that is stronger than moral reasons, by which the Saints have thus overcome the world! Yea, is it not obvious to all who look on, how great a difference there is betwixt the pretended

pretended resolution of a natural spirit in death & suffering, and that joy and confidence of a Christian, which hath then shewed the composure and tranquility of his soul within? The one being but a dark shadow, and the other drawn to the life.

SIXTH. That there is a Conscience within men, whose power both as a judge, and witness, doth answer that clear discovery, the Scripture giveth thereof, Rom. 2. 9. is a thing obvious even to the world, which they must needs confess, both from it's visible effect on others, and the working thereof within themselves. That herein the word is verified, these things make it clear and undeniable,---

1. That sure there is something *within*, which thus maketh men afraid to be alone with themselves, yea, will cause them to go abroad, and frame diversions, to be out of its noise: must it not be sad earnest, which hath so dreadful a sound in their ear, doth haunt the wicked man whither he will, or not? wherewith he would gladly be at peace; but amidst his greatest mirth and prosperity this doth mingle his vine with gall and wormwood.

2. Is it not also sure, that men have oft an *accuser* within their breast (while they seem to brave it out before others) whose judgment and sentence they can by no means decline; but after the committing of sin, yea, on the back of their sinful pleasures, doth follow the same with a bitter sting, and ring this dreadful peal in their ear, that *in the end their way will be bitterness!* O! is not this an accusing conscience, which doth begin the torment of some before the time?

3. What is it that should make men's guilt so legible oft in their countenance, even when they study most to conceal it, and thus cause them to give their tongue the lye; yea, bewray to bystanders, whether they

they will or not, some secret trouble, and fore they have within? Doth it not clearly shew the power of conscience, which hath such authority on men, that without violence or constraint from others, doth even force them to confess the truth, and supply the room of witnesses;

4. Whence is it, that some are so much disquieted for *secret sins*, which the eyes of others could not reach, yea, that as to some *gross sins*, even the most profligate amongst men, have an horror at them, without respect to *outward hazard*? Doth it not shew the power of natural conscience, that holdeth forth a *greater party*, than the world with which they have to do, to whom *all things are manifest*, and some *greater witness* than that of man?

5. How is it that even *greatest* men, whom the world could not reach, and in the midst of all probable advantages, have yet often most *affrighting thoughts*, much terror, and disquieting reflections? Must it not be something within, which doth cause them to fear, an other power than that of the world, and a judgment greater than of men?

6. What must it be which doth force men to *justify God*, when his hand doth pursue them, and maketh them so easily find out *sin* in a time of their *strait*? Why is the sense of guilt so very affrighting at *death*? Is it not the conscience, which doth preface a future judgment, and extend its power to matters of an everlasting concernment and duration?

7. What should make men *tremble at the word*, and so much hate a *searching* ministry! Is it not because the light doth torment them? That though the word doth particularly name none, yet there is something within, which maketh application of the truth, and doth plainly say, *Thou art the man!*

8. How do the worst of men oft *justify* those in *secret*, whom they *openly* have condemned: that while

while they are even persecuting the faints for truth, and holiness, yet for these they give them and their way a favourable testimony, notwithstanding all their prejudices? Yea, what is it that doth cause a secret fear and awful regard of such whom they hate? --- Doth it not shew something within, whose judgment they are not able to resist?

9. I must further ask, whence is that *horror*, and those dreadful cries and groans, which *wicked* men oft have in their sickness, even such who were wont to sport at sin, with a daring countenance? Can the world get this past without some remark, how intolerable a thing an evil Conscience is, when once let loose? when in all ages such terrifying examples of this kind have been set up, for all that past by to look on, such as *Spira, Latomus, Olivarius, &c.* And truly I think, it is a great Defect, that there should not be a more particular *record* of such, which would give Atheism so great a dash; yea, force men to confess the truth of a Deity, and of the written word.

(9) This is a great truth, & a great demonstration of God (blessed for ever!) his being, and of the truth of his word, that there is a *Conscience*: so strange a power, which every man hath within him and over him, that forceth the soul to a *reflection on it self*, even when it trembles at that sight, and with an awful sound tells the Atheist; there is a God, when he seems to have no fear or conviction thereof! This is that great tormentor and troubler of the world, from which there is no retreat, though one should flee to the uttermost parts of the earth: this keeps a high court of justice under the authority of the great Judge, and there without respect of persons does summons great and small, does arrest, bring in witness, & passes sentence; yea, in some measure puts that in execution, and

and can make hell begin there, by an unexpressible anguish and horror. It is strange, that such a thing, when it is so undeniable, does not stare the world in the face with more amazement. But I shall further offer some few evidences of this truth, besides those already mentioned.

(1.) Could there be such a Power in man to *difference* betwixt that *good* and *evil* which is within him, if there were not also some *higher power* above him, who hath thus formed him, with such principles? Yea, could there be a judging and witnessing within a man, if there were not a law & rule over him? For it is sure, the conscience in all its actions hath respect to a higher judgment, and to a law, which even nature's light, though very dim, holds forth, but is express and clear in the Scripture which is that great rule of the Conscience. --- (2.) Is it not very strange, to see such a power *within a man*, and yet *against* him; that the grossest Atheist is an enemy to it, yet cannot be without it, or get it shaken off; and whilst it is known how strong a bias and inclination these have to *evil*, more than *good*, they are yet forced to justify the one, more than the other! The drunkard cannot drown this conviction, nor the worldling bury it in the earth, where his treasure lies. --- (3.) Though men may come some length to *divert* the conscience, and *silence* it, that it cannot exercise its function, without some special divine excitation; yet is it not manifest, how then when *once* it is *awaked*, there is no possible *withstanding*! Then the stout-hearted cannot keep his ground, to debate with it; yea, when they run, it follows with as swift a pace; no skill, no arguments can defend from its force; there is no violence against such a power, but whilst in the practice of sin they overreach the witness of men, lo! this is continually at hand to tell them, that He who is greater than the conscience, do's

do's regard.--(4.) Can any thing be more real and certain, than these effects of the conscience, I mean that *trouble* and fear men have in *sinning*, and that *peace* and satisfaction that attends *well-doing*; Do you know such a place of the earth, whither this power hath not some access to over-aw men, even without any visible aw or hazard? And can all mankind, through the whole World, in all ages, be in so strange a delusion, if there were no real ground for it?---(5.) How convincingly do's this witness to a conscience, and the reality of it, that men are at so much work to *bribe* it, to frame *diversions* thereto, yea, to find out false grounds of *peace*, and some such gloss and commentary, as many reconcile the rule with their grossest actions and exorbitancies? And why is this, but that in outdaring it, they find it stronger than they, and therefore must counterwork, by darkening that great light, and find out some shew of reason to silence conscience, and promise peace to themselves, though they walk in the wickedness of their heart.--(6.) Do not these strange *extreams*, which oft are obvious in men's condition, witness the reality of this power? O what a marvellous thing, to see one stupid, this day; and desperate the next, the conscience breaking out, at that rate, that to be rid thereof and its torment, the poor man would seek a shelter in the grave? Yea, is it not usual to see some wear out their time as beasts, yet at dying seized with an inexpressible horror of God? Is not this something awakened, which was formerly asleep?---(7.) Do not men see such *desperate* acts of wickedness in the World, such *furious* running over warnings and convictions, that may even convincingly shew some pursuit of the conscience, and that horrid way they take to be rid of it by revenge, to give it a further wound and silence its noyse, by some violent deep stroke! ---(8.) Are not these

these *sudden* unlooked for out-breakings of the conscience most remarkable; how it takes some *unawares* and grows upon them, the more they strive with it? It is known also, what *reflections* men usually have on themselves and their actions, in some present *exigent* and *hazard*; yea, how they are thus affrighted, or in some measure quiet, as they are put to condemn or acquit themselves on that score. Now is not this a convincing witness of the force of a natural conscience; And likewise that usual recourse, which the grossest of men will in such an extremity have to God by *prayer*, do's both declare this, and that impression they have upon them of a Deity.--(9.) How marvellous a *confidence* and *support* do's the conscience afford where it is a *friend*, under the greatest misery and trouble from without; For thus a *man's spirit* can *sustain its infirmities*. But O when it is an *adversary*, nothing (nothing) so *unsupportable*; it will torment and tear one within, when there is none without dare provoke him; yea, cause the oppressor to tremble, whilst it upholds the oppressed with confidence; it makes the one eat his bread with joy, when it imbitters the pleasant morsels of others. (¶)

SEVENTH. That there is a reward for the righteous, and unquestionable gain in Godliness, is a piece of the Scripture not only well known, and witnessed to the observing Christian in his experience, but is also held forth in every age, as in great letters to the view of the world. *Pf. 58. 11. Pf. 97. 11. Is. 3. 10.* It is true, that the Christians lot is oft followed with much trouble, and sometimes with loss of his life, which may seem to have a very dismal aspect. For that great goodness, which the man who feareth God, hath ensured to him, is much laid up in another world: but it is also sure, that there are such clear convincing proofs of this truth held forth
even

even to the observation of men, by which the Lord hath in every age confirmed the same, that I am sure the greatest Atheist cannot answer even these.---

1. That this is the very dictate of a natural conscience, not only that *God is*, but that he is a *rewarder* of such as serve him: yea, none amongst men are so gross, or brutish, who are not in some measure principled to *difference* betwixt *good* and *evil*, with some fear of a punishment to the one, and some hope of recompence to the other; and are also forced to notice some more signal and convincing examples, which have been of that kind in their time.

2. Must we not say, yea, doth not the World see, in every age, that history of *Joseph* in some part *acted over again*? Sure, there have not been wanting many such remarkable instances, wherein it might be easy to trace an upright and straight walk through a very maze and labyrinth of changes, and to show how that hath been their condition, & at last integrity hath brought them to land in a comfortable harbour; yea, how often they have had a marvellous, unlooked for relief, contrary to all humane appearance. This indeed is no romance; but a most true history, which through all times, and many examples, might be written of the Word and providence, which would surpass the richest fancy, that any fiction or romance did ever contain.

3. Must it not be convincing, even to the worst of men, what a *visible blessing* doth oft follow the *mean lot* of some of the *Saints*, which can make their *little* reach far, and cause them to *abound* more in their *poverty*, than others amidst their abundance? Which, I think, the world cannot shun to observe, and gather that there is surely something else than mens own care, which doth their business: and how that ordinary proverb falleth not to the ground, that *it is better to be happy than wise*, when they see a secret

cret judgment blow upon some men's estate, that no means can prevent; and a secret *blessing*, which maketh things prosper and take effect, accompany the Christian's little: so as it may be easy for such who look abroad, to see where real contentment, with cheerfulness and giving of thanks, useth to dwell.

4. May not the world see, there is a *staff* in a *good conscience*, how little soever they partake of the World? that well doing, and the practise of godliness, hath some present *reward* in its hand? Whereas so remarkable a difference may be discerned betwixt the countenance and carriage of such, and of them who trust in falshood, that surely in a time of strait, those have another kind of security and confidence, when greatest natural spirits fail; yea, that those alone can enjoy themselves, have the most calm and composed spirits, amidst the several changes of their life; that according to outward things their peace doth not ebb, nor flow, but they are at a seen advantage above others, in the day when men are fore outwitted with their straits. So as it will be most easy then to see the good and advantage of religion, when the vanity of other advantages is most discernable.

5. Is it not also seen, that true *honour* doth truly wait on *humility*, and followeth such; But that it fleeth from them who do most pursue it: yea, that *faithfulness* and an upright walk will gain credit even amongst her enemies, and respect before the World?

6. That those who are faithful in their life, and diligent improvers of a small talent, have usually more added, with some discernable growth following the same: and as the drying up of the parts of some, as a judgment on unfaithfulness, is oft obvious, so also such a blessing upon serious diligence, as hath made the *last* to be *first*, and even outrun such who were once before them. Yea, it is truly seen, how grace

grace helpeth men's gifts, doth raise and sublimate their spirits, above that which once they were.

7. Doth not the Lord put some *visible difference* off, betwixt the *righteous* and the *wicked* in a time of common *calamity*? that a strange deliverance with the concurrence of very marvellous providences, doth sometime await such, even to the conviction of observers; which may tell the World, such have had an *invisible hedge* of preservation about them, and have been under some better care, than their own.

8. What a clear witness do *ungodly* men oft bear to this truth, at their death, or at some other *strait*, so that their conscience hath forced them to *justify* the godly man's *choice*, & to say, that the lot of such is only most desirable: yea, with much bitterness to lament their own folly, that made not religion more their business, the good & advantage whereof is now no matter of debate. Sure, the World will confess, how oft the confession and testimony of such men, to this truth, hath reached their ear.

9. I shall but add, that which is so very manifest, how faithfulness and integrity doth *transmit* men's name with more honour; yea, maketh it have a sweeter *savour* in their generations, than either riches or outward preferment: yea, that there is a great *difference* betwixt the *memorial* of the righteous, and of the wicked, even to the conviction of the world.

EIGHT. That verily there is a God who judgeth in the earth, Ps. 58. 11. who doth render unto men *vengeance*, and doth pursue the *transgressor*, because of sin, is a truth, which the world hath in every age by many convincing instances held forth to them, where they may see the Scripture clearly verified.

I

I have a little touched this in the second Argument how the accomplishing of Scripture threatnings is witnessed to the observation of the *Church*, and to those who are *wise to discern the times*, wherein they live. I shall here point at this truth, as it is in the providence of God, written in such great letters, as are obvious to the view of the *World*, so as most common observers cannot pass this without a remark. It is true, much may be laid over to that great general assize of the last judgment, that day of retribution; yea, sometimes we see the most wicked and vile go in peace to the grave; the sovereignty of God doth also appear very observably in the different measure and kind of punishment; and it is too evident, how prone men are to look more to the interest that second causes have in such a thing, than to a divine hand: but this is also sure, that *the Lord is known on the earth by the judgments which he executeth*, and in every age doth set up such convincing examples before men, that the greatest Atheist may see, yea, oft their conscience must break the jail, restrain it as they will, and force this acknowledgement, that such judgments can be no casual thing; while something of a power higher than man, and a clear verifying of the word, are so discernable therein.

Now to demonstrate this truth, I would offer some things which may shew how very near this cometh to the observation of men, so as none can be a stranger thereto, or want conviction of this piece of the truth of God, except they willingly shut their eyes, while it is clear,

1. That the very *Heathens*, who never knew the Scripture, nor a written Law, have yet so much of a natural *conscience*, that not only they can put some *difference* between *virtue* and *vice*, but even in some measure can discern God's putting some difference betwixt the same, and how flagitious crimes use to be

punished

punished by a divine hand. We may say, time could never yet wear out the observation of this truth, through the World: & though many things may be received and credited, which not having a sure ground do quickly vanish (it being truth's priviledge still to out live falshood) yet it is sure, how in the darkest parts of the earth, this hath been still noticed with a special remark, & transmitted from one age to another; yea, the records of the nations, even by heathen writers, shew what remarkable punishment hath followed cruel oppression, Covenant-breaking, and such other gross sins against the second table; yea, how these have been the usual forerunners of great strokes on Kingdoms and families.

2. Doth not the World see, that in those remarkable judgments, which have come on a Nation and People, there is something *higher* than instruments, or second causes, which may be very evident in bringing the same about: so that all who go by, must confess, such is no casual occurrence, nor doth arise out of the dust, but that surely a *divine* hand is there? And truly, though some desolating strokes are very terrible in themselves, and blood and ruins should be no matter of pleasure; yet, whereas thereby that state-ly found is heard, even *his voice who maketh the earth to tremble*, and God is made known to the sons of men, we should not only with fear, but even some holy congratulation consider his work. Now to clear what a convincing witness these are to this truth, I shall point at some very obvious remarks, which I am sure the World cannot contradict, of the Lord's own immediate hand in such judgments.---(1.) That strange *concurrence* of providences, which useth to appear when *God is against a People*; how all things will then conspire, as a fatal conjunction, to work their wo and ruin, that men may see, surely *this is from the Lord, who is wonderful in counsel,* and

and from a hand against which there is no striving. (2.) How such remarkable *strokes* are seen to fall in with some great and remarkable height of *sin* in such a nation and People; so that it is easy then for all lookers on to confess the *righteousness* of God thereon.---(3.) When judgment is coming on a land, it may appear how *instruments* are raised, and in a more then ordinary way acted with all advantages for such a piece of service.---(4.) There is a visible *blasting* then both of *counsel* and *strength*, and those means, which otherways looked most probable; how remarkably such are confounded, even in the use of their ordinary abilities, & their heart & usual courage taken from them, while the Lord is on a work of judgment.---(5.) That astonishing *success*, which is usually seen to follow those whom *the Lord sendeth forth* to execute his judgment; how then they move swiftly, & with vigour; they do not stumble, or weary; it is neither rivers nor walled cities can stand in their way; mountains are made vallies, to shew *it is the Lord, whose hand in that day is strong upon them*, to strengthen their loins, and make the sword and ax sharp for his service. (6.) Amidst these various strokes which come on a land, can men pass that of the *Pestilence* without some special note? where *God's* immediate hand, something supernatural, above ordinary or natural causes, may be clearly seen, in its strange progress and spreading, which like lightning doth oft go through cities and countrys in a small time! Do not these tell aloud to the World that they come not unsent, and without some special commission; and that there is no striving against them, nor are ordinary means effectual in some such extraordinary plagues, until he who brought it on, do also by his own hand take it off.

3. Very obvious even to the world is that clear *resemblance*, which is oft betwixt *sin*, and the stroke: how holy justice doth keep a proportion, and

and doth shape out the judgment so exactly, both in measure and kind, that it may be easy to see the *stroke* pointing (as with an hand) to the *cause*, by its discernable likeness; and both at the righteous judgment of God, which thus measure out to men, as they have dealt with others. We see how the Lord judged *Agag*, and *Adonibezek*; how *Sodom's* burning lust was punished with fire from heaven: Yea, what even *David* had measured out for his murder and adultery; for the one, *the sword shall not depart from his house*, and for the other, his *wives* by his own son *abused*. And truly every age's observation can witness this truth from many convincing examples, *that there is a God who judgeth in the earth*. It being oft seen if men would seriously observe, (1.) How an universal overspreading of sin in a land, hath usually some national and universal stroke following.---(2.) That blood waiteth on bloody men, and suffereth them not oft to live out half their days; one oppressor punished by another: the unmerciful man payed home in his own coin, by such as shall shew as little mercy to him, or his.---(3.) How the proud and insolent, who do most hurt aiter outward glory, are usually punished with some humbling abasing stroke. *He poureth Contempt on princes*; and such who will not honour God, shall not obtain that honour they seek from men.---(4.) That such who have been most given up to *Uncleanness*, are oft seen not to increase as to their *Posterity*, but their issue observably made to fail; yea, by a divine hand rooted out: sure many such signal examples might be instanced.---(5.) How such who have chosen *sin*, to shun *trouble* and suffering, have in their sinful way got as large a measure thereof, as that man, who in *Q. Mary's* time said, he could not burn for the truth, and therefore forsook it, by an unseen hand, had both himself and his house in one night burnt.---(6.) That the *treachorous* and deceitful men are thus dealt with by others;

others, yea, children who have been *undutiful* to their parents, have from their's met with the same recompence.---(7.) That whilst men, to make a *purchase*, have even denied themselves the *necessary use* of outward things, they are oft seen to leave their estate to such, who do quickly *waste* and *scatter* the same; and thus the sinful parsimony of parents is punished with the prodigality of such who succeed them.---(8.) That the frequent use of some dreadful *imprecations* is oft punished by the Lord with a *suitable stroke*, to the conviction both of themselves and observers. (9) How such as have *joynd* together, and united themselves against the *truth*, have been visibly *broken* as to their own private interest: and truly we must say, there is oft such a conjunction of very convincing circumstances, in some acts of the judgment of God, with such a *resemblance* to the *sin*, yea, judgment sometimes pursuing men in the very *place*, where the sin hath been acted, that it may be easy for all who go by, to say, there is indeed a *God who judgeth in the earth*.

4. Doth it not appear, how very convincing and obvious this truth is even to the World, from those *ordinary remarks* and *proverbial sayings*, which we find in all ages and in every part of the earth, even the most *rude* and *ignorant* have had, of the *judgment of God*. For truly what else are these but an express witness, how universally this truth is known, and received by men, how much the World is convinced thereof, through a long tract of observation, from the fathers to the children: yea, thence they have had a divinity of their own, drawn out thereof; how such sins do not use to pass without some exemplary punishment. Now I would but name some few of these remarks, that have been most usual in all times. (1.) How some *families have not thriven*, but a secret judgment hath been discernable thereon, since they had hand in some gross acts of *wickedness*,

wickedness, such as bloodshed; their former prosperity from such a day visibly declining.--(2.) How that an evil purchase useth not to be of long continuance, but their estate oft in a very strange and unsensible way made to vanish, which their children though frugal can by no means keep up: and the cause hereof men do easily point at, it was purchased by *fraud*, transmitted with a curse cleaving thereto, and so there was no warding off the judgment of God.--(3.) Such who do not much consider God's controversy, yet are oft forced to remark, that since some have meddled or matched with *such an house*, they have sadly smarted thereby, something of a *curse* even following the *race* and posterity of some.--(4.) How *sacrilegious* meddling with that which hath been for a pious and publick use, hath caused a visible waste and consumption in their own estate.--(5.) That men's asking counsel from the *Devil*, & turning to that quarter for their help, doth usually resolve in a sad and *tragick* close; and truly this, many in the shutting up of their life have been forced to confess.--(6.) That *falsehood* doth not use to *keep its feet*, nor a *wicked way long prosper*, what ever it seem to at the first view: yea, I may add, as one of the world's remarks, which they cannot well shun, that which seemeth was an ordinary saying in the time of *Esther*, that it is not safe *troubling the Church*, or for men to state themselves in opposition to that party; & I dare not question, but this shall be yet as convincing and obvious to the World, as it hath been in any former ages.

5. Is not the appearance of a divine hand oft very obvious to the World in the *discovery of sin*, and bringing to light some gross acts of wickedness, even in extraordinary way? while its seen, (1.) By what *strange unexpected means* these have been brought forth; such an astonishing affliction, & concurrence of things therein, as hath forced not only lookers on to

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some special remark, but hath even struck the guilty party through the heart with wonder, and conviction of the same.--(2.) How the hand of Justice pursuing men for some notorious, and publick crime, doth oft bring to light some that have been most *secret*, which they thought the World could never reach: yea, it may be frequently seen while men have been in *one sin* found out, it hath also brought forth the discovery of some *other*, and forced them to confess, that it was a righteous judgment pursuing them for the same. It is a thing also known, yea, by many undeniable instances witnessed, that marvellous discovery of concealed *murder*, by the bleeding of the body upon the touch of the murderer. I confess, it should be hard to assert the lawful and warrantable practice of such an appeal to so extraordinary and stupendous a sign from the Lord, where Scripture goeth not clearly before us: but on the other hand, such a thing so surely tryed for such an end, and in the case where all ordinary means of discovery have been wanting, I think, calleth us to a serious remark thereof, while it so visibly seemeth to witness his hand, who doth *make inquisition for blood*.

6. Is not the dreadful *consternation*, those tormenting *fears*, which men after some gross acts of *wickedness* do bewray, a very obvious witness to this truth, *that there is a God who judgeth on the earth, in whose hands it is a terrible thing to fall*, and sheweth, how great a *punishment* wickedness is to *its self*? Truly if Atheists turn not brutish and stupid, they must notice this, and confess a thing which doth so oft reach their ears, what have been the horrid *crys* of many *dying* men, who have most sported with sin in their life; that may tell flanders by, there is a *Judge* who can *stretch forth his hand* on the *soul* and *conscience*, whereto no rack or outward torment is any way comparable.

7. I would further add; those extraordinary signs and prodigies, which do usually go before some stroke and judgment on a land, do they not clearly point at a *divine hand* in the same? For as these are a solemn forewarning from Heaven, to give men an alarm, before remarkable changes, the truth whereof the World cannot deny; so we must say, they are a convincing testimony, that these judgments are no casual things, which the Atheist cannot answer; it being so clear, (1.) That such signs and prodigies have been in every age visible to the World's experience, and the gravest histories both of ancient and latter times, do fully witness.--(2.) That such things should also be previous to great revolutions in the World, we know the *Scripture* is most express, *Joel. 2. 30. Luk. 21. 11.* And as we should guard against any superstitious respect, we should also beware of stupid Atheistical inadvertency at these strange works of the Lord, which call both for fear and observation.--(3.) That such have been usually previous to great calamities and judgments on a People, is a thing that all ages must witness; even those, who have been most cautious and discerning in their time, who could not shun this as a remark. *Herodotus* doth set that down as a thing most sure, in his sixth Book. *Cum Deus puniturus est gentem & urbem prodigiis, id solet significare.* And *Lucan* could tell what went before the Romans civil wars, ----- *Superique minaces Prodigiiis terras impleverunt.* Yea, it can hardly be instanced any great change or revolution in the earth, which hath not had some such extraordinary Herald going before.--(4.) Can the World deny how sometimes these prodigious signs have been shaped out to point at the very nature of the stroke then imminent, by a strange resemblance to the same; such as a flaming sword in the air, the appearance of armies fighting even sometimes upon the earth,

earth, to the view of many, most sober and judicious Spectators, also showers of blood, the noise of drums, and such like, which are known usually to go before wars and commotions.

NINTH. That there are evil spirits, (*Eph. 6. 12. Rev. 20. 2, 3.*) and a Diabolical power, such as the *Scripture* hath held forth, whose constant work is the ruin and undoing of man, is a truth, not only witnessed from that experience Christians have of their assault but is undeniable by the world, and greatest Atheists, except they deny the discovery of sense, as well as reason.

I confess, it may cause fear & astonishment, to think on this, that spirits so knowing and once originally excellent, have fallen thus into such an height of indignation against infinite goodness, that it is now their only aim and pleasure, to dishonour God, and destroy his image in man. It should indeed cause us to fear him, that spared not the Angels who sinned. But the truth it self is sure, that such a party is at this day encompassing the earth, and trafficking up and down there: to prove which by arguments, were to light a candle to let men see that it is day, while it is known what ordinary familiar converse many have therewith, and alas too easy to discern that power, which the prince of this World hath upon the children of disobedience. How obvious are the marks of his conquest almost every where; Thousands lying in his chains! How far do we see many transformed into the very image of the Devil; which in those desperate prodigious acts of wickedness that are oft in the world, may appear; such, whereat we should think human nature, though corrupt, could not but tremble, yea, look on with horror! how many in all ages have even been in an express covenant with them? and is not there a great part of the earth, where the Devil is visibly and

audibly known, where he hath a kind of neighbourhood with men? But there being no need for such a demonstration, I only here aim to hold forth what a concerning truth this is, and of great consequence, if seriously considered; yea, how both the Scripture, and Christian Religion, is hereby evidently confirmed since these things must necessarily follow,---

1. That in this the Scripture is truly fulfilled, which doth witness *what* these Spirits are, *adversaries* to man; in their nature and Inclination desperately evil; whose actings in the earth have a visible tendency to men's hurt and ruin; yea, their pretended favours always directed to that end; whence we see such a natural inbred horror, which is in man against them.

2. That it is no *common* thing, which they so much pursue; something more precious than the body, for which so great and cruel an adversary is in continual labour; for their actings have no such tendency to ruin men's estate in the World: no, it is most evident, this is the *soul*, the immortal soul, to undo them in that great interest, is the mark, whereat they level; that poor man might be sharer of that misery, under which *they* are concluded.

3. Is it not an undeniable consequence of this truth, that there must be an *invisible World*, that hath inhabitants of *another kind* than such as are here; that sure there is some being above man; yea, a real correspondence betwixt men and Spirits? And should not man, thus placed in a middle estate betwixt the Angels and the beasts here below, partaking in his *body* with the one, but in his reasonable *soul* with the other, thence raise himself to thoughts of some more *excellent* condition, for which he is framed, than a *sensual* life; and that surely the *soul* hath an interest in another world, which he should most look after?

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4. Must not this also be sure, that there is an *invisible guard*; and these desperate Spirits are under *restraint*, by a power stronger than they, which can bound their malice? For, this may be certain, that these who have so great enmity to man who are so near, and have such advantages over us, could not keep at such a distance, but that they are kept in chains by a higher power.

5. How is it that *now* by the Gospel and within this precinct of the Church, *Satan's* power is so much *restrained*, in respect of *former times*; while it is known, what a familiar converse they had with men, did even haunt their houses, and were so publick in their appearance under such names of *Faries* and *Brownies*, which since the breaking out of the light of the Gospel hath not been? Yea, hath not the Devil to this day an open throne and dominion in those parts of the earth, where Christ is not worshipped? It is also known, how the oracles of old did cease, and that publick worship, which the world for many ages had given them, with the very time of Christ's appearance, and breaking out of the Gospel; these night-beasts getting to their dens, when once the day was broke. *Plutarch* and other heathen writers are witness to this.

6. Whence is it that *within the Church*, where Satan is most restrained, yet there he doth *more stir*, than in all the world besides? Doth it not shew, that that is the party with which he is *at war*? Hence doth he more *rage*, the more clear the light shineth: yea, is there not seen something, besides men's natural enmity at the truth, even a fury and violence, where-with some are visibly driven, in their acting with such an insatiable cruelty against the followers of Christ, without the least shadow of provocation, as holds forth a lively resemblance of *the Devil*, and some violent pressure and incitement from that quarter!

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7. Is it not sure, that there is such a party, by this, that he is an adversary to God and holiness; for which reason he doth so impetuously tempt and press men to the outward acts of sin? Yea, that there is a Spirit of blasphemy, which so visibly rageth in the world, and acts men to war against Heaven with their tongues, by cursing and blasphemous oaths, which hath no carnal pleasure or gain, but yet they can not forbear; from a violent incitement, which may be seen swaying to the same.

8. Whence is it, which is so very known and notorious that those horrid wretches who give themselves to the Devil, cannot enter in any formal engagement without renouncing Christ and their baptism? doth it not shew that direct opposition he stands in to Christ, yea, to the very name and shadow of Christianity?

9. Whence is it that even the grossest Atheists, upon any appearance of the Devil, or apprehension from that quarter, will not then make scorn of prayer, but turn in earnest to that, which at other times they mocked? O doth it not shew, men's Atheism is their judgment; that not only there is a dreadful horror and fear, which by nature men have of these evil Spirits, but some inbred sense also and impression of a Deity, which doth bewray it self, whither they will or not, in a pressing strait and extremity!

TENTH. That there is such an enmity betwixt the seed of the woman, and the Serpent, as the Scripture hath held forth, is very manifest: a truth, wherein the world may see the Scripture clearly verified, Gal. 4. 29.

It is truly strange, that this putteth not men to more serious thoughts, to pursue such a thing to its true rise, what should cause such a violent and unreasonable contrariety against the ways and followers of God; for here, upon grave reflections, they must needs

see, that their way in this is a convincing witness to the truth of the Scripture, which might put them in some other humour, yea, help to turn this poison into an antidote against it self. But this is sure and undeniable, the discovery whereof cannot but stare the greatest Atheist in the face, from these convincing evidences.

1. That it is seen, no private quarrel which ever was among men, hath been with such vigour and malice pursued, as this upon the account of religion; which hath still put the World more in a flame, than any private interest: yea, it is very manifest how men are carried with the stream of their own natural inclination, to oppose the Church and People of God.

2. That this seed and enmity could never be taken up through all the successions of time; a strife which is not late begun, to be seen only in one age, betwixt the children of the bond-woman, and of the free. No, the most sage and wise amongst men, the greatest Peace-makers, could yet never fall on a way to reconcile these two parties: but the children have still served themselves heirs to the quarrel and hatred of their fathers against the Church.

3. Is it not seen, that those who are more civil, and can hold a little up with the form of religion, yet will break forth in greatest rage against the power thereof, when once it begins to appear? It is indeed here, that inbred contrariety, which is in men against holiness, doth bewray it self, even in those who are otherways noted for a calm and peaceable disposition, while once they begin to be searched with its heat.

4. What strong natural antipathy is this, which causeth men to pursue with so much bitterness those from whom they never had any personal injury? Sure their conscience must oft tell, that they have no reason, or any other provocation, than what is from the appear-

rance of the *image of God* in such : but this is their *nature* and disposition, an *enmity* which they can no more help, than they can change their *nature*, or the *Leopard can change its spots*.

5. Form what a *strong inclination*, and *inward principle*, doth the World thus act in its opposition to the Church and followers of God ? whilest it is clear, though these were never so quiet and peaceable yet their enemies are still restless, and cannot sleep beside them.

6. It is seen, how this doth *separate* betwixt nearest *friends* and *relations* and alienate such who have sometimes been most dear to other : no bond in nature so strait, which it will not break. It doth oft set the husband against the wife, and the parents against the children ; Yea, when *religion* once breaks out in a corner of a land, or a family, doth it not then make a visible *jar*, and put all in a *flame*.

7. It is clear, that when once *grace* appeareth in men, they are as a *sign* and *wonder* to a profane generation. The World doth then sensibly change her countenance, and looketh like a step-mother : while on other hand it is clear, that professors turning *loose*, and running to an *excess of riot* with others, will cause their old adversaries to warm towards them ; and alas, proveth the surest way to gain men's *friendship*, while the World thinks, they are their own, when once they turn profane.

ELEVENTH. That the Creature is made subject to *vanity*, because of *sin* : which not only the wisest of men, but the Spirit of God, doth witness, that things here beneath the sun, are indeed *vanity*, and *vexation of spirit*, (*Rom. 8. 20. Eccles. 2. 11.*) is a piece of the Scripture, in such great letters written forth to the view of men, that none can be strangers there-
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It is true, the cause, and solid remedy of this so general a complaint, are only reached by the *Godly man*; who knoweth how to read the vanity of the creature, as a piece of the fulfilling of the word, and doth seriously consider things as they are, and not as they appear. But it is also sure, that in every age through the various changes of man's life this is so clearly witnessed, that the most gross and brutish cannot shift the conviction thereof : but in one of these two times have been forced to a publick acknowledging of the same ; at *death*, when they are leaving the World, or in a day of *strait*, when the World is leaving them. How to demonstrate this, I shall here but offer these few queries.

1. Have not the greatest instances of the *glory of the World*, been usually the greatest examples of its *vanity*, and *change* ? How few hath ambition raised, but it hath also ruined ; yea, given the forest fall to those it had lifted most high ? What sudden changes do attend great men, and high places ; which those who sit low, do escape ? Sure, if the tragedies of Princes, and such who in their condition have been raised above others, were put by themselves in record, it would make a great volume, and shew how their *glory* and prosperous estate did only make their *fall* the more observable.

2. Is it not obvious, what a *frail dying disposition* is in all worldly things ; that even the greatest Kingdoms and politick bodies, to maintain which neither policy nor strength was wanting, yet like natural bodies of men had their inevitable *periods*, their youth and flourishing times, their declining and old age, and at last been brought to their *grave* ? Hath not the glory of greatest Empires and Monarchies sunk in the dust ? yea, scarce a heap of stones left this day, to tell us where once famous cities have stood, *Nunc Soges est ubi Troja fuit* : the ruins where-
of

of, and such excellent pieces of the World, doth clearly shew that certain dissolution of the *whole* fabric at last.

3. What a small *distance* we may see betwixt *extremities* in outward things, even greatest plenty and poverty, the highest place and a low condition ! So that the morning hath seen some happy and flourishing in the World, whom the evening hath seen miserable : and in a most short time, such who have been objects of envy and admiration, made the object of men's contempt and pity ; yea, have so suddenly disappeared, have sunk into so little bounds, that men have been put narrowly to consider them, and with admiration ask, *Are these they who were once a terrour in the land of the living !* And their place hath not been found, who a few days before seemed to *place themselves alone in the midst of the earth ?*

4. What else is it but the very *present* moment of time, that maketh such a difference betwixt the *rich* and *poor* ? since as to what is past, and the former time, men's happiness and misery may be reckoned as though it hath never been. *Nam quicquid retro est, mors tenet.* And who but a fool would boast of that which is to come, a thing so uncertain ? This only is sure, that a few days will make all conditions equal, when the bones of the rich, and the dust of greatest Princes, will not be discernable from those of the poor man.

5. Is there any thing so *pleasant*, which hath not a *worm* at the root thereof, a *moth* which naturally breeds in the most satisfying enjoyments, that quickly eats out the heart thereof, and blasts their hope before the harvest ? How oft is greatest longing, in the pursuit of things, turned to loathing and weariness, when obtained ? because it is not the nature of the thing, so much as an humour, and the novelty thereof, that

that maketh them pleasant. Hence many sensual men have turned Monastick, and greatest Monarchs become melancholy ; yea, how usual is it for many to survive their pleasures, and bury their joy and delights in the World, even before themselves ; while nothing remains of all their former-enjoyments, but some sad sighs and groans with a heavy fare-well.

6. Is it not found that *riches*, and abundance of the earth doth *load* more than it fills, & men's *wealth* only further heighten their *wants* ? How very *poor* are some amidst their *fulness* ; more than those who earn their bread with sore labour ; whom the world doth wholly possess, while they do not all possess it, neither is it in their power to make use of that they have. Yea, are they not sick and dy in Princes courts, as well as in the meanest cottage, and the complaints of the great and rich usually more than those of the poor ? Sure it is known, that the great man doth often want a stomach and rest, than the poor want meat and a bed to ly in.

7. In what an *endless circle* do *voluptuous* man move, from one thing to another ; in a perpetual search after other enjoyments, to satisfy their spirits ? It sheweth what a great *want* is there, which still calls for *variety* of things, and some fresh supply, to take off the weariness of one pleasure by another : else the delight they have therein, would quickly languish and wear out. Yea, is it not still found, that the *best* of outward things are not, on a near *approach*, what they seemed to be at a *distance* ? *the eye not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing !* But the more they are pressed, the less they yield. Neither do they enjoy such things with most satisfaction, who take a *full draught*, who wallow and steep themselves in their enjoyments ; being more in expectation, than in possession : so that sometime men's attaining their

their *desire* hath caused their *delight*, and pleasure in these things to cease.

8. It is also clear, that outward things are incident to the *worst*, without making them the *better*; and separable from the *best*, without making them the *worse*; and what can silver, or gold sute an immortal *soul*, or answer such a capacity, more than virtue and godliness could answer to fill an empty chest or glass bottle?

9. How rare is it for men to get their lot in the World brought up to their *desire*? But are still at some jar with their present condition; so that oft there needs no more to turn men discontented, but the thought of some lot, which they apprehend more satisfying than their own; the want whereof makes them more disquieted than all their enjoyments are pleasing. Yea, it is also evident, many men's labour and disquiet doth increase with their wealth, and turns the flame more violent; and that even in the condition of the poor there is something the great man is made to envy, while the poor may find cause oftimes to pity and compassionate some great men in the midst of their prosperous estate.

10. What is the enjoying of the best of the earth, but its very *passing away*, while it *perishes in the present use*? And what! Are not men going through the world, and leaving it behind them, in the midst of their most satisfying enjoyments? Is not the excellency of most outward things only according to opinion, or the institution of men, while they have but small intrinsic worth from their own quality? In some parts of the earth, whiteness is reckoned deformity, and the blackest colour the greatest beauty, and therefore they paint the Devil white: What a poor smoke is swelling titles of honour, if soberly weighed? while the proud man's happiness doth some way hang upon the poor who go by, which they must

must beg from others with the greatest artifice: And would the choicest jewels, or a bag of gold laid upon the heart of a dying man, any way quiet his spirit, or ease his pain? Surely this is vanity.

11. Is it not oft seen amidst the various changes of the earth, *Princes* and great men *walking on foot*, and *servants riding on horseback*; the children oft put to ask an alms, from such who have served their fathers? fools loaded with wealth, and great stiles, while men of the choicest spirit are buried under contempt and poverty? yea, do we not see how quickly men are cryed up, and down in the World? That which in one age is raised, is oft raised in another; yea, many at much labour to undo that which others have done with greatest care and expence? what a fore vanity is this!

12. Will not the *want* of a very small thing oft embitter the pleasantest lot, and turn it into *wormwood*, and *gall*? The smallest touch of pain, the gravel, or tooth-ake, yea, even some melancholy thought, will make men disrelish all their present enjoyments. What torment doth a small ruffle and affront oft prove to the proud man, even in the midst of his glory? is it not also found, how carnal mirth and joy of men wallowing in the delights of the World, hath still in the close a bitter sting and harsh reflection, which as the shadow attends the body, is the native and inseparable consequent thereof. And surely that may be easy to discern, there is no condition, which can want a cross, or some mixture of discontent, even where there is least seen cause.

I would add, which cannot want a remark in every time, that while men seem to be at the *top*, and furthest period of their thoughts and projects, have things according to their desire brought to some happy close, they are oft then upon some *turn* and change in their condition, either by death or some very

very sad cross, and even in that day their thoughts have perished. Truly such as are wise observers of the World, and of the course of things therein, may oft see, how usual an occurrence this is, that when there is too bright a sun-shine in outward prosperity, if great sobriety and moderation do not accompany the same, it is an ominous and fatal presage of a storm, and *ad summum quicquid venit, ad exitium prope est.*

TWELFTH. There is this truth, which hath in all ages been clearly witnessed, even to the conviction of the World, that the end of the upright man is peace; and integrity, what ever rub it may seem to have by the way, yet hath a sweet and comfortable close. *Psal. 37. 37.*

This is an undeniable truth, not only because the saints are then entering into perfect peace: but it is also clear, that however the godly man may have very sharp assaults in the close of his days, and some who have shined very bright, do set in a dark cloud, their evening full of sorrow and bitterness, yea, their reflection on some sad slip, which they have made by the way, bearing them company even to the grave; yet this truth is still verified, yea, may be discernable to the conviction of the world, that integrity and an upright walk hath much peace in the end, and doth land men upon a comfortable harbour: as to which, I can appeal to the World, and the most ordinary observers, if this hath not been oft very convincing, and discernable to them; from many instances of the Lord's usual way with those who have been faithful in their generation, at their death; from that testimony which they have then given to this, yea, from most visible signs and evidences hereof, even upon their countenance and carriage: whilst it is seen, ---

1. How

1. How great an advantage such use to have above others, when *Death* approacheth; so that it hath not been *Balaam's* wish alone, to die the death of the righteous, and to have his latter end like theirs, but the worst of men are still forced to witness their respect to the lot of a dying Christian, and would wish a share thereof when it comes to their turn; about which I may ask the greatest mockers at Religion and at the life of a Godly man, if they can possibly shun this conviction, that surely such are at the best estate, and at the greatest advantage, in their end.

2. This I am sure cannot be hid from the World, that abundant peace the saints do then testify in their choice; what a present unspeakable complacency they have with this, that they valued *Christ* above all other advantages, did chuse affliction rather than sin; and now while they are turning their face to the wall, find the witness of a good conscience, and in God's approbation so sweet a feast, that their joy and peace on this account, they can not smother or keep in, but declare to all who stand by, what they find. And truly it hath been oft seen, how the inward joy which some of these have had, hath exceeded their outward pain, been more sensible to them, than their sickness; yea, they have been in leaving the World much more chearful than those whom they left behind.

3. It is also known, and may be very obvious to standers by, how with a sweet composure and recumbency of soul such have laid themselves upon the promise, in that hour, while they were grappling with the king of terrors; their spirit then quiet and calm, having taken the truth and testimony of God for their shield and buckler: which may tell the World what another kind of security and confidence these have beyond others; yea, that surely the ground on which this confidence is founded, must

must be a thing that is able to bear out the greatest storm and assault, and is something above nature.

4. Is it not clear, that even an *untimely* and *violent* death could not hinder or frustrate that peace, which integrity causeth in the close? For innumerable instances can witness what marvellous joy and satisfaction the Saints have shewed at a stake, and upon a scaffold; and thence have had more chearful going out of time, than the rich man stretched upon his soft bed, or the greatest Monarch amidst all outward advantages. Sure we must say, that sweet refreshing close of the upright man hath never been more visible, and writ in greater letters, than in such a case.

5. What very sad *conflicts* have some of the Saints had in their *life*: yea, even upon the setting of the sun have been put to cry out through sore perplexing *fears*, and *doubts*, wherewith they have been assaulted, who have at last had this turned into a *song*, and such a marvellous change in their case, as hath not been more sensible to themselves, than discernable to all lookers on, like a sudden calm and sunshine, after some dark storm. I must here ask the Atheist, and such as reckon Godliness but a fancy, whence should so strange, so sudden and great alteration proceed; that those who a little before were under such horror, could have no rest, no arguments could serve their turn, do thus witness the abundant peace of their souls; yea, (which is oft seen) that *feruent desire*, wherewith some of the Saints are taken away, the very lustre of heaven being upon their countenance! How marvellous and piercing are their words, which may clearly tell that now they feel, they see, and have got some glance of that, which lookers on cannot reach, though they cannot deny an acknowledgment of this.

6. Must

6. Must not the World grant, yea, the greatest enemies to godliness allow this charity, that sure this *peace* and *joy* which such have witnessed at *death*, can be no *counterfeit*? That there is no temptation could thus byass them to deceive others, and themselves, in a matter of such high concernment; and at a time, when it is expected, the grossest of men would speak truth; yea, that this doth appear, while men cannot in the least charge dying Christians, with any distemper in their judgment, but while they have been most composed, stayed, and present in mind, and as to other things of their concernment, most deliberate and sober; even then they have born this witness.

(¶) Since that peace and joy, which integrity hath in the close of the day, when the Saints are dying, is undeniable, even to the conviction of the World, I would add something about that great truth, *The immortality of the soul, and its subsisting after death*: to which this joy, when the Christian is finishing his course, hath a special respect; and is a truth, wherein the Scriptures accomplishment, and the certainty of that blessed record, may be convincingly witnessed, and demonstrated to the World. For it is thus (I mean, by the light of the Scripture) that *life and immortality is brought to light*, and made known to the sons of men. I know, this seems so common and uncontroverted a thing, an after-being of the soul, and its eternal subsistence, that to essay more than the naming of it may be looked on as impertinent. But oh, how *unknown* a truth is it! of which there needs no more to shew the little solid persuasion men have, but that it is so usually passed with so *few*, and these very *common thoughts*. It is not indeed much questioned, not because it is believed and men are sure thereof, but because they are not in earnest about such a thing. It concerns the World to keep at a distance
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from a thorough *knowing* of that which would be their *torment* to know; and there is cause for this sad regret within the Church, that the most great and fundamental truths, wherein our comfort is most concern'd, are usually least studied. But O should it not put us to other thoughts, if we could have a serious view of this? It may truly be said, the better part is so buried in the worst part, that until men are dying, few lay this to heart, that their *souls* must live for ever, yea, must once part fellowship with the body, and enter in another World, and an unknown state, until the resurrection. What I intend here, is only a short touch at this great truth, as it is a convincing witness to the Scripture, and the accomplishment thereof; about which I would offer these three to be considered. 1. How express and clear a testimony the Scripture gives to this. 2. On what plain and undeniable grounds of reason this truth is demonstrable to the world. 3. How great a thing it is, to believe and be assuredly perswaded thereof: for it seems, men rather dream, than have their judgments seriously exercised, or are in earnest about such a thing.

As to the *first*, It is undeniable that not only the *Scripture* holds this forth, but that *there only* men have a clear and right discovery of it. It is indeed known, what glances the world hath had of this, yea, what hath been writ thereon, by some whose sole guide was the light of nature, in this search. But it is no less evident, how very dark and uncertain, these have been: they could not shift some conviction thereof, but it was through a dark cloud, and as some pleasant dream, they looked thereon; because they did not know its rise and original, and what the end was, to which in its actings it ought to be directed; they knew not what its after-condition could truly mean. Hence with such wavering and uncertainty do they express their thoughts. I do not here

here mean the schools of *Epicurus* only, to whom the soul was but a complexion of atoms; but ye see how perplexed and uncertain both *Aristotle* and others of those famous ancients have shew'd themselves about this: which speaks out more some perplex'd and disordered notion, which they could not ward off, than any clear and certain discovery which they had on solid grounds thereof; for they knew not the Scripture, where its original, whence it is and whither it must return, is so clearly held forth. *Ecl.* 12. 7. And you may further see, *Heb.* 12. 9. *Gen.* 2. 7. *Luk.* 16. 22, 23. *1 Pet.* 3. 9

2. This grave testimony, which the Scripture of God do's bear to such a truth, may be also held forth to the world from such a *clear* and *rational demonstration*, that the most brutish of men can hardly sink so far into the condition of a beast, as to deny they have a never-dying soul, which will not go to the dust or inherit corruption with the body. I should be loath to borrow so much of your time, by any discourse on a subject, which by others hath been so much handled; for which there are many, many arguments, unanswerably demonstrative of this truth, both Physical and Moral; yet having mentioned it, I cannot altogether pass the same without a touch at some few, that may be most convincing and obvious. (1.) If you should question the being and subsistence of the soul after death, you must also deny its *frame*; that it is a simple, immaterial and active substance, which hath neither quantity nor parts, and is not compounded of any principles, and therefore can be resolved to none.---(2.) Do but consider, if the soul have *no cause of corruption*, and from no contraries can suffer opposition, as the body do's, through the prevalency of heat or cold, how should it then admit of a dissolution with the body! For you know generation and corruption they are by contraries. And if

if you argue from any natural cause, it must surely be one of two, which makes the soul partake with the body in its decay and mouldering down; either a *dependance on matter*, as the soul of the beast hath, which is but a material form, or a *conflict from contrary qualities*, which you know helps the bodies wasting and its fall: but I think, you would not so far contradict reason, as to alledge any of these concerning the soul of man.--(3.) Consider, if by those *diseases* to which the body is subject, the soul is not reached, must it not also have a distinct existence from it? And I am sure, you must grant, the soul doth not directly suffer from any outward diseases; but the body may be under expressible pain and anguish, when there is a sweet calm and serenity within.--(4.) Does not this witness, that the soul lies not a dying with the body, nor falls with it, since it suffers no *decrease*, but is found strong and vigorous in its actings, when the flesh is brought low, & on a visible decay? Yea, is it not at the greatest advantage in its exercise and discerning, the more separate from the body, and sensible things? Now it is sure, that cannot be destructive to the soul in its being, which is so subservient to it in its operation. I think, those who ever observed the joy and peace of a dying Christian, & the excellent frame and composure of his soul, under a pained and languishing body, through many diseases, may clearly see this truth, and there read a lecture of the immortality of the soul.--(5.) Will you consider, can the soul of man have a dependence on the body in its *being*, when it does no way depend thereon in its *acting & exercise*? For it is sure, it does truly act, yea hath a clear ratiocination, even when the body sleeps: and O does it not prove, that this soul that is found waking, when the other is asleep, must have a distinct subsistence, and live when that dies.(6.) If you admit that there are *Spirits* and *incorporeal* beings, which

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do act without a body, and yet have a true and real subsistence, can you doubt or question the existing of the soul, or its exercising the faculties thereof, without the body, though you do not reach how this should be? And if there be indeed a converse & intercourse betwixt us and Spiritual beings, yea, a truth in fellowship with God the Father of Spirits, O may not this satisfyingly demonstrate that existence and acting of the soul; even when the body is at a distance and in the grave!---(7.) Consider, that which you must grant hath a *dominion* and *præminence* over the *body*; by its making a rational choice of good when it is most cross to the desire and delight of the flesh; yea can not only determine it to endure most grievous torments, but does oft witness a special delectation therein, must it not be something truly distinct from the body, and what can have a subsistence without it? Now this, I am sure, you will not deny, that there is such a dominion over the flesh, and a captivating of it to the law of the mind; which the most sensual and brutish will not deny in many instances, how little acquaintance soever they have with it themselves.--(8.) Since there is a discovery and knowledge of things, not only *above* the reach and impressions of *sense*, but even *contrary* thereto, that men do rationally judge and assent to truths, which truly contradicts their senses, as the rotundity of the earth, which seems to us a plain, &c. O does it not shew, that this soul in man, which can so far soar above the earth, and does so far exceed the body, must be of a more excellent mould, and something truly different from it? I shall but add, what means that *war* and *strugling* which to every Christian is known betwixt the *flesh* and the *Spirit*; yea, to every man is known betwixt *him* and his natural *conscience*? what mean those *reflex* acts of the soul on its self, those marvellous products of the understanding, and

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new discovery? why are men so anxious and concern'd about their surviving *name*, which is a most poor airy accident, not worth the regarding, if there were a destruction of the whole? what means that marvellous deportment of so many *martyrs* for the truth, that they should shew such a joy & satisfaction amidst their torments, as though they had no bodies; the pleasure of the soul so far overcoming the pain of the flesh? what means so *universal a consent* to this truth, that those who love and fear it, yet cannot be rid of grief? & I must also ask, how are the *choice* and the *excellent* of the earth so oft crush'd under the feet of their *enemies*, whilst these wretches do sit wallow in satisfying outward delights; yea, sometimes go *down without bands in their death*? In a word, what is it that makes so vast a *difference* betwixt *men* and *beasts*, since these you see have a sensual life, want not some natural sagacity, and have their enjoyments by the senses as well as man?

3. Let us consider how *great* and *astonishing* a truth this is. O *immortality*, do men believe it (the soul's surviving the body, and that condition wherein it will enter) and yet have so few *thoughts* thereof! For this is a matter of such concernment, that may turn much of our life in a continued wondering. I must say, can this be believed, our having an immortal soul, which is of a more excellent nature and inestimable value, than these visible heavens, sun, moon and stars; and which no less than the blood of him who was truly God, could ransom from everlasting wrath, & yet that we put so small a price thereon! Is it indeed believed by men, whilst they are so hot in their pursuit after the world; since here is a question may silence all flesh, *What should it avail a man to gain were it the whole world*, when it is purchased with the *losing of the soul*? It is sure, there is no imaginable proportion

proportion betwixt that and a piece of red earth, or betwixt a few years of time and long eternity. I remember a passage of worthy *Mr. Blair*, our own country man, who the first time he heard *Mr. Bruce* preach, said, The fame of so great a man caused him to expect something very extraordinary from him; but his whole Sermon did press this truth of the soul's being immortal, and that it was a great thing to believe it; he confessed, it did at first some way amuse him, why he dwelt so much upon so known and common a subject: but after, he found it was some other thing than appears at the first look, for which men may dispute, and toss it as a notion in the schools, who never knew what it was to believe the truth thereof; and that a serious impression of it on the heart is something else than a twining of it in the head, by some ordinary speculation of this. O what a truth would it appear, and what astonishment would it cause, if men would but sometimes go alone, and consider,----(1.) What it is they have thus held out to them, and how *great a change* is before them which ere many days must be in their condition, when once that strange step is passed, betwixt time and another world, which they can step but once.--(2.) That this marvellous change is truly *near*; time making long steps, the vessel under full sail, which carries men forward, whether they sleep or wake, to that port: for it is sure, this cannot be long deferred, and it is very unsure, but this night thy soul may be required.--(3.) That this change must be *in a moment*, in the very twinkling of an eye, and no interval, but a present entering of the soul into that *after-state*, which shall then put the *Christian* in the fulcres of an inconceivable joy, in the immediate presence of God, in the embracements of the Mediator, amongst the angels, and spirits of the just made perfect; but one moment also must put *others*

bers out of their sensual pleasures and delights, the Prince off his throne, and those who have been wallowing in the world, down to those dark and horrid prisons, where with the ceasing of this world's melody, they are forthwith met with that horrid noise and howling of the Devils and of all the company of the damned.--(4.) Oh! if men would consider, what *thoughts* they shall *then* have in another world, of *that other world*, and what other thoughts of their former state and condition; how far they will find this beyond all they ever thought or conceived at a distance.--(5.) Should it not cause astonishment to think seriously on this great change, which admits *no after-change*; But that there long *Eternity* is the true measure of the soul's duration after death! O what a long breathing-word, to be *ever ever* blessed or miserable, where the one hath *no fear* and can go no more out, and the other *no hope* or possibility thereof! The hope of the hireling is not there, that he may change his master at the next term; for these gates are everlastingly shut, by the decree of him who alters not,

Now to shut up this argument, I shall offer one instance more, wherein the world may see the truth of the Scripture, and therewith of a divine providence, convincingly demonstrated, if prejudice did not draw a veil and obstruct so excellent a discovery: it is this, *That the way of God is perfect* (Psal. 18. 30.) and *that his works are perfect*; and *his ways, judgment*, (Deut. 32. 4.) yea, *that he do's all things well* (Mark. 7. 37.) which testimony then the multitude was forced to bear to this great truth: And O how great a truth is it! which can be said neither of Angels nor men, but to Him hath a peculiar respect, even to him alone, in whose way there is nothing crooked, no mistake, no inequality, nothing too much or superfluous, nothing out of due time, that is either too soon, or too late, nothing incongruous, nothing

nothing misplaced; yea, in all he do's nothing which is not best done, which any could rectify or make better, but in every piece of his work leaves matter of wonder behind, and thus declares himself to be God! I know, this is a truth the World cannot well bear, but pretends a visible contradiction from the great *disorder*, that things here seem to be in; for men will oppose to this, what a miscarrying there is of instruments, what a strange emergency there is of most grievous and cross accidents, the most promising means frequently blasted; yea, how good and evil are so strangely interweaved; and is not the present day oft undoing the work and labour of the former? Yet whatever the World can say to darken this great truth, *That the way of the Lord is absolutely perfect*, it must shine: yea, it do's not want clearness, when by a thick interposition betwixt us and the same, there may be need of clearing it. The sun ceases not to shine, when the clouds obstruct its brightness, as to us. O that those who will debate so great a truth, would but come near, and by a serious perpending, *consider the work of the Lord*, then should they see so much in the daily tract and administration of providence, yea, even in most ordinary passages thereof, that might arrest their spirit with astonishment, the discovery whereof they shun, by keeping at a distance from it.

I shall touch a little this demonstration, how this piece of divine truth is verified and writ out in the event, to the observation of the World, that they who cannot spiritually discern the same, yet have so much witnessed is to dazzle their eyes, and force this acknowledgement, that *the way of the Lord is perfect*, and *he hath done all things well*! and for clearing, I would offer some particulars, though few, yet so very comprehensive, that in a large measure they reach not only those great works of God, where-

in he most eminently declares himself about the Church, but takes in also the most ordinary things of providence, here under the sun, and therein demonstrates the certainty of this truth.

First, you may see this clearly verified, that *the way of the Lord is perfect, in the whole frame and structure of the Church of Christ here*; which is made a great wonder, and an astonishing piece of the work of God, beyond the most exquisite humane contrivance, that ever was. It is true, *her glory*, that do's most affect the eye, and ravish the heart, it is *within*, and lies not in the common road of men's observation: yea, some parts of this excellent body oftimes are in such a disorder, as darkens the beauty of the whole; there is such an intermixture of the *hay and stubble* of humane inventions, with this choise building, that helps to mar its order and beauty; the carved work also may be spoil'd and broken down, as with axes and hammers; yet with all these disadvantages, there is a glory on the Church of Christ, an awful Majesty, such convincing marks of its grandeur, even under its ruins, as have forc't the World, and the great men thereof, to consider that sight with wonder and amazement, which you see *Psal. 48. they saw, they marvelled, and basted away*. And the preceeding words give clear reason, *for God was known in her palaces for a refuge*. They saw something both in the grandeur and frame of the Church, and in her preservation, that forc't them to see that it was something more than humane. Now to clear this a little, do but consider these few instances, wherein you may see the great and stupendous fabric of the Church, and how all things are there well ordered by him who hath framed it.---(1.) You may see on what a *sure foundation* it is built, even that of the *Prophets and Apostles* which is the Scripture of God, whereon as it is manifestly found-

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ed: it is no less marvellously united and joynd together in *Jesus Christ*, who is the *chief corner-stone*: will you seriously consider the *form of the house*, and the *fashion* thereof, its *goings out and comings in*, with all its ordinances, and there you may see how marvellously exact and uniform this building is. (2.) Is it not likewise obvious, that the Church thus *fitly joined together and knit, by all that the joynts do supply*, in its whole complex frame *groweth up as a building to the Lord*? Yea, is there not a very strait union and correspondence betwixt all the parts thereof in the same faith and worship; that tho' divided in so many parcels through the World, yet is still one intire body, the union whereof, the variety of members and these of such various sizes, that great inequality amongst them in their growth, the remoteness of place, different languages, exile or change of countries, yet cannot break off that near tie, that joins the Church of Christ together.--- (3.) What a wonderful contrivance is it, which is *in the World*, yet not of it? that spreads itself among the Nations, yet loseth not its own distinct being; is mixed with humane societies, yet an inclosure and incorporation by her self; a fountain of sweet waters sealed, though surrounded with this great salt Ocean of the world; is made up of many particular Churches, yet every part homogeneous, and of the same nature with the whole; and though it seems to be open to fore assaults, yet is a defended city, which is impaled, hath both her walls and watchmen, her bulwarks and strong towers! (4.) This is of such a frame, that is both *visible and invisible*, yet *not two distinct Churches*; though, under diverse considerations, it comprehends both without any jar, and hath communion with *Jesus Christ* as her head for life; standing related to him as his mystical body, and yet as a visible politick body, is related also to him, as its supreme head, by a political go-

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vernment and guidance, and hath an exprefs charter granted for its extents and rights.---(5.) This muſt be ſaid of it, *though black, yet comely*; though it does not want ſome *spots* they do not ſo far mar its beauty, but, that in all its ſeveral adminiſtrations there appears a ſingular grace. It hath indeed its blemiſhes and failings, yet every meaſure and degree thereof does not forfeit her relation, rights, and privileges.---(6.) Is it not a marvellous frame, which does not want a corrupt mixture, yet in its *rule and conſtitution* does allow no corruption; and though many are found groſs within, yet does it difference betwixt the *precious* and the *vile*; yea, ſhuts its gates, as well as it opens, and is no more tender and eaſy in her admiſſion, then awful and authoritative in her rejection? ---(7) Its ſo well conſtituted, that all her *officers* have their appointment, and each their work and charge deſigned, yet no greater *variety* of ſervice and employments, than there is of gifts, which from her head are diſpenſed and ſuted to the ſame.---(8.) She is of ſuch a mould and frame, that though ſhe can boaſt of an *intrinsic power*, within her ſelf, yet muſt derive it from another ſountain; yea, muſt have a *directory* and rule from her ſupreme *head* and lawgiver, for exerting the *acts* of that power: which alſo hath its proper *objects*, even the inward man, and its peculiar *end*, the edification of the body, to which this power and the exerciſe thereof is directed.---(9.) This is ſuch a body, the members whereof are indeed ſubject to the *magiſtrates*, and denies no due obedience to that power, yet without any ſubordination or ſubjecting of the *Church*, as ſuch, to an humane power: and though it hath not its authority or juriſdiction from men, it denies no juſt reſpect to theſe: it does *bind* and *loose* upon the earth, which no humane power can make void; and though caſt in among the nations, yet by peculiar bounds is kept from all other ſocieties

ties diſtinct: ſhe hath her judicatories, and there a ſubordination of the leſſer to the greater, yet no allowed preeminence and inequality amongſt her officers: yea, though her government is truly *monarchick* with reſpect to her head, for there is but one ſupreme Lord; yet with reſpect to the ſervants and officers, it is a moſt excellent well tempered *aristocracy*, which holds off thoſe gradual differences of power and greatneſs amongſt them, which are ſo much in uſe amongſt the nations. In a word, O do you conſider this choice and exquisite frame, and you will ſee how both *tenderneſs* and *ſeverity* do here concur; what a healing there is here in her ſharpeſt rebukes and cenſures, whiſt a private eſſay for gaining, is to go before a publick and judicial procedure; yea, her authoritative determinations without prejudice to the judgment of Chriſtian prudence and diſcretion, which belongs to every one of her members. Conſider alſo how ſhe *wears not out*, but hath ſtill a ſpring after the winter, hath both her ſigns and her ſeaſons, and whiſt ſhe is loſing and in a decay as to particular members, ſhe is ſtill *travailing in birth* for a new off-ſpring and ſucceſſion. O that they who ſtand afar, would but come near, and ſeriously look on this rare piece of work! *Go about Zion, conſider well her towers and bulwarks, &c.* that you may ſee, this is a fabrick the Lord hath founded, & raiſed up, & that ſurely this piece of the word is therein fulfilled, *His way is perfect, & he does all things well.*

Secondly, Is not this great truth clearly demonſtrated, not only in the frame, but in the whole *conduct and adminiſtration of providence about the Church?* Which is indeed one of the moſt marvellous discoveries, we have of God here; yea, even to the world, is oft convincingly obvious, through what a variety of diſpenſations he uſeth to bring forth his work, and makes his way oft break out of the boſome of a

dark cloud; yea, so unexpectedly can make those perplexed changes, with which the Church militant is tossed, resolve in such a satisfying close, that it may be seen they were all directed for her interest and advantage. I know, this is a great deep, and we cannot have such a discovery of the providence of God about the Church, nor reach the meaning of things in their first mould, as in their after-tendency and product. O that marvellous fight, which shall once be, when that great work of providence, that now is put over into the hand of the Mediator, hath its perfect close; and the whole frame and contexture set up together as one entire piece to look upon, that is now by several pieces and through a various succession of ages carried on! Yet we must say, the Lord herein comes so near, even in the darkest times, and makes the glory of this truth in such a measure shine forth, as may convincingly witness to any ordinary observer, the way of the Lord is *perfect* in all that he does. I shall here offer some few things, that in every time are obvious to those who take pleasure in such a discovery, and desire not to keep at a distance therewith. (1.) Must it not be said of his way, that *he does nothing in vain*, but makes all things *congruous to his end*, even things that amongst themselves do most cross one another? Does he not carry on his design by the miscarrying of instruments, and bring forth his greatest works by means most small and contemptible? I know, the world would object, they can see no such thing; and indeed providence cannot be understood, or the meaning thereof by one look: but I must ask, do you discern the motion of the hand upon the clock, even whilst it is certainly going forward? yet when it comes to the hour, and strikes, you will see it was then moving. It is sure, there are such periods, that providence hath, where its meaning does not clearly break forth, until it

is comes to the striking of the hour, if we may so say; and then the most stupid are forc't to observe, what once seem'd most improbable, in the way of the Lord.--- (2.) Is it not also obvious how the Lord doth *ensnare men in the work of their own hand*, and *turns their wrath unto his praise*? how he takes the wise, and outwits them by their counsels; makes events fall out contrary to the second causes; frustrates the most promising means; and by things unknown and unthought upon, does oft bring forth the deliverance of the Church; yea, how out of shame and reproach he does even bring about his glory. Sure these are not so far in the dark, that in any age the world can altogether pretend ignorance thereof. And is not *his way perfect*, of which such things can be said?--- (3.) Have we not this discovery, how the Church is oft *fed by the rod*; yea, under that appears with such advantage, that may be said, *her meat hath been brought forth out of the eater*? How usually is her mercy and enlargement prepared for her, by the sharpest down-casting? oft is she humbled, in order to an uprising and deliverance; yea, oft is one step of the way of the Lord made clear to her by another. O that is not here so excellent and marvellous a method, that all the wit and invention of the world cannot follow!--- (4.) His way is indeed perfect, and by an infinite wisdom managed, which does *at once*, and by the very *same* providence, reach so many several assigns: yea, bring forth such *various* and *contrary effects*, that no humane reason could ever judge the result and conclusion by the premises; how severity and mercy should be at once brought forth; a more full stroke on the adversary, by their further raising, yea, by a long forbearance of that stroke; how he should also make use of the same mean both for *humbling* and *proving* and *to do his people good in the latter end*. O how perfect must his way be, where

all the steps thereof, & after-product; would seem repugnant; yet no real jar. For the Church sinking, yet do's not perish; in a flame, yet not consumed, but is thereby kept alive; brought under the yoke of the oppressor, to make her grow and flourish; is wounded and smitten, for her further healing, and a witness of God's tenderness to her thereby; hath a greater weight and burden put on, to give her thus ease and enlargement; yea, is chastened and meets with suffering, to prevent suffering, *that she may rest in the day of trouble!* Sure these are a part of the ways of God, and may be visibly demonstrated in the conduct of his providence about the Church, even to the conviction of the world. But oh! it is hard to see, when men will shut their eyes.---(5.) Is it not obvious, what strange things do sometime fall in *betwixt the beginning and close* of some special piece of providence about the Church, that do pass humane reach to give a present reason for the same: yet in all these may there not be discerned a remarkable *dependance and connection* of things? how in such a variety of cross events, and in a long continued tract of providence, every thing falls in aright, in its own place; yea, every step, every circumstance, so proportioned by a marvellous disposal and conduct thereof, to suite another, for making the whole complex providence beautiful; that on a serious review the world must confess, this is a concatenation so strange, that it must be his work, & his alone, who *sees things from the beginning to the end!* (6.) How perfect is his way, who can *hasten and dispatch* his work by *delays*; and when he seems to take a long circuit in bringing about his design, yet loses no time, but in such a visible going back do's most effectually move forward! Yea, is it not seen, how he makes things fall in, that are very *unexpected, cross and remote* (that would never have entered in our thoughts) to

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answer his blessed end? and even dispose that which above all might seem most directly *destructive* to the Church, to be of all other things most effectual and subservient to her *advance*; brings her more quickly forward to the harbor by a storm, than a calm! O have we not such great things to observe in the way of the Lord, that may shew it is indeed perfect! ---(7.) It is also very clear, though not on the first view, yet in the close and issue, what a *certain steady motion* providence hath, and keeps on its course, whilst the World is reeling to and fro: how the Church's mercy hath by greatest disappointments been more fully answered, than in the most probable way; yea, when her relief seem'd furthest off, and had been much followed with many a weary look from some other quarter, with what a strange surprisal do's providence oft break out at her hand, as it were from under the ground, with an unexpected mercy? ---(8.) You may see his way is perfect, who puts a *peculiar beauty* upon every occurrent of providence, and brings it forth in the very *fit opportune time*, that it could not fall out more seasonably and with more advantage to the Church. Is there not a seen cause for her sharp trials, and the necessity thereof no less discernable, than there is of the winter, for the profit and advantage of the earth? and is it not also manifest, her reviving came never too late, but in the very fittest time? I know, the World may object, they can see this in the revolutions of the *Year*, but not in any such changes of the *Church*: yet I am sure, this is manifest, that the Church of Christ hath her *sad* and her more *comforting* times here, with as discernable a *succession* of the one to the other, as there is of the Summer to the Winter; yea, that under these *vicissitudes* of her condition she is still seen to look forth with a *peculiar advantage*. I shall add; what a *marvellous composition*

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position and temperament of contraries is discernable in this excellent frame of providence? There is nothing here incongruous; nothing here too small, which doth not fall under its reach, and nothing so great that can over-reach it; here is no jar or disagreeing with the diligent use of means, yet does this rise so far above the same, that no human care can bend it to their will, nor is there any running cross to such a current. Here is indeed an unsearchable deep! Yet so much is there broken forth and made clear, that may convincingly witness and verify this truth, even to ordinary observers, *the way of the Lord is perfect*. And what now we cannot attain in its discovery we should learn to admire and solidly believe a more clear manifestation thereof.

3. I shall yet further pursue this demonstration with respect to *that great and marvellous work of God in the redemption of the Church*; a contrivance, we may say, more wonderful than this whole structure of the universe, of the heavens and earth, which are so exquisitely fram'd! For here the thing itself is not more astonishing, than the way and conduct of infinite wisdom is, in the whole frame, and all the steps thereof. O this great thing, that men's distance therefrom does only keep them from being dazzled; where their ignorance is the great let why they do not more wonder at it! This is indeed far above nature, that without a divine illumination it cannot be known, or understood: yet we must say, so much is brought forth and discovered, that those who have only report, and thence give some ordinary assent thereto, cannot have their reason and judgment in exercise without some such conviction upon their souls, that surely this is a contrivance above humane reach, and worthy of the great God; yea, that here *in his way is most absolutely perfect*: and no sight can be like this, where we may see so excellent a correspondance

pendence between the foundation and superstructure, that the whole tract of the Gospel is but one intire and compleat mean for glorifying God, and does in this as the ultimate end resolve. Here men may see the greatness of his *power*, that unexpressible freedom of his *grace*, the holy severity of *justice*, all meet and joyn together in a sweet agreement; where both justice is salved and fully answered, and yet sinners saved; where mercy does rejoice over condemnation; vengeance is taken on our inventions, and the inventers escape. O strange! a redemption *without price* and absolutely free, as to sinners; yet all that a just God could exact, fully satisfied and told down! It is here we may rise and pursue this great thing up to the fountain-head, which is the sovereign pleasure of God, and is the internal impulsive cause; and thence follow it down to that infinite satisfaction of the Mediator, which is the great meritorious cause! And here we may see, how marvelously well ordered all the steps of this way are, all the parts of this contrivance; how the elect are *made meet for the inheritance, through sanctification of the Spirit*; how *faith* hath its special concurrence and instrumentality, without prejudice to the absolute freedom of *grace*, since it is freely given to believe; how those excellent means are by a most strait connection linked with the eternal counsel of God, and in a most beautiful order joined one with another! Here does sanctification flow from an eternal decree, and like an excellent stream doth run down through time, until it lose it self (to say so) in that great deep of everlasting blessedness! Yea, thus the purpose of the Lord runs under the ground, concerning his people, until it break out at last in their heart, by their answering the call of the Gospel! O how stately a peice of work this is! And is not *his way perfect* therein, where you may see that grand plot of the Devil

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Devil to undo man, break upon himself, and by the seed of the woman, his head crushed! where so glorious a fabrick is raised out of so great a ruin, and poor man established by his fall! where the glory of the sovereign God, the freedom of grace, and man's blessedness, do at once meet together! where the cure is as broad and large as the wound, and the restoration made to answer to every piece of that ruin: I mean, not only in man's being ransomed from eternal wrath, but that the enmity should be killed and taken away, and such a marvellous change of his nature by the renewing of the Spirit, which even here restores him in part to that he lost! It is on this blessed contrivance we may see men brought under a constraint by irresistible grace, yet without violence; their reason further raised and refined, yet not broken, and its true liberty not taken away, but restored; yea, a notable consistency betwixt moral perswasive arguments and the efficacious power of grace; betwixt men's planting and watering in the use of means, and the alone increase thereof from the Lord; betwixt a physical and moral concurrence in producing one and the same effect; betwixt those two desires in prayer, *Da (Domine) quod jubes, et jube quod vis.* Is there not likewise here a most excellent suitability and congruity, betwixt repentance and remission of sins, without prejudice to the freedom of grace; since he gives repentance, as well as requires it, and makes his people what he would have them to be! O how marvellous a contrivance is this, where the blessed Majesty of God finds an argument in himself, when man had none wherewith to plead; was found in the form of a servant, and became our nearest Kinsman, to redeem the inheritance: where his people's standing is ensured by another surety and strength, than their own; not on their apprehending, but their being apprehended: where

where the Lord do's oblige himself by bond, to make that good which is only of grace, and is most freely given: where he both frames the desire within the soul, and satisfies it! I shall only add, it is here the *redeem'd* having nothing in themselves to *boast*; and the *reprobate* none but themselves to *challenge*; for on whomsoever that door is shut, they have therein actively concurred, to draw a bar for shutting themselves out.

4. I shall offer one instance more, wherein this great truth may be demonstrated to the world (that the way of the Lord is perfect, that his works are done in judgment, yea that he do's all things well) with respect to that *marvellous order of nature, and disposal of the works of God under the sun*: how unexpressible well all are fitted for some use, & directed to their proper end. This is indeed a truth, wherein the greatest Atheists may see this piece of the Scripture convincingly verified, wherein God comes so near, that men may *feel after him.* (Acts. 17. 27.) that it may be said, there is no way to shift this discovery, but to stop their ears, and shut their eyes. O what a wonderful disposal may be seen, even in the *commonest* things, with a mutual subserviency to each other! and in this great variety and throng of the creatures, is it not obvious how each hath its voice and speech, to give us something of instruction; and every thing hath some matter of wonder in it, that we may say, it is hard to be an Atheist! There must be a strange violenting of their light, where the *invisible God* comes so near, to make himself known by *things visible*, and by so marvellous a conduct and ordering thereof, shew's unto the sons of men, *he do's all things well.* Oh, may it not be said, we cease to wonder, because every day we live and converse amongst wonders! Now it is here the world hath a demonstration of the Scripture, that they dare not debate, lest they should deny sense, as well as reason; & if any will question

question the glorious former of all things, why things are thus ordered and disposed, let him but retire within himself and he'll find the want and defect is truly within, which he would challenge in the way of the Lord. May we not see with astonishment this frame and composure of the universe, how each thing doth answer its part, and to the conservation of the whole; how amidst a great contrariety an excellent concord is manifest, in all its different parts, natures and dispositions! I must truly say, not only duty, but delight and pleasure may call men to this study; yea, even to lose themselves, as it were, in so sweet a labyrinth, where it is more easie to enter, than to find an out-let; and all things do witness, even to men's senses, the truth of the Scripture. It is sad, we have so choice and true a history every day to read, of the *works of God*, which are not in themselves greater, than that wisdom is by which they are ordered; and yet should be for the most part as a sealed book. But it is not here in a *general* this truth can be reached; O will you *come and see!* Consider the *work of the Lord*, and you must also see it is *perfect*, and *his ways are judgment*, yea, that *he hath done all things well*. Do but consider this stupendous frame of the universe, a fabrick that in all its parts is most exactly joyned, and nothing in it defective or out of order. Here you may see that great Minister of nature, the *sun*, with what advantage it is placed and fitted to dispense its light and refreshing influences to the earth; is it not with such wisdom, that to move in a higher or lower orb would not thus answer the advantage of things below! with what a constant motion do's it travel betwixt the tropicks, to fulfil its annual course; and in diverse parts do's successively arise, that by turns it may give the several parts of the earth a visit! should we cease to wonder at the rising and setting thereof, because it is so frequently seen! O may not this

this arrest our thoughts with astonishment, with what wisdom it is made subservient, all along its course, to cause Summer and Winter, Spring and Harvest! Yea, how its approaches and withdrawals are gradual, that by its ascent in the spring it may dispose our bodies for the summer, and by its descent in such a degree in the harvest may prepare and fit us for the Winter, that there should not be an immediate bordering betwixt these extremes! Is not its correspondence also manifest, that it hath with things here below; which does not only reach the surface of the earth, but the most inward bowels & secret caverns thereof? For its power is known on minerals as well as plants. Is it not also evident, that this glorious body of the *moon*, though of a lesser glory than the other, is for another use than for men to gaze thereon? how it keeps them from groaping in utter darkness through the night, and lights a candle to the world, when the sun is gone down, which by its withdrawing does so far discover the glory of the moon and stars, that its brightness did vail and darken; its influence is known also upon the sea, upon seeds and plants, yea, upon the humours and complexion of men's bodies. O what innumerable employments are those, by which it is made continually subservient to the world! And do you not see, how the *night* hath its special use, and is well ordered as well as the day; yea, that it hath its peculiar beauty; & by its darkness doth commend the light, and makes its approach more sweet and desirable? This gives the labouring world some time for repose, and most observably answers man's weariness, and necessity of such a rest, with so fit a season, that we may say, it but draws a curtain about us for that end, and doth thus retire the earth and put it in a sweet and silent composure from the noise and hurryings of the day. Yea, does not every *evening* solemnly warn men of their approaching *death*, and the swift passing away

way of time, that they may have no excuse for being surpris'd in this great change, who have so grave, so frequent a monitor, to speak of it to them? But let us a little further follow this choice enquiry and search of nature, which is so clear a witness to the Scripture; and you may see, how marvellous these various motions of the heavens are, the position of the stars and constellations, where each hath its own proper course, yet all carried about to one general and common end, to shew there must be a first mover, who is not subject to motion or change, but does manifestly determine all these.-----O strange! How does this great body of the earth hang upon nothing! that a thing so vast and ponderous should lean upon the air, as on a foundation! Must there not be here a piece of art above humane reach; how thus it does keep its center, & rests thereupon; & is it not clear, how steady the axis of the earth is, & perpetually parallel with it self, that it cannot tumble this of that way? What a marvellous order is also seen in those higher motions of the celestial bodies? of which some are slow, others more rapid; some tend to the east, others towards the west; & yet from these, though thus cross to other, there results a singular harmony, in which the conservation of the World & production of things here below are concern'd, which could not so well have answered this; without such a variety in their courses. It is true, the Lord might have made every day a year's length, & caus'd the sun to keep its course from east to west so long: but O how well are all these things order'd, & that thus he doth divide our life in such short stages, to make us more frequently mind our change! We see likewise how marvellously the earth is fram'd in its various parts and proportions, and the singular advantage it hath both in its posture and figure; the mountains and high places do not mar its beauty, nor want their use, where the beasts have a

shelter provided; and is not nature likewise more display'd and laid open to men by the plains and vallies, which are to the earth a special ornament? How manifold is the use of the air, which fills up that vast space betwixt the heavens and earth, and is so fit a medium for correspondence betwixt the higher and lower world? It is here the birds find use for their wings; thorough this the rains find an easy passage; this does interveen betwixt the sun and the earth, yet is no let to the communication either of light or heat, but its scorching is thus qualified by that sweet cool breathing of the air. Is not the singular use and advantage of the winds also known? And how these are both directed and bounded, so that men can neither cause a storm, nor a calm, at their pleasure. And O can you look on the sea, and not wonder, what marvellous things are there! how it is shut up with gates and bars, and hath its appointed bounds, without which there could be no reason why a bank of sand should restrain the great Ocean from breaking forth. Its manifold use and advantage is also known: would any wish, that the whole earth were dry land? and O strange that this not only is made passable, but by that art of navigation become a more easy way for transport and commerce, by which cities and countries are made to flourish! Do you not see that regular course it keeps in its ebbings and flowings, the singular use and subservience of the tides; so that when men are difficulted in an inquiry about the natural cause of these, they cannot but observe the special end and advantage thereof? May we not with wonder also see, how those parts of the world, which have the most scorching day and greatest heat, have usually the longest night, to qualify it with such a cooling moisture? How these countries, which have no rain, as Egypt, have

have some supply thereof by an overflowing of the rivers? Do you see, any members either of men, or beasts, *superfluous*, and wanting an use? or is there any *poison*, but hath some peculiar *antidote* provided? yea, the most hurtful creatures, as Serpents and Vipers, are found of singular use in medicine, against their own hurt, as the oyle of Scorpions is against the sting thereof. You see, the *poor* people have medicinal waters provided *without money*; & it is a notable remark, which is certainly known, of one who inclosed some such *well* in his ground, that he might put an *impost* thereon, had it taken away and run dry on his hand. What a marvellous use is there of natural *antipathies* and *sympathies*, whereon the operation of medicine, the special improvement of navigation, by making use of the *load-stone*, doth so much depend? You see how the *harvest* gives a large compensation for the toil of the *spring*; and do not the poor man's *labours* through the day make his *bed soft* in the evening, and his rest sweet unto him? You see that correspondence the *heavens* keep with the *earth* in those sweet refreshing *showers*, by which its seminal virtue is drawn forth, and thus the rain doth moisten what the heat would scorch: you may see how it is distill'd and drop't down, not in violent streams, but as it were through a small sieve, or otherwise it would hurt, more than help: you would not desire to want rain, nor yet to have it perpetual, and thus it is ordered. Are not the vapours exhaled from the earth, that by refreshing showers they may return thither again? O how manifold are the works of the Lord! And in what wisdom hath he done them all!—Is not the pain and travel of the *beasts*, in bringing forth their young, proportioned to their condition, and to that longing they have? Job 39. 3. *They bow themselves, and bring forth their young, and cast forth their sorrows.* And as their time and duration is for most part

part shorter than man's, is not their *growth* also suted thereto? You see, men have their lodging furnished ere they come into the World, the breasts are provided, and by a wonderful instinct they are taught to seek after the same. It is known how the *want of bearing* or *sight* useth some other way to be recompenced with some special natural *sagacity*: Yea, a want and defect in some *parts* of the body is oft supplied with a greater *agility* in some other members thereof; which is known in many remarkable instances; such as that woman in this country, not long since, who had no *arms* from her birth, but could with no less dexterity make use of her right *foot* for all the uses of her hand. You see how the beasts have some natural *defence*, and are taught self-preservation; and what the hare and hinde wants of the lion's paw and strength, is made up oft by a more swift foot; what an advantageous *antipathy* there is amongst the beasts, lest the earth should be overrun with those which are hurtful; the dog fitted by a strange tendency of its kind, to pursue the wolf and the fox, and the cat for destroying of rats. You see how the oxen are tamed to endure the yoke, and brought under discipline, whose strength is above many of the wild beasts. Are not those things that are most absolutely *necessary*, most *easie* likewise to be had? and whilst there is such a variety of *labour* and *toil* does attend the lot of man here, doth not the earth also afford a variety of *delights*? You see, the *birds* need no instructor to build their nests, and chuse a fit place, nor do thy mistake their seasons: yea, do not these sweet Musicians by their natural melody call men to praise, whose debt is much above theirs? Is there not a marvellous *coalition* betwixt the *grass* and the *tree*, which exceeds humane art, if nature did not so wonderfully co-operate therein, and in the inoculating a small bud into a stock? and O that wonderful

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encrease, that follows the seed thrown into the ground! how it dies and rots there, that it may rise with the greater lustre and advantage; and by such a significant emblem teach men the certainty of the raising of their bodies. For it's sure, the ordinary things of nature are great and convincing Hieroglyphicks, to hold forth more divine things, if we could but read them. Do you not see what *veins* of coals and other minerals go through the earth? whence it is furnished and hath fit materials for daily use, and for an improvement of men's faculties? Is not the *earth watered* by an *intercourse* which springs and rivers hath with the sea? And what some parts of the world want, is it not in other things supplied; that *every country* hath almost some *peculiar advantages*? It is known, how the coldest places of the earth, do most abound with the warmest furs. You see the beasts want not their table: and is not the lilly well clothed? Doth the *grass* of the ground want its use? Yea, is not the very colour thereof notably suited for men's eyes? What cause of wonder is there of the different forms, the virtues and variety of *plants*; You see, the little *ants* have their magazine and storehouse; the *bees* want not some order and government; yea, no human skill can frame such work as theirs is. But, O *Man!* what a curious and exquisite fabrick is that which did come in amongst the last of the creation, but as the *greatest wonder* thereof, a most rare piece of work, of a strange various and subtle composition, in which there is so notable an harmony made up of many contraries! I think, those who would learn Atheism, are not only concern'd to stifle their reason, but to shut their eyes from looking on themselves and the frame of their bodies, which is so *curiously wrought* with nerves, sinews and veins, with such a variety of parts, and yet not one bone or Muscle superfluous. (9)

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THE FOURTH ARGUMENT

I shall here offer to prove the Scriptures accomplishment, is this, *That whereof the most part, as to those special predictions and promises that concern the Church, is fulfilled, and hath now taken place in their appointed times, which we may at this day clearly read in the event, and but a little part thereof now remaineth to be made out, must be a sure truth.* But the Scripture is thus fulfilled, and the prophecies thereof now made legible in the history of providence, and in the works of God about his Church. Therefore, &c.

I would premise here some few things, ere I speak particularly to this argument.

1. Though the Scripture is thus wonderfully suited by the Lord, and taketh place in *every* generation, as if it were alone directed to *that* time; yet it is also clear, that a *special part* thereof hath its *proper accomplishment* in those ages and periods of time, to which it doth in a *peculiar* way relate: some part of it, which did concern the times of the *Old Testament*, some that doth also answer to the times of the *Gospel*, and a part of it which hath a *peculiar respect* to these latter days, which the Lord is now bringing forth, and we wait for a more full accomplishment, that it is on a near approach.

2. It is also sure, that the *whole work* of God, and his providence about his Church here in the World, which was perfect from the beginning, and before him from eternity, is comprehended under the *written word*; where the Lord hath fully revealed his mind and counsel about every event and concernment of the Church; though we oft be in the dark, in finding out the same, but the event will in due time speak for it self, which should cause us until then with

with much sobriety to pass our judgment on some of those truths, that are not yet fulfilled.

3. It is clear, that the Prophets of old did not only foretel such great changes and revolutions, as were to go over the Church's head, and declare the certainty thereof, but we find these prophecies oft point at the *times and periods of time*, whereto they did relate; and though sometimes in dark terms, yet did clearly shew that there was a certain prefixed time, and not at every time could they have their performance.

4. We should consider how the full *accomplishing of the Scripture*, and the *perfecting the Lord's work* about his Church, will be at once, and doth keep pace together, and then shall a *full and satisfying discovery* of God's way and providence and all that he hath been doing in the World, clearly break forth, when the *great mystery of God* in his written word is *finished*, and the Church so near to land.

That I may speak a little to so grave a subject, I would lay down these two things to be considered.

1. *How much* of the Scripture, and predictions thereof, may be *now* seen clearly *verified* in the event.

2. What doth yet *remain* to have an accomplishment in these last times; by which we may certainly judge, how near the Lord's work about his Church is to a *close*. Under the first I shall point at some of those most concerning events and changes, which the Church hath met with, wherein we may see what of the Scripture may at this day be read in the history of providence, and is certainly fulfilled.

The *first* thing to be considered, is,---
WHAT IS ALREADY ACCOMPLISHED.

I. Let us go back to those first times after the fall; and see that *dreadful stroke*, which came upon the old World

World by the flood, after an universal defection from God, and we shall there find the fulfilling of that which *Noah*, that great *Preacher of righteousness*, had oft foretold, and of those threatenings which by *Moses* were there recorded: Wherein it may be very manifest, (1.) That this truth, besides Divine authority, no records of *ancient Times* (no antiquity) could ever *contradict*; yea, some of the eldest writers do clearly *witness* something of an universal *deluge* over the earth, with the strange *preservation* of some from it, however they were in the dark as to many circumstances of it. *Josephus* doth cite *Berosus* the Caldean about this, who without doubt had then some of those oldest records true and uncorrupt. *Eusebius* also doth mention some fragments of *Abidenus*, and *Appollidorus*, which in his time were extant, clearly pointing at the flood, and at *Noah* under the name of *Ziuthrus*, with his sending out of birds to see if the waters were asswaged.---(2.) There is nothing here doth *contradict reason*, how this might be brought about, even in the way of ordinary natural causes, which the Lord did make use of for that end. For we find, *the windows of Heaven were opened*, the air being condensed into clouds, and their retentive power loosed, these great floodgates were thus set open; which falling not in drops, but all in a full body, like the spouts and cataracts of the *West-Indies*, might soon overwhelm, the earth with abundance of water; while those *fountains also of the great deep* beneath were broken up, which was not only the Ocean let forth to go over its banks, but an universal vent to all the veins of the earth, and that great mass of waters which is in the bowels thereof, which from beneath meeting those that were from above, may give men a clear and rational account how such a thing might be.---(3.) This piece of the Scripture is most *congruous* and agreeable to the whole, and the great

great *scope* and *drift* of the same. For it points out an *universal desolation*, and an *universal stroke* meeting together : it leads us forward to *Christ*, of whom the *ark* was an excellent shadow, and of that salvation which in and by him the Church hath from eternal wrath : and is a very manifest pledge and sign of that *last destruction* of the World, which though not in that manner, yet shall once surely be, and find men in such a condition, as this flood found them into in the days of *Noah*.

(9) II. What we find expressly threatned by the Lord (*Gen. 11. 7.*) as a stroke and judgment upon men for their ambition and pride, *The confounding of their languages*, is it not also most clearly verified and writ forth to the view of the world in the event ? that whilst men cannot deny or debate a thing which is so conspicuous and undeniable, they must also see a fulfilling of the Scripture, and that there was a divine hand in this strange stroke ; which may be a convincing refutation of Atheism, if such do not willingly shut their eyes at these clear evidences.-----
 (1.) That it is sure, there is such a *confusion* and variety of *languages* in the earth *at this day* ; whence it is *divided*, one part thereof so much rent from another, commerce and correspondence thus made difficult, and a bar drawn betwixt nations, by a different speech. And do not the most ancient records of the world witness the same to have been in former ages ?---(2.) It is also sure, that *no tradition* or humane history, but the Scripture only, gives us an *account* of this strange thing how it should be, or whence its true rise is ; yea, those who have writ most of other things, yet can give no reason why they write in one language more than in another, but that it is proper to their country ; where they had their education. But how the race of men, who have such

a community in other things, should be thus divided, is indeed a mystery, which divine truth can only unvail and shew its meaning.--(3.) It is sure, there is no language one more than another, that is *natural* to men, but what *instituted* is acquired, whether by long continued *use* as children doth their mother tongue, or by set rules. It is true, *Adam* who was the first man, had his by some extraordinary infusion : but it is found a pitiful fancy alledged by some, that young children, who have never heard speech, and have been thus kept at a distance, would speak the first language of the world, and consequently *Hebrew* ; for the contrary of this is certainly prov'd.--(4.) Is not this *confusion* and diversity of languages, which is in the world, a *most strange* and *marvellous* thing, which in no ordinary way, yea not without something of a miracle, could be brought about, and to no continuance of time or invention of men can be attributed, if we consider these things.--(1.) It is clear, that if man can be traced back to some *original* and beginning, there must then have been some *one* language, whilst the world was but in a family ; so that if you will admit the truth of the creation, you may see it was not so at the beginning.--(2.) Is it not undeniable, that men could not *chuse* so great a plague and judgment on themselves, if they had any use of reason ? which would divide betwixt them and the greater part of mankind, hinder trade and mutual interchange with other countrys, either in exporting or importing most necessary commodities ; that which also would obstruct humane knowledge, and the discovery of those excellent inventions and experiments of other places ; yea, give man, whose days are so few, such a sore toyl and labour to acquire but a few of those many different languages, which are in the world.--(3.) Is it not also clear, that this is above human reach, which men cannot judge, *how* in an
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ordinary way such *different* languages could have been *found out*, and afterwards acquired by the body of nations, yea, how there should be such an *agreement* in this amongst a vast multitude of different tempers and capacities. For it is obvious, there should have then been an inventing of those first radical languages; I mean these that are not dependant upon, or interwoven one with another, but are wholly different as *Greek, Latin, &c.*: And therewith such a vast *Dictionary*, of words with their significations, and rules to enjoin them in sentences, must have necessarily been framed, and abandoning also and turning off of some former language, so far as to the bringing of it in oblivion: yea, would the universal consent and concurrence of the multitude in such places be required? I confess, this were not so strange, if such a difference betwixt Languages were but in some peculiar mode or propriety of phrases, and alteration of words according to the various tempers, and climates of the earth: but we may see what different languages there are, wholly independant on one another, not only in original words, but in the very whole frame and bulk, which can be no compound of other languages, as many of our modern tongues are, which does truly state the case in such a manner, that the Scripture only can resolve how this should be; yea, it is known, besides many branches, mixtures and variations of languages, which through continuance of time, thro' conquest and mingling of nations together, are in the World, there is also a vast number of those that may be on clearest ground judged *original* and *mother-tongues*, of which (whatever lesser variation there hath been by the adding of some new words, or the quitting of old, yet the whole bulk does remain intire.--(4) What a strange and marvellous thing must this be, if we consider that most of *ancient maternal* languages were *previ-*

ous to the use of *letters*, whence rules or a method could be conveyed from one to another, if it had been only some humane invention? For we may know from surest antiquity, how long it was ere several nations reached a further way to communicate knowledge, and represent their conceptions, than by speech and a vocal tradition, or some significant symbols or Hieroglyphicks, which were then much in use to supply the want of letters. Is it not known how little either by pen or printing hath been discovered to the World, but of such late time, as is from clearest histories written to us? Thence we find very little of the *Greek* language upon record before *Homer's* time. Now may not this clearly demonstrate, that in an ordinary way these languages could not then have been acquired? --- (5) It may be very convincing, what the Scripture about this holds forth, that by these *different* languages, nations and families were at first *divided*, *Genes. 11.* yea, that this was the first rise of bounding one of them from another, for which the World could never give another cause. Thus did the Lord inclose his Church in *Israel*; and by this diversity of languages did out-law the rest of the earth; for *there* was that venerable first language of the *Hebrew* kept up, by which these sacred oracles of the Old Testament were made known. I shall further add. Is not a divine hand eminently seen in this? that so great a bar, which for so long a time was betwixt the Church and the world, should not only at last be taken off, but such a *curse* turn'd into a *blessing*; that the power of God and his very immediate work in spreading the light amongst so many people of a *strange language*, might now under the gospel be more conspicuous, that once such an interdiction hath been served on the world thereby, to shut the nations out from the Church: for we may say, there hath been as signal a miracle in the *gift of tongues*

tongues under the New Testament, as there was formerly in the *confusion* thereof. (9)

III. What we have expressly promised in the word of the *Church's delivery from Egypt*, and was foretold by *Joseph* at his death, that *God would surely bring back his People out of that land*, for which he left his bones to lie unburied as a pledge thereof, hath now many ages past been fulfilled. It is long since that remarkable day, when God made a way for his People through the red sea, and his power known upon *Pharaoh*, and the *Egyptians*; since *Moses* with the Church did sing that triumphant song, *The horse and his rider be hath cast in the sea*. Wherein these things are most clear,---

1. That this was a deed *known and publick in the time*; which was not done in a corner, but in the view of the World, and before all the Children of *Israel*, and by them attested, and with greatest carefulness transmitted to their children, and by these to the following generations, as a thing never to be forgotten.

2. Was testified by *Moses*, so great a person, and *eye witness* thereof; one whom even the most ancient of heathen writers do mention with much respect, and in this did never challenge his testimony, though a matter of fact, and of that moment, which all the nations about could not but know, and both in the present and after-ages have the remembrance thereof kept up; so that they might easily refute such a thing, if false. And we may judge, the *Egyptians* and many others could want no good will to put disgrace on a People, they so much hated, nor be ignorant of that which *Moses* published in his own time; to whose works some of the ancientest heathen writers do shew they have been no strangers.

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3. A truth, which by *Moses* was put in record, and this delivered to the *Jews* to be kept by them and their children in all succeeding ages: a record, which they did so narrowly look to, and had in that reverence and esteem, that all the *syllables* and letters thereof were by them *numbered*, lest in the smallest point it should be wronged; yea, were more careful to preserve it than any nation can be of their most concerning rights, and charters.

4. A thing, whereof the *remembrance* was yearly from that time *celebrated* by the Jewish Church: whence the institution of the *passover* had its rise; that deliverance being as a sign and sacramental pledge of that *great salvation* by him who is our true *passover*.

IV. What is held forth in the Scripture concerning the *more full growth of the Jewish Church*; that *Judah* should enjoy a *Scepter*, which was foretold by dying *Jacob*; and promised once and again to *Abraham* by the Lord, that *his seed* should be as the *sand of the sea*, and enjoy *Canaan* for an inheritance; hath it not long since been fulfilled? Wherein these things are clear,---

1. That for many ages *Israel* did enjoy that land in a most *flourishing* condition; which doth in part appear from those very ruins and desolations, over which they have so long lamented, the glory of *Jerusalem*, and the *Temple* once so famous, which causeth such reverence amongst them to the very rubbish thereof at this day.

2. That they were once a *people by themselves*, who were not mingled with the Nations but kept at a distance, by their *Religion* and *Laws*, from

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the rest of the World, as a *peculiar people to the Lord* is a Thing undeniable.

3. That whilst *they* enjoyed it, there was a singular blessing of *fruitfulness* thereon above other places; so as that small piece of ground was enough for an innumerable multitude of inhabitants; but the same is now at this day a barren land, an extraordinary curse no less seen thereon, than the blessing was in former times.

4. It is also evident, that something in the *way*, and *carriage of this people*, even in their low wandering condition, doth discover they have not forgot what *once* they were, nor their former grandeur and flourishing, but still keep *by themselves*, with some respect to their own land, which their fathers did enjoy.

V. That piece of the Scripture, which did concern the *declining times of the Church under the Old Testament*, what *Jeremiah* foretold of the *Babylonish Captivity*, hath now many ages since been fulfilled: a truth, which we have attested by sacred history, an history which doth clearly justify itself and its authority by such convincing marks thereof, that we may say those who do seriously converse with the word, cannot take up Atheism without the laying down of reason, and putting a Force upon their own light.

Now as to this particular prophecy we would but seriously consider,---

1. That which *Jeremiah* did foretell about the *captivity*, was not its accomplishment put on record in a book of the Church's *lamentations*? Where this truth may be read in her tears; and truly such as ever knew grief in a high measure, may easily know what is there exprest, to be sad earnest, and read the lively motions of an afflicted case herein. And besides

sides hath not this been witnessed to after-ages by a visible monument, even the destruction of the *Temple*, that great and excellent work, which tho' after rebuilt did never attain its former splendor.

2. This was a matter of fact of *great note*, and *famous in the time*, done in the view of all the nations, a considerable piece of the *Babylonish conquest*; yea, that testimony the Scripture beareth to the same, was it not a few ages after made publick to other parts of the world by the *Septuagint translation*, so that it had been easy for *Ptolemy* or any in that time to have discovered the fallhood of a thing so lately done: yet, those times, nor the most professed enemies to the Church therein, could not in the least contradict the same.

3. Though much of *humane History*, and those records of ancient times that we now have, are both corrupt and defective, yet there wants not some *consent*, from the *surest of these*, to many of the most observable things that we have of the history of the *old testament*; and as to the certainty of this truth, besides its own authority, we shall find some of these oldest Writers, *Berosus*, *Herodot*, and *Xenophon*, give some light to the same, whose witness the Atheist cannot challenge; yea, is it not clear that *Josephus*, not only from sacred history, but from these old records and fragments of former times, which were then extant (tho' since have been much lost) composed his *Jewish antiquities*, which give so particular a relation of this truth.

VI. What was foretold by *Daniel* concerning the *rise and fall of the Monarchies*, and change of those great Empires, which had been so sore a rod upon the Church, hath it not many ages past had a most punctual performance? It is now long since that great *Image* shewed to the Prophet in a vision, hath been

brought down and broken, so that scarce the *toes* thereof do now remain : which, besides the Scripture, may be clearly demonstrated upon other rational grounds.

1. It's being granted, that the Prophecy of *Daniel* was translated in *Greek*, and laid up in that great library of *Alexandria*, long before much of it was fulfilled, before *Antiochus Epiphanes*, and the rising of the *Roman Empire*, of which *Porphyrius* could not be ignorant, though all he could answer to that evident agreement betwixt his Prophecie and the event was, that it must have been writ after these things were accomplished ; whilst it is clear, that a part of the Prophecy of *Daniel*, which concerned the *fourth Monarchy*, was not even in his times fully made out, yea we must say, something thereof doth reach to the last end of time.

2. It is also undeniable, that in these great revolutions of the Monarchies there is a discernable consent and harmony betwixt the Scripture, and these ancient records, which we yet have of those times : so that not only the things themselves, but some of the most observable circumstances thereof, which are particularly mentioned by *Daniel*, we may read in *Xenophon*, *Herodot*, and *Diodorus Siculus*.

3. It must also be granted, that some things which in *Daniel's* Prophecie would seem most strange and improbable, such as *Belshazzar's* death in that very night the hand writing was shewed to him, may be particularly understood in *Xenophon's* history ; how *Cyrus* took the advantage of the *Babylonian* security, whilst they were in the midst of a solemn Feast, and by diverting the channel of *Euphrates* did enter the city without opposition ; also how that great horn of the high goat was so suddenly broken, and the coming up of four in his room, which by *Daniel* are expounded

expounded of the *Grecian Monarchy*, and] the dividing of that Empire after *Alexander's* death, is it not punctually held forth by all the histories of that time ?

4. Was there not a very convincing appearance of a divine hand, both in the rise and fall of these Monarchies, and an extraordinary providence which we cannot but see, when we read these histories, that surely something above ordinary means and second causes was both in *Cyrus's* conquest over the *Babylonians*, and the marvellous swift progress and success of *Alexander* against the *Persians*.

VII. That which was the great scope of all Prophecies under the Old Testament, *The coming of the Messias*, is surely verified, and now many ages past hath had an accomplishment. *The Lord is come unto his Temple*, even he whose day *Abraham* and the Saints under the law did long after : this was the most happy and notable crisis, that ever the Church was under, the great Epocha and period of time, from which she doth now reckon. We know, this is no fable, or cunning device of man, that God was manifested in the flesh, did make his abode for some time in the earth, suffered at *Jerusalem* in the view of the World, before many witnesses, did arise from death on the third day, was seen and known by his Disciples thereafter, and having finished the work for which he came, was received up again into glory.

This is indeed a great truth, which concerneth us no less to know, and be sure of, than our soul is worth, and our interest through eternity : the fulfilling whereof, besides the authority of sacred writ, the witness and records of the Evangelists and Apostles of *Jesus Christ*, who testify what they certainly knew, is a truth which from such convincing rational grounds

grounds may be demonstrated, that the greatest height of Atheism knoweth not how to state it self in a direct opposition to the same. And truly in this, we may say, the Lord hath so tendered the strengthening of his people's faith and their encouragement, that as it is the most concerning *promises* of the Scripture, on which our whole hope and blessedness depends, so is it also most clear and conspicuous in the event. I shall but only touch this, whereof so much hath been said by others.

1. It is undeniable, the *Messias* was to come : to whom all the *sacrifices* under the Law, those ancient types and shadows, did clearly point ; to whom the *Prophets* bear witness ; and it was the faith of the ancient *Jewish* Church, of which promise they were *persuaded*, even whilst they saw it but a far off, yea, did *embrace* it and repose themselves thereon. And is there not a most clear and exact portraiture drawn forth under the Old Testament, of the *Messias* ; what an one he should be, and by what peculiar characters he should be known, who was to be revealed to Israel ?

2. The *special season*, and period of time, wherein Christ should come, we find prefixed and shewed to the ancient Church : which, though under some figurative expressions seemed then dark, yet was so far revealed, that upon diligent a search and enquiry, and particular collation of the times, it might be easy to discern the *Messiah's* coming and near approach. Of which *salvation* the *Prophets* did enquire, 1 *Pet.* 1. 10. And truly the fall of the Monarchies, and right understanding of *Daniel's* weeks, were sure and solid grounds for a clear computation. Thence was it, that so general an expectation of the *Messias* was among the *Jews*, at that very time when he came ; so as divers impostors did arise, whom the People were ready to follow ; and
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we see with what amazement the Pharisees did inquire at *John* the Baptist, if he were the Christ, or not ; yea, *Josephus* sheweth how the persuasion of this did most excite that People to war with the *Romans* from the prophecies they had in holy writ, that from *Judea* should about that time come he who was to be Emperor of the World.

3. It is also sure, there was such an one, who in the days of *Tiberius*, and under the reign of *Herod*, was made manifest to Israel : and came with no outward shew and observation, but did great and marvellous things before all the People ; was crucified at *Jerusalem*, under *Pontius Pilate* ; and notwithstanding the ignominy of his death, was after adored, and followed, both by many of the *Jews* and the *Gentiles* ; whose doctrine did also in short time spread through the World : a truth, which the greatest adversaries of the Gospel have ever confessed, and do attest the history thereof, *de facto*, to be a faithful relation. Not only *Jews*, but the heathen writers, *Suetonius*, *Tacitus*, and *Plinius* the younger, that lived near, and some of them contemporary with the Times of the Apostles, do witness that this *JESUS*, whom the Christians worship, did truly suffer in the time of *Pilate's* jurisdiction over the *Jews*.

4. Is it not clear, how this appearance of *Christ* to the World did exactly fall in with the very time, foretold by the *Prophets* therefor ? Was not *Jacob's* prophecy thus accomplished ? For until that time it is clear, the royal line of *David's* house did not cease, until *Herod* a stranger came to reign, by whom it was utterly cut off. And it is manifest, those 70 weeks mentioned by *Daniel*, must be understood of years ; else they could admit no other sense : which reckoning from the decree given out by *Cyrus*, to rebuild the temple, are 490 Years, and doth answer
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to the very time of Christ being in the World, and his death, which necessarily falls in the last of these weeks, a thing so manifest, that *Porphyrius* an avowed enemy to the Christian Religion, could have no answer, but that this prophecy had been devised after the event: which I am sure, the Jews, though as direct adversaries, would be loath to admit.

5. It is most clear, that *in him*, who at that time was revealed to Israel and whom the Christian Church doth this day worship, was *exactly accomplished* whatever was by the *Prophets* told concerning the *Messias*. And it is no small advantage for the Christian cause, that it needs but appeal to those records, which have been kept in the hands of her adversaries, where there is so clear a portraiture of him held forth, as to his person, his way of coming, the place whence, the entertainment he should have, and his death, that I must think it a contradiction to reason, men should acknowledge the *Old Testament*, and not grant the *New*; since it is clear, the *Jews*, look for no other *Messias*, than such an one as is held out by the *Prophets*, and they acknowledge also the divine authority of *Isaiab*, *Daniel*, *Micah* *Malachi*, &c. who do by such clear marks point him forth, and shew the Church how they should know him when he cometh. For truly it may thence appear, that it is not more certain, the *Messias* should come, than that *Jesus Christ* is he. I would but seriously ask, what do the Jews this day miss in our blessed Lord *Jesus*, which the *Old Testament* alloweth them to expect in the *Messias*? Is it that he came not with outward shew and glory? sure, according to the *Scripture*, such an one we ought not to acknowledge; no, should he not be the seed of the woman (*Gen. 2.*) who should be born of a virgin, as, *Isaiab* sheweth: his voice not heard in the streets; despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows?

sorrows? Such an one, as was shadowed out under the Law, who should be made a sacrifice for sin; yea, come with no outward pomp, but meek and lowly, and riding upon an ass, was to be betrayed, and sold (and his price shewed by *Zachariah*) for 30 pieces; a crucified dying Christ, that should be wounded in the house of his friends, and cut off from amongst the children of his People! O! can men possibly deny so clear an accomplishment of these in our blessed Lord?

6. Is it not undeniable, that the *Jews* now, in their present case, cannot possibly expect the accomplishment of this promise; that the *Messias* cannot this day come, according to the *Scripture*, except they could be put in such a condition, as they were in then at Christ's coming? Certainly it is impossible, that the *Old Testament* be ever fulfilled about this, if it be not already. Can he come forth out of *Bethlehem*, whilst now no such place is known by that name? Can he come into his *Temple*, that is utterly destroyed? Is there not now a subversion of the Tribes, and the family of *David* not known at this day? Yea, are not the gentiles brought in, whom *Isaiab* sheweth should be gathered under the standard of the *Messias*? Doth not the daily sacrifice cease? which, the Jews will confess, hath been so for many ages; and this was to be after his coming. And I would ask, how was that ever fulfilled, that the glory of the second *Temple* should exceed the glory of the first? for this cannot be on the account of its structure, or outward magnificence; sure there is nothing, wherein this glory could appear, but as it points at Christ, and the breaking out of that glorious light, which was before its destruction.

7. There is an innumerable company, who have embraced the *Gospel*, and received the spirit by the ministry thereof, since the times of the *Apostles*, who have

have put this seal thereto in all ages, that it is *the power and wisdom of God*. And truly without partial respect (which the consciences of the worst of men have been forced to justify) it may be said, these were *the excellent of the earth* in their time: many of greatest outward parts and abilities, whose moral integrity and candour was beyond question even with their adversaries; and these both of Jews and Gentiles, of all ranks of men, of all nations and languages; who not only by a naked profession, but by their walk and sufferings did shew forth the power and virtue of a *crucified Christ*; yea, *shine as lights* whilst they were in the World, to the conviction of spectators. And is not this a convincing witness to the truth of the Gospel, which its enemies cannot possibly deny?

8. That excellent *doctrine*, delivered to the Church in the New Testament, by Christ and his Apostles, doth it not clearly shew whence it is, and witness its own authority? For here we may see a manifest agreement betwixt this and the doctrine of the ancient Jewish Church; that as the five Books of *Moses* hold forth the sum of the Gospel, the Covenant of grace, and that mystery of Salvation by *Christ*, so the Prophets do carry it on with further clearness, and the Evangelists bring it forward: like an excellent edifice that is founded and advanced in the one, but perfected in the other: all breathing the same spirit, with a convincing tendency to the same end. So that we may say the old *Jews* under the Law were in effect *Christians*, and the followers of *Christ* now under the Gospel in some respect are *Jews*; being one in the substantial of their religion. For it is clear, that poor Apostate people now of the *Jewish* nation hath wholly departed from their own doctrine, and *will not come to the light*, that they may be judged according to the Old Testament.

Testament. Now in this I would seriously attest the adversaries of the Gospel, if *paganism*, the *Turks* Alcoran, or *Jewish* Talmud hold forth any such doctrine or rule as that which the *Christian* Religion doth! such pure, and excellent precepts, to restrain the inordinacy of corrupt affection, backed with arguments becoming an immortal soul; a doctrine so sincere, solid, and rational, so consistent with it self, and agreeable to the true scope and drift thereof, which holds forth the most exquisite rule of perfection, for men to press after; yea, where every page and line breatheth forth holiness towards God, and righteousness and humanity towards man!

9. I shall add, those clear convincing evidences of the truth of the Gospel, which did attend the *first publishing* thereof were so manifest and undeniable a seal from the Lord, as may force the greatest Atheist to silence. For,--(1.) They were *Jews* as much concerned in the Religion of their Fathers as any, who did *first* publish the Gospel; none more zealous according to the Law, than *Paul* was before his conversion; none also could challenge their driving an outward interest hereby, since persecution and bonds, yea, greatest hazard was that which they must expect.---(2.) It is clear, they walked by *no* rule of *human* policy, nor those ordinary ways of *insinuation* which the World doth use, to engage men, and make a party to themselves: but did deliver the *truth*, truth most repugnant to the flesh and its interests, with greatest *candour* and *simplicity*, though likewise with a convincing *authority* and *confidence*; yea, came with a message to the World, which had no other convoy, or persuading argument, but the evidence of its own truth, yet withal such a *power* accompanying the same, before which men could not stand.--(3.) *What is published concerning Christ* by the Evangelists, the great works he did,

did, his dying at Jerusalem with all the stupendous circumstances thereof and signs from Heaven, was not a thing done in a corner, but in the publick view of men, which in those days was most known and famous: but yet there cannot be produced one *contradictory* testimony, to the truth of these relations, by any adversary of the Gospel, either at that time, or since. Sure the World wanted no malice, and these great things were early published by the Evangelists and Apostles, whilest much of that generation was alive; yet it is clear, though in a matter of that concernment, which made then so great a noise, and was at that time putting the earth all in a flame, none was found either among Jews or gentiles, who could or durst put forth a manifesto, to discover the least cheat or falshood in those things attested in the History of the Gospel.---(4.) Whatever different parties and sects did break out with the first time of the Church, to oppose the truth in other things, yet in this they had all one consent, that he who was crucified at Jerusalem, was the *Messias*, and *Christ*. Which truly did witness the clear irresistible manifestation of this truth in those times; since, if there could have been the least ground to challenge any imposture or deceit in this great foundation of the Christian faith, it is more than probable, those bitter contentions, followed with such animosity and heat and irritation, of those whom the Apostles and Church in that time did with much zeal and sharpest censures pursue, would have engaged them, to put all the disgrace upon the truth, which they could, if they might have had where to fasten their teeth. I would further add, that even the arguments and objections, which the adversaries of the Gospel could ever bring, to oppose the same, are indeed a convincing witness and confirmation, and shew how little they could any way say, in giving their malice a vent. We find that

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that absurd allegation of the Jews, that the great works Christ did in the days of his flesh, were by stealing the name *JEHOVAH* out of the temple, which they alledge he sewed up in his thigh: which truly needeth no further refutation but the reciting thereof. And here they are even forced to witness the truth of those relations held forth by the Evangelists, as to the matter of fact, which we find also these later Atheists, such as *Vanninus*, *Cardan*, &c. dare not challenge or debate: only they would ascribe these great works which Christ then wrought, to the influence of the stars; a challenge so absurd, that needs no other answer but to relate it.

VIII. We have that remarkable Prophecy of the *incoming of the Gentiles*, a truth indeed great and marvellous, which is expressly held forth in the Old Testament (*Is. 54. 1, 2. Is. 60. 3, 9.*) is a thing so clearly now written forth in the event, that I am sure, the greatest Atheists can have no shift here; but must own that in this strange work of God about his Church, the Scripture hath an undeniable accomplishment. Now to clear this let us but consider,---

I. That for many ages this truth about the incalcing of the gentiles was sealed up in a prophecy, a thing so great and astonishing to the ancient Jewish Church, that they could not well comprehend the same, until once the event brought it forth. For this was indeed a mystery hid from ages, how the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, of the same body, and Partakers of the promise in Christ; when the bounds and extent of the Church did not exceed *Judea*, that small inclosure, whilest the whole World beside did lie buried, like an outfield, in dark Paganism. For it is well known, that the most pleasant places of *Africa*, *Asia*, and *Europe*, where afterwards many famous Churches

Churches were; within these 1600 years was but a savage wilderness: *Britain, Germany and France*, did then worship the sun and stars, they sacrificed to the Gods of the heathens; yea, those eastern parts on which the sun did first rise, did not then know the *God of Israel*: a truth, which not only the Roman and Grecian Histories, but the records of particular Nations can clearly attest.

2. It is clear, that this prophecy was not held forth only in general; but we find the *time* also prefixed (with other special circumstances) when it should have its accomplishment, *at the appearing of the Messiah*. He should be revealed to *Israel*; before which time a bar was drawn in the way of the Nations, and a wall of partition betwix them and the Church, until he should hold forth an ensign to the People, and gather the Gentiles under his standard; which *Isaiah* doth clearly shew, *Is. II. 10. and 34. 1, 2, and 60. 1 &c.* And then must the mountains flow down at his presence, Nations be born at once; yea, the light break forth to the East and the West: then should the Children of the desolate be more than of the married wife, when this time even the set time for the gentiles is once come. And it may be very conveniently which is most observable, that notwithstanding in a more flourishing condition of the Jewish Church in former ages, when her grandeur and prosperity was more tempting, and the neighbourhood and commerce which the Nations about had with this people, yea, though by the captivity they were fostered among the *Persians and Babylonians*; yet was there no such stir or change of the World, until the appointed time once came.

3. It may be easy to prove the event of this prophecy, and its manifest accomplishment, even at the time thereof. For this men cannot deny, that

that the Lord did visit the Gentiles with the knowledge of his truth: Which then caused such a change in the earth, as a great part of it hath been brought from heathenish idolatry, to worship the *God of Israel*; and such who once were strangers and aliens, now made to profess the same faith (as to the substance thereof) of the ancient Jewish Church. Sure this truth needs not want a witness, whilst Nations and much of the known World have been for so long a time, and yet to this day are, a visible proof thereof; a truth of such concernment, that in former ages made a great and stupendous change upon the face of the earth, so that not only an innumerable company out of all Nations and languages, but the generality, the very complex body of Kingdoms and Nations can bear Witness thereto. And now the Gospel hath been preached through much of the World; yea, we may say, there are few parts thereof, where there hath not been some face of a Church: Though the promise hath not yet had it's full accomplishment, but we wait for (according to the Scripture) a more flourishing time, and great harvest among the Nations, when *Israel shall be gathered* however, it is sure, the Lord hath in a great part fulfilled this his promise, so that the Church might then with astonishment cry out, *Who hath begotten all these Children! Who are these that see as a cloud, like the doves to their Windows!* O blessed day, in which the light did first break forth on the poor offspring of *Japhet*, who then dwelt in the shadow and region of death! O blest day, that brought salvation with it to the Gentiles, wherein the Lord did visit these dark places of the earth, which were full of the habitations of cruelty. I think, the sense of so great a mercy should never let us want an errand for giving thanks, yea, put much to silence our other complaints.

4. It is not only as to the time, but those very places of the earth, which *Esaias* & other of the Prophets did particularly point at, this promise had an exact accomplishment? For it is this day manifest, as to the *Isles*, which we find so frequently mentioned, that these should wait for his Law, & the uttermost parts of the earth, whence he should bring the Daughter of his dispersed, we may get a clear commentary upon the same, from what the Lord hath done to *Britain* and *Ireland*, with other remote parts of the earth: yea, have not *Ethiopians* been made to stretch out their hands even in those sun-burnt places of *Africa*? Hath not Christ also had a conquest, where many a black-moor was through grace made as the snow of *Salmon*, and the feathers of a dove? So that it is clear, how these particular places, which were so oft pointed at by the Prophets, have been visited by the Gospel, and fallen to the share of the Church.

5. This change, which by the incoming of the gentiles to the Church was wrought upon the Earth, is a thing so great and astonishing, that were it still in the promise, and this not yet fulfilled, it would truly stagger our Faith, how such a thing should ever come to pass: and is there not here a miracle, that that the World cannot possibly deny? (Even this great work of God in bringing in of the gentiles, which without an extraordinary power, could not be effected) if men will consider--(First) That swift progress which then the Gospel had: how it did run, and was glorified, through the furthest parts of the earth, and like lightning break forth from one place to another; so that in the Apostles time, the Scripture doth shew, how most of the conspicuous Provinces of *Asia* had received the Gospel; and *Tertulian* who lived in the second Century (in his Book *contra Judaeos*) doth there witness how many nations, and these most remote from other, *Parthians*, *Medes*,

Medes, *Armenia*, *Phrygia*, *Cappadocia*, *Pontus*, and *Pamphilia*, with much of *Egypt*, and diverse parts of *Africa*, besides *Rome*, *Spain*, and other places of *Europe*, were in his time almost wholly Christian. For it is indeed clear, that the bounds of the Church was then of a larger extent, than it is now at this day.--(2.) It is also undeniable, that in this solemn day of the Gospel's spreading amongst the nations, suffering and persecution did all that time attend the Church; yea, in such a measure, that as the writers of those times do witness, neither famine, pestilence, nor the sword did destroy so many of the World, as then were of Christians in the two first centuries put to death for adhering to the truth: and it is clear, that this great work of God, in such a swift spreading of the Church, was most discernable in those times of hottest persecution; yea, then was her most effectual growth and increase, which upon her getting some rest, and beginning to flourish with external peace, was at a visible stand.--(3.) How marvellous a thing was this, to be brought about, if we consider the many different languages, that did then stop Correspondence between the Church and the rest of the Earth. For how could the truth thus spread among the nations, yea, in such remote places of the World Churches be planted by the Apostles, and have the Scripture translated, and made legible to them, without that extraordinary Gift of Tongues, which for that end was then given from the Lord? Sure, beside sacred authority in this matter, reason may convincingly witness to the World the truth of such a miracle.--(4.) How strange & wonderful a change was this, that in so short a time the Gospel should thus enlighten and put such a lustre on the most rude and savage places of the earth, where scarce humanity had been, and bring them from the condition of beasts, to be men; should thus tame and civilize

civilize the greatest Barbarians, and cause the lion to ly down with the lamb, yea, by the preaching of that Gospel, and of a crucified Christ, which as it was to the Jews a stumbling block, so to the Greeks foolishness!

And in a word, was not this indeed a miracle, how in a matter of such high concernment as that wherein mens souls and everlasting interest lay, they should be turned off from their old way and religion, in which they and their Fathers had been so long rooted; and that a little spark which did break out in Judea, should bring down the idols of the nations, and burn up their temples!

Alas, that there is so little of a large heart, of that primitive zeal and fervour this day among Christians for the enlargement of the Church! that such merchants are now rare, who would venture out to trade with other parts, for this excellent ware, *the merchandise whereof is better than of gold!* O that in these parts where the truth is known and professed the Lord would raise up men of such a spirit, & such a Magistrate, who would make it their work, and lay down solid grounds how to advance the Kingdom of Christ in the dark places of the earth, and reckon their interest in a foreign plantation upon the account of the Gospel, no less than on the account of trade! we would pray, and yet hope for this.

IX. What we find foretold by Daniel, yea, by Christ himself, about the destruction of Jerusalem, and ceasing of the Jewish daily sacrifice, with the rejection of that people, (*Dan. 12. 11. Math. 24. 2.*) hath many ages ago come to pass, wherein the World may see how clearly the event doth answer this Prophecy. For it is manifest,

1. That this is a truth which doth need no other witness; than the scattered remnant and desolate ruins

ruins of that once flourishing Church and nation of the Jews, which we see with our eyes at this day whose present state is so great a monument of divine judgment, so clear a witness to the Scripture, that I think men cannot look thereon, if they be in any measure serious, but must have such a conviction.

2. What hath befallen this people, may it not be an astonishment to the World in all succeeding ages! A stroke, that hath put them in a more sad condition than any nation or people we ever yet heard of! that cast them out of their own land, and scattered them as vagabonds through the earth, so that these many ages they have had no scepter nor law-giver, no piece of the earth they can call their own, but at the mercy and arbitrary disposal of every place they reside in; no privilege, or liberties, but a naked permission to possess their lives and estates during the pleasure of those under whom they get shelter! A people put by themselves with a visible mark of divine wrath upon them, like a beacon set up for all the nations to look on, even these who were once eminently owned of the Lord, who was known in their palaces for a refuge! yea, it is very manifest, that no stir or essay that ever they made for their relief, but was still to their further ruin, and found God's hand visibly cross to them therein! Sure, *Ammianus Marcellinus*, a heathen writer, did intend no testimony to the Christian cause in relating that strange passage, which near his time fell out how the Jews by Julian's warrant and permission did attempt to build the Temple again, but a fire breaking out from the foundation thereof, which destroyed many of the workmen, forced them with much terror to desist.

3. Must it not be some strange and dreadful provocation, beyond the sin of their forefathers, whereat so strange and unusual a stroke doth point? Would it is clear, that notwithstanding frequent

latry, and departing from God, when they were at that height in wickedness as to offer up their children to Moloch, and set up altars in the groves, to reject the message of the Prophets, and thrust some of them in a dungeon; yet were only punished with 70 years captivity and after by God's very immediate hand brought again, those who had taken them captive concurring with them to re-build the Temple: But now how long and dark hath their night been, since this judgment came on them! and though they could not these many ages charge themselves with Idolatry, yet no Saviour or Deliverer hath been raised up, no Prophet sent forth, no sign or appearance at this day of relief, now for these 1600 years; yea, amidst these frequent changes & revolutions, that have been in the World, no change in their condition! Sure, if that people were in speaking terms with their consciences, this might put them to a strange demurr, what should be the cause, if they be not guilty of killing the Messias, and that blood pursuing them; what atrocious provocation beyond others they can instance in, for which the Lord doth so long and so sorely, by such an unusual and unheard of stroke, thus contend.

4. What a marvellous concurrence of providences, and convincing appearance of a divine hand, was in this judgment, the besieging of Jerusalem by the Romans falling in with the very time of the passover; whilst so great a confluence of people from all parts of the land were there on that account, that both sword and famine might contribute their help to destroy! What unreasonable and astonishing obstinacy against all offers of peace, and the most pressing insinuations thereof, which Titus Vespasian made, even whilst their ruin was otherwise inevitable! An unheard of strife, where the enemy did contend to save, but they to undo themselves! How judicially hard-

dened under most remarkable prodigies and warnings, which they had of that approaching desolation; divided wholly amongst themselves, yea, so cruel one upon another within, that their adversary without could not but look thereon with compassion! O what a stroke was this, wherein greatest Atheists would grant a fatality! For indeed men cannot consider the same without acknowledging a divine hand, and something above ordinary means and causes, where all did thus meet together in a solemn conspiracy to accomplish that people's ruin.

5. But it is here we may see a singular providence of God for his Church, that those who of all the World are most violent enemies to the Christian truth, are also a most convincing witness to the same. Whilst (first) these do clearly attest the Scripture which is our alone charter, the divine authority of Moses and the Prophets, the true copies whereof they did most tenderly preserve, what ever absurd glosses some of their Rabbies have thereon; yea, durst never offer in the least to vitiate the original, but have had the same transmitted, still from one age to another; to which records, that are this day in their hand, the Christian Church can with much confidence appeal, & demonstrate from the Old Testament the undoubted truth of the New. Yea, in this we may appeal the Atheist to his conscience, that the Scripture is no imposture, or any cunning device of Christians, which is so far witnessed even by the greatest adversary and maligners of the Christian Religion. (2.) That strange induration of the Jews, their unreasonable rejecting of the truth, who after so long a time cannot see the cause, which is most discernable in their stroke. O is not this also a most convincing seal to the Scripture, and clear fulfilling thereof, there is a veil over their mind, as the Apostle sheweth, whilst they read the Law, judicially smitten by the Lord with blindness that

that they cannot see until once this veil be taken off? And truly we may say, there is nothing in their judgment more strange and astonishing, than such a continued *obstinacy* against the truth; how they should be thus dark in the noon-day, but that herein the Scripture is fulfilled; so that we may even turn a poison into an antidote!

X. That which is so expressly foretold in the New Testament, yea, as the great drift of the Prophecies thereof, *The coming of Antichrist, and revealing of the man of sin to the World* (2. Thess. 2. 3, 4, 7, 8, 9.) hath long since been accomplished; wherein, we may say, the wonderful corresponding of the event with the prophecy is so clear, that this truth is now as plain and obvious, as once it was dark to the Church; these things being undeniable,---

I. How the Spirit of God in the Scripture hath been in a more than ordinary way *particular*, to point *Antichrist* forth by such notorious *marks* and *characters*, that after-ages may know him, if they will not shut their eyes. I confess, it is not strange, the *popish* party should seal up the Scripture, and forbid the ordinary reading of it, since the breaking forth of that light would soon make their Kingdom dark. For if men would but set the history of the Church, since the times of the Apostles, over against the Scripture, and make use of that notable key for opening the prophecies of the New Testament, it should be then easy to know, the *Antichrist is surely come*, and *who* this is; and herein doth the Lord's tender respect to his Church appear, that he doth not only in a very solemn manner forewarn men about this great trial, and as it were by the sound of a trumpet give an alarm, that such an adversary was coming, yea, of the time thereof, who would do more hurt, than all who had gone before, but doth also make
so

to clear a discovery of the whole fabrick, rise, and progress of that party, with such particular circumstances and differencing characters from any other enemy of the Church, as may render the World most inexcusable, if they will needs dash on that rock, whereon the Scripture hath set so conspicuous a beacon.

2. That this Prophecy should now want an accomplishment, or *Antichrist* be yet to come, is a thing most *repugnant* to sacred truth: since it is sure, that *mystery of iniquity* even in the times of the *Apostles* did begin to work; and what then for a time withheld his coming, the *heathen* Empire of *Rome*, hath long since been taken out of the way; which caused some Christians in those days to wish the standing and continuance of that Empire! from the terror they had of that adversary, who according to the word the y knew was to fill his room. Yea, do we not find, the Churches trial from *Antichrist* should be the *most sore* and *lasting* trial of the Church under the New Testament? which after her begun breathing from *heathenish* persecution, was to continue for many ages, wherein the word is most express and clear, that the rise and fall of this enemy should be gradual, and not at once; whose beginning and first appearance might be traced to the first times of the Church, and his close and final ruin near the second coming of Christ, *by the brightness whereof he shall be destroyed!* And therefore this is so much the subject of the Prophecies of the New Testament, the great intent and scope of the Revelation of *John*, in which the true state of the Christian Church, with the various changes of her condition, even from the opening of the *first seal* to the blowing of the *last trumpet*, is particularly held forth; and there may we all along trace the steps of the rise and fall of that *man of sin*.

3. That such an one as the Scripture points forth, doth most fully answer to all those marks which are there given of *Antichrist*, hath come, and been revealed to the World, is a thing so very manifest, that except men will needs force their light and conscience; it cannot but be beyond question and debate; even such an one whose coming should be after the working of Satan with all power, signs, and hying wonders, forbidding to marry, and to abstain from meats which God had appointed, who sitteth in the temple of God, having a name full of blasphemy, and doth exalt himself above all that is called God, who bewitcheth the Kings and great men of the earth with his enchantments; yea, that even by his livery may he be known, he most usually hath scarlet and purple which I think truly marvellous, how particularly these are mentioned in the Scripture; and in a word, such an one whose traffick, and merchandize, is not only gold and silver, but the souls of men; who should be drunk with the blood of the Saints and Martyrs of Jesus Christ; under whose reign the Church must flee to the wilderness, and there be latent for a long time; and his seat, that City which is situate upon seven hills, even that great city which doth rule over the Kings of the earth. O strange, how men can acknowledge this for the Scripture of God, and yet not see it fulfilled before their eyes, that there is so lively an image and portraiture of *Antichrist* there held forth, such peculiar characters which do convincingly point at the *Pope*, and popish hierarchy; yea, could answer to no other adversary, which Christ ever had under the New Testament, either Pagan, or Mahometan: and yet so much of the World doth not know him when he is before their eyes!

4. It is clear, that no age since *Antichrist* was revealed, did altogether want some witnesses, to point him

him forth, even in the darkest times; many of whom loved not their lives unto the death, that they might seal this truth; & it may be a question, if more of the blood of the Saints was shed under heathens, than in after-times under *Antichrist*. Yea, though we had not such express marks to discover him, from the world, it may be easy for men to judge who that is, that is this day so directly opposite to Jesus Christ, and to the great design of the Gospel; that assumes to himself what is alone due to God, to forgive sin, and be worshipped with Religious adoration; that challenges a Magisterial power and supremacy over the whole Church, as its head, a stile too great for any of the Angels; who maketh void the merit of Christ, and layeth down a way of life and salvation, on the same terms that it stood in the Covenant of works, who doth destroy the great intent of the Gospel; and in effect, denieth Jesus Christ to have come in the flesh; who setteth Heaven upon sale for money, and permitteth none to perish and go to hell, but the poor, who doth dispense with grossest acts of sin, and the express commands of the Law-giver, maketh moral prohibitions void by his authority; yea, halloiweth the very stews, and most horrid acts of uncleanness; taketh on him to change the condition of the dead, and ensure to their friends the happy state of their souls, if they will make large offerings on that account. O! who is this, if not that *Antichrist*, whose way doth state him in such direct terms of opposition to Christ?

5. Have we not cause to wonder, no less at the strange induration and blindness of the popish party, than of the Jews, that whilst the one doth confess the Old Testament, and yet knoweth not Christ, the other should grant the truth of the New Testament, and not know *Antichrist*, that he is come, even he after whom a great part of the World for these many

ages hath been *wondering*? Sure, so clear an agreement betwixt this prophecy and the event may not only put this beyond debate, but leave a conviction upon the greatest Atheists, of the truth and divinity of the Scripture. For what ever former times might pretend ignorance, whilst this *Mystery* was but *working*, now when the *man of sin* hath come to his full height and stature, and is so clearly *revealed* by the light of the Gospel, is taketh away all excuse; and I profess, in these latter times, I cannot see how one can be a *knowing Papist*, and not an *Atheist* also.

(q) I know it is a fore judgment on men, who will not receive the *truth*, that the discovery thereof should be their *pain and torment*; and I am sure, whatever advantages of outward peace the followers of *Antichrist* have this day, they can have no sound sleep, whilst the light with that clearness doth shine, that they can neither stand before it, nor yet flee and escape, where their conscience will not follow. But O! here is the scripture evidently fulfilled, and their judgment far begun, as it is held forth in *Rev. 16.* that the greater discovery the light makes, the more they should rage, and in fury rise against it: for the heat of this cannot but *scorch*, where it doth not warm. There is no help, where God doth judicially harden men: no blindness, like that where they shut their eyes, and the righteous God makes it their plague by putting his seal to it. However, *wisdom* must be *justified of her children*; the truth cannot lose its errand, even when its effects are sad and judicial; for *it is a sweet savour to God in them who perish*. It is truly a sad sight, and there seems no accords to convince, where malice at the way of the Lord turns men mad, yea, cruel against themselves; but since the *Papish* Church do's not avowedly deny the scriptures, the divinity of the New-Testament and prophetes thereof (which

(which is the great advantage we require, to have its authority admitted, and their Religion brought to this test) which is the alone rule of all true Religion; and since they must grant that to be joined with *Antichrist*, or partaker in such a way, is most dreadful, and involves them under the greatest of judgments; for it is a matter of no less weight, than an eternal salvation, or damnation: yea since this concerns Ministers of the Gospel, as one special part of their work now in the last times, to bear witness against *Antichrist*, (that *great*, we must say the *greatest* adversary, which Christ ever had in the earth) to warn and pursue without ceasing, this call, whatever success it have, *that men would come out of Babylon*, and haste from under an approaching wrath and vengeance, which on some other ground, than appearance, we are sure, now makes haste; I would here in behalf of the truth offer some queries on this subject (besides any thing hath been already mentioned) and herein appeal the adversary to the Scripture of God, that great and uncontroverted judge & to their own conscience, yea to the sober & retired thoughts of such, who are under any awe or impression of a Deity, when they are alone with themselves, if this so remarkable a Prophecy, about the *Antichrist* & his coming, be not now clearly verified, that men may see him with their eyes, or else must shut them at such a sight.

1. Is there not a very full and particular discovery which the Scripture gives of this great *Adversary*, both in his rise & growth, his reign and fall; and not merely by a passing word: whom the Apostle, *2. Thes. 2. 3, 4.* points out by such peculiar marks; whom *John* do's describe and difference from all other *Antichrists*, that were only to be his forerunners, & shews him a more noted and principal adversary of Christ above others; yea, we have through the whole *Revelation* most clearly discovered, under different titles, what he should be, and what a sore and long trial the Christian

tian Church was to have under his reign. I profess, when I read the Scripture, and there see so express and clear a forewarning, which many ages before we have about the *coming* of this adversary, with such peculiar distinguishing circumstances and marks, as are at this day most exactly verified in the event, I am constrain'd to admire at so convincing and unanswerable a witness to the Scripture's divinity; and must think it strange, how men at such a rate can wrestle against the truth, except by getting a victory over their conscience, and putting the light in fetters, whilst they own these Prophecies of the New Testament to be of divine verity; which yet they so evidently distort, against the clear sense and meaning thereof; yea, do adventure such a commentary on the same, that manifestly destroys the text.

2. Can you possibly expect *Antichrist's coming* to the world *now* according to the Scripture, if he be *not already revealed*; when his forerunners were so many ages before, even in the times of the Apostles, to shew he was then coming? I must ask, if this adversary should this day begin to appear, could you judge this is he, or reconcile such a contradiction, how he is *now* breaking out, who was *beginning* to discover himself 1500 years ago? For it is so long since the Apostle shew'd, *this mystery of iniquity was working* (2 *Thess.* 2. 7.) which clearly points at *Antichrist*, who then was hatching, though not on such a growth and ascendant, as after; and could he be yet latent, yet in the bud? Hath there been no further advance, after so many ages? Hath this mystery yet not wrought it self above ground? O where hath he been? that such a *working* thing, so dreadful a spark could keep so many ages under ashes, and no flame, no fire perceived? For it is sure if he was then *at work*, he hath not yet ceased. Yea, if you admit the Scripture, is not the rising of the *Turkish Empire*,

Empire, in the order of the *trumpets*, clearly after the revealing of the *Antichrist*; and this horrid scourge held forth (Rev. 9. 20.) as a remarkable judgment from the Lord, on the *Christian* world, then turn'd *Antichristian*, for their idolatry, worshipping of images, &c. which was not brought into the Church till the *man of sin* was towards his height?

3. Is not this unanswerably manifest, that *he who did withhold*, and as a bar restrained *Antichrist's coming* for a time, cannot now be standing in the way? You see, the Scripture shews expressly there is a bar must be *removed*, and then should this *man of sin* be revealed and this cannot be doubted, but that some temporal power was hereby meant, which did then *forcibly withstand* (as the original word *κατεναν* imports.) For it is very clear, whilst the *Roman Empire* was *beaten*, he could not brook *Rome*, or as a Monarch have his seat in *that city with seven hills*; he could not then both *sit in the temple of God*, and have the *Kings of the earth* to give their power with consent to him. Now let me but appeal men to their reason and judgment, if any such bar could be yet standing, after so great, yea, such innumerable mutations and changes of the world. When, many ages since, there have been such various successions of States and Kingdoms, and a wearing out of greatest families, how could any temporal power be ever since the days of the Apostles a continued let in the way of the adversary?

4. This query I would seriously offer; if such a party can be found *this day*, to whom all the *marks* of *Antichrist* held forth by the Scripture, do truly agree, could you then deny that he is come; if so be you look for such an *Antichrist*, and under that cognifance, as the holy Ghost points him forth in the world? O will you be so much in earnest with your conscience, as to suffer the truth to come thus near, that you may impartially

tially judge what is there of the *Prophecies*, that concerns *Antichrist* coming in the world, which is not now verified in the *event* before your eyes; and admit the Scripture but judge therein, whether there is any such particular distinguishing badge and mark, held forth in that blessed record for his discovery, which does not convincingly quadrate with the *Pope*, and his followers.

5. I shall in this also appeal your conscience, if there be now or hath been under the new Testament an *other* party, or such an *adversary* to the Church of Christ, to whom these distinguishing characters of *Antichrist* could agree: such an one who should be no open adversary, but *sit in the temple of God* under the veil of a friend, with a shew of great *wonders and miracles*, and yet under that shew *exalt himself against God*. I know, you will deny that this hath a clear respect to the *Papish* party, or is justly applicable to them: but I am sure, if without a prejudicate byas you would seriously judge, and abstract from application, in this you could not deny an assent, that *such a party* (whoever he be) bears that great badge of *Antichrist*, in *exalting himself against God*? who, as a friend, doth assume those *titles* only due & competent to the glorious God, and to the Mediator, to be *Head and chief Doctōr* of the Catholick Church, and alledges her for *his spouse*, who challengeth an infinite power, by making use of that, *Mat. 28. 18. All power is given unto me, &c.* (which that book, intituled *Pontifical Ceremonies*, does assert *Lib. 1. fol. 36.* who assumes an authority to bind men's conscience by his law, and to free their conscience from those laws which are divine and unchangable; who appoints divine worship and adoration to creatures, by directing prayers to them; does subject the faith of the Church to the determination of a man, in which, as infallible, all must rest: is not that a dethroning of him

who

who is the great Prophet and teacher of his Church, yea, a making his authority void? Now, beside these distinguishing characters, which the Scripture, so expressly gives of *Antichrist*, are not these also so notorious and plain, that I think it strange how men can have their reason and judgment in exercise, and not know to whom they belong; I mean, *the forbidding of marriage*, and of *the use of meats*, which the Apostle holds forth, *1 Tim. 4. 3.* and in *Rev. 18. 13.* you have there a *merchandise with the souls of men*. And O can anybe in the dark, *who* these are, that have such a peculiar traffick with this ware, by redeeming souls for money, and making a sale of pardons and indulgences, which concern men's souls. I shall add that likewise *Rev. 9. 20. the worshiping of idols of gold and silver*: and herein crave the world to be judge, yea, can appeal to some of their own greatest writers, if this be not both the doctrine and the practice of the *Romish Church*, which one of the most learn'd among them does expressly assert, that the *images* of the *Trinity* are not set up for a shew, but for *Religious Adoration*. And is not this a most direct making void of the moral law? which so expressly forbids any worshipping of the invisible God under the *similitude of a corruptible man*; or under any visible representation.

6. Is not this foretold of *Antichrist*, what a *dominion* he should have over the *Kings* of the earth (*Rev. 17. 18.*) unto whom they should *agree*, and *give their power and Kingdoms*, to support his interest? Now if this be not convincingly verified, and hath been for many ages in the *Pope*, it is easy to judge: and I am sure, his followers would be loth to deny a thing, in which they so much boast. I confess, were it not thus foretold by the Scripture, we could not think it credible, how the *Kings* and great men of the earth should be in such a measure *bewitched*, to enslave themselves

themselves and their interest to that party, and yield to so strange a subjection under their yoke ; it seems so very irrational, yea, like an insatiation, since they cannot but see under what a terror he keeps them by his interdictions, by assuming a power to loose subjects from any tie to their Princes ; and thus binding and loosing their conscience at his pleasure, what interest he hath in their counsels, by that subtle device of auricular confession ; what intollerable homage and service he requires from Princes ; what vast treasure he draws for support of his Hierarchy, from those places where he hath power ; yea, what a visible tendency his actions have to promote a worldly interest, and make the great men of the earth dependent on him ; how easily he can dispense with the greatest breaches of the moral law, whilst most cruel and inexorable in any thing that interferes with his power and supremacy ; O how astonishing might this blind devoting of great men, both themselves and their power, to the support of such an interest be, if we had not a clear resolution from the Scripture, that this is *from the Lord*, who hath put it in their heart, and so far gives them up in his secret judgment !

7. I must ask, is not that a convincing witness to the Scripture, and a clear argument for the *Protestant reformed Church*, which you so much object against her, that *her condition* for so many ages hath been *low and abject*, and did so little appear, whilst the *Papish* interest was resplendent and flourishing ; For it is sure, such a long continued suffering, and latent condition of the Church under *Antichrist*, is expressly foretold, wherein the *witnesses* should be put to *prophecy in sackcloth*, and the poor woman (which is meant of the Church) put to *flee to the wilderness* and be there *hid*: so that you cannot say, the Church and followers of Christ have been more low in these worst and darkest times, than the word holds

holds her out to be. Yet, hath there been still a *succession*, and some witness for the truth, and the Church thus continued in all these times, which (as one excellently says) was like a fresh river that made her way through that horrid lake of Antichristianism, without mixing therewith, and at last did break out gloriously.

8. Is not the *Antichrist* in a special way pointed out in the Scripture, by some *proper mark* ? some *visible sign* and *cognisance*, which his *followers* should receive, for *differencing* them for any other party, *Rev. 13. 16*. Now in this I desire the World and commonest observers to judge, if those many strange *ceremonies* and *rites* of the *Romish Church*, their distinguishing signs and badges (which they so much own and indispensibly require, as visible characters of their profession, yea, are so peculiar to that party beyond others) do not convincingly quadrate with the Scripture herein, and most clearly verify the same in the event. The World knows, and the ordinary way and practice of these can witness, that frequent use (oh a most horrid, idolatrous abuse !) of the sign of the *cross* ; which not only in a special manner they take as a *differencing badge* of their party from others, by so frequent a crossing of their forehead and breast, and putting this as their mark on all they baptise, or receive by confirmation ; but do ascribe also to it an *efficative* and *operative* power, and as a charm or magical sign makes use of it to effect things supernatural, to restrain sin, drive away the Devil. For thus they conjure spirits, thus they wear it in their rings, and pendaries ; yea, is it not by them adored and worshipped, and made use of for the blessing and consecration of all other things : Sure, this can be no matter of debate, since it is so known and obvious, and that it is easy thus to discern a *Roman Catholick*, if he but avow
his

his profession, by such a visible sign, and find him but by his mark; which that party does pursue with greatest fervour, and thereby correspond and discover themselves one to another.

I shall further add, Is not this the *Antichrist*, whose name must be understood, and reckoned by the number thereof, which is the *number of a man*! *Rev. 13. 18.* It is true, this seems very dark and mysterious, and instead of a more clear discovery, might rather be judged a drawing a veil over this adversary: but since we have the Scriptures express call and warrant, to make a serious inquiry and search about its meaning, yea, does not only hold it forth as duty, but shews such a thing is attainable, and may be understood, I shall desire in humble sobriety, without peremptory asserting, to offer some few thoughts on this Scripture, both as to its meaning, and how clearly *the man of sin* is thus pointed out and his name made known by the number thereof: about which I humbly judge (and must therein crave liberty to differ from others, and those whose judgment I most highly respect) that this number (as it is here set down) is explicatory, and given as the very key to the Church, for opening the mystery of this name, and of that man of whom also it is the number; and thus shew's, it is not to be reckoned as the name of a single person, nor is it to be found by Arithmetical computation in the numeral letters of a man, but is the name of a *politick body*, a name which comprehends a plurality, such as those numerous orders and degrees of the *pontifical* Hierarchy are; and by such a scale, his number does remarkably ascend in so many degrees, until it terminate in a man, even in one absolute Monarch and universal Head, as the very *Summa totalis*, in whom that whole number resolves, and therefore it is *the number of a man*. Yea, by this reckoning, we may thus clearly

clearly know *what* a man that is; that as he cannot be known, if we take him alone, without respect to a politick body and the whole complex *Hierarchy*, of which number he is made up, as the constituent parts, we must also understand, by this computation, the *Antichrist*, with respect to a long continued series and succession, which here the Scripture shews to the Church: that he is not a single individual person only, or such a politick body, of many numerous degrees, resolving in one head, which should be but for an age, or of a short duration; but that he is an adversary who is to be continued, in a *numerous succession*, through a series of many ages. And thus may the man of sin and his name be understood, by this number, of which he is made up. Now in this, I humbly judge, the scope of the Scripture is clear, in setting down such a rule to count Antichrist by his number, and thus does prophetically obviate that great mistake, after-ages would fall into, and is to this day entertained, that this adversary is but one individual person, who should get up, and cause a remarkable Apostacy in the Church; therefore it is, that the World will not know this is he, when they see him before their eyes; not considering that such a numerous body and succession is contained in his name, from which he cannot be separate.

But for further clearing, I shall offer some few things to be seriously considered in his reckoning. (1) Here is a number, and plurality, by the Holy Ghost particularly set down, by which *Antichrist* must be known and counted: and the tie is so close betwixt him and his number, that both the man, and his name is formally made up thereof.---(2.) Here is a number which is not to be sought after by the subtle computations of *Arithmetic*, or any curious inquiry in the numeral letters of a man's name; since thus we cannot know the true use of Christian wisdom and

and prudence, which the Scripture requires; yea, it is clear, this way might answer several other names, as well as *Lateinos*, which could not in an ordinary way be determined, without a pretending to some extraordinary revelation and discovery. But here may be judged work for spiritual *wisdom*, to count this *number* of Antichrist, and his *name*, with respect to his nature, frame, and composition.---(3.) Here is such a *number*, which is all summed up in *one man*, and cannot otherways be counted or understood, but as it hath a respect to a single person, in a continued *succession*, wherein it resolves. Now, is there not such a *number*, to which the *Pope* stands as nearly related, as the total sum is to those degrees, and lesser numbers, of which it is made up? And here is *wisdom*, to join aright that *man of sin*, and his *number*, and there see how exactly they quadrate in the event, and each gives light to an other.---(4.) We find here a *large number*, wherein there is a plurality of many different degrees, rising one above other, and is therefore definitely expressed by so great a number as 666.---(5.) This is also a *number* (and herein there seems clear ground for such a remark) which is most *unite* and *compact*, with a close concatenation, a remarkable *order*, and rising from a lower to a higher degree, with a special subordination and dependance on other; yea, is thus knit, that one part comprehends the other; such as is most clear and obvious, in that subtle politick constitution of the *Romish* State, and that numerous *Hierarchy*, with which this definite number of 666 seems marvellously to quadrate: where by a scale of so many steps and degrees, you may follow up this number, as it were from six to sixty, &c. by Deans, Provincials, Generals of Orders, to Bishops, thence Archbishops, Primates, Patriarchs, Cardinals, until you find all resolve in one man; who is as straitly related to it, as

a *name* can be to so many *syllables*, whereof it is made up. I know, this may seem too curious an inquiry, and not so suiting the gravity and weight of the Scripture; but since the Spirit of God hath chose such a definite number before another, wherein there is so strange an order and quadration, to discover that adversary, and gives us such ground that his *number* points at his *frame* and composition, I think, without any challenge of unfobriety, such a remark very futable.---6. Whilst the Scripture shews, this is the *number of a man*, and of his *name*, does it not also shew, it is such a number that lies nearest *Antichrist*, and is most straitly related to him; and as the formal cause, does most specially concur in his constitution, yea, gives as it were life to that image? Now let it be seriously considered *what* this is, yea, whither that mystery of Antichristianism does not in a peculiar way lie in his *Supremacy*, and being *infallible* and the ultimate *judge* of controversies, which he claims as absolute *Head* of the Church universal, and that fountain whence all those degrees of power in the *Romish* Hierarchy do flow, and in whom they fully terminate. For it is clear, thence are all those gross tenets, and corruptions in doctrine. Thus he most directly *exalts himself against* God, and puts the Mediator off his throne: thus he does exercise authority over men's conscience; thus Antichristianism, and that avowed opposition to Jesus Christ, takes life, is nourished, and hath its strength, even under those wings of his absolute supremacy. Now if it be clear that this is the *number* which lies nearest to *Antichrist*, from which he can no ways be separated, and does most formally make up that *man of sin*, then by the exercise of Christian *wisdom* may that number, and its true meaning be thence understood.---(7.) Is not this such a *number*, that is peculiarly restricted, in a class by it self, which the 18th Ver. does shew, wherein that great Bulk of the

Romish Church is not to be fought? For though it is there clear, that such who receive the mark, and by some visible profession own the doctrine of the Romish Church, are of the largest extent, and therefore it is said, great and small, rich and poor, must come that length, yet as to the number of the beast, and of his name, it is expressed by its self, and as a higher class, in which all of the common rank who must receive the mark, do not fall: but as lying more close and near to Antichrist, is in a peculiar manner restricted by a distinguishing note; which a serious study of that Scripture will help to clear. (3)

XI. What was prophesied about the killing of the witnesses under Antichrist, (Rev. 11. 3, 7, 8.) we may see hath clearly come to pass, and at this day may receive the same in the event. For it is manifest,--

1. That during Antichrist's reign, even in the darkest times, there wanted not some to seal the truth, and bear witness thereto, both by open confession, and suffering on that account, which the Church-Histories can abundantly make out.

2. That during that dark night those who did give a testimony, and any way appeared against the grievous encroachments of Antichrist, in behalf of down-born truth, were put to prophecy in sackcloth, when there was nothing left, but to weep over the Church's ruins, and witness their detestation and grief for the growing Apostacy of such times.

3. It is clear, that as the prophecy doth point at some more remarkable suffering and persecution, which the Church was to meet with from Antichrist, beyond all it had endured from that adversary in former ages; yea, a special permission from the Lord to that party, to vent their rage and cruelty against the Saints, which should fall out after the witnesses finishing

ing their testimony, who had so long in an abject low condition, as in sackcloth, prophesied; yea, when Antichrist should be at his height, and his Kingdom upon the turn, that then must this remarkable killing of the witnesses be accomplished: so likewise did the event convincingly verify the same. For it is known that upon the close of Antichrist's reign, whilst the truth began to break out, this forest storm of persecution beyond all that had been before, did then break upon the Church, even in its budding forth, that we may say, that adversary did not only put forth the utmost of his power and rage against the Saints, but seemed in some measure to bring his cruel designs to pass; which the dreadful massacres in France, Provence, and the Valleys of Piemont, the fore and violent persecution of the Church thro' the Netherlands, under the Duke of Alva, and in England by Queen Mary, in Germany after the defeat of the Duke of Saxony, and Landgrave of Hesse, can clearly witness.

4. Is it not also clear, how this remarkable storm, and cutting down of the Saints, over whose dead bodies their adversaries did rejoice, was according to this prophecy to be previous to some eminent enlargement and reviving of the Church, which did accordingly fall out in the event, like a resurrection of the witnesses from the dead, to the astonishment of the World, that immediately followed upon the back thereof? so that when their enemies thought they had gained their end, as they did conclude by such persecutions, particularly that French massacre, that the Protestant interest should be quite ruined, they were yet forced to see their labour in vain, and the Church more eminently flourishing after the same.

I shall further add, that Antichrist hath not only been revealed, and his Kingdom come to its height: but it is clear this day, that it is on the falling hand, and

his ruin is now begun. Upon which account we may say, yea, have cause to sing, that *the winter is past, the fig-tree putteth forth her leaves, that sheweth the summer's approach*; yea, the *singing of birds is heard in our land*: let us go forth, and meet him, who is now gone out as a mighty man, for the salvation of his Church, and takes the fields against this great adversary of his truth and people, on whose side victory doth surely wait.

The second thing proposed, was to consider,-----
WHAT IS YET TO BE ACCOMPLISHED.

Having touched a little some of the most concerning prophecies of the Scripture, both in the New and Old Testament, which are *already fulfilled*, and the truth thereof so clearly written forth in the history of providence; that we may say, the most ordinary observers, if they will not shut their eyes, cannot want a conviction thereof: I shall now in the next place point at that which yet *remaineth* of the prophetic part of the Scripture, to be accomplished; those prophecies which concern the Church in these *last times*. Whereby we may have a sure demonstration, how *far the night is spent*, and of the near approach of that blessed day of the *liberty of the sons of God*: for this doth *finish the mystery of God*, and fully perfecteth his work, if once that which remaineth of the prophecies of the word were fulfilled.

There are those truths, the accomplishment whereof we have a sure warrant to expect *before the end*. As (1.) The full ruin, and downfall of *Babylon*. (2.) The conversion and incalling of the *Jews* to Jesus Christ. (3.) A solemn day of the Church's flourishing, both *Jews* and *Gentiles*, which shall follow the making out of the former promise. (4.) The fall

and destruction of the *Turkish Empire*, that cruel party who have been raised up and established for judgment, with whom the Lord shall yet reckon, for all that Christian blood by them so unjustly shed, as seemeth clearly held forth, *Rev. 16. 12.* (5.) We are also to expect, after all these, that full and last stroke upon *Gog* and *Magog*: and then *the Lord is at hand*, and that great *mystery* of the prophecies and promises of the Scripture shall then be *finished*, and at a blessed close.

I. We have *the full ruin and destruction of Antichrist and his Kingdom*, clearly prophesied, and in very express terms promised to the Church (*2 Thess. 2. 2, 8. Rev. 16. 10, and 17.*) the accomplishment whereof we do yet according to the Scripture wait for; which the God of truth, who cannot lie or repent, shall in due time assuredly bring about, and which approacheth when that solemn cry shall be heard, *Babylon is fallen!* about which we would consider,---

1. That this judgment is *already begun*, and the first step thereof visible is now clear; wherein men may see the event most exactly answer the prophecy. For the Lord hath begun to *consume Antichrist by the breath of his mouth*: and since the first breaking out of the light, his Kingdom hath been mouldering down before the Word. Have not Nations fallen off, at the voice of the preached Gospel? It is true, the Church wanteth not fore conflicts, even under the *Vials*: and it is the Lord's way, to try his People with such various uncertainties, that when things have been most promising, another providence cometh like a cross wave, which seemeth to drive them as far back, as once they seemed to be forward. Yet it is sure, and should be beyond debate, that Antichrist's overthrow is upon a present *advance*, and that work

work of the Lord for his Church's deliverance is going forward. For, if we believe salvation by Christ upon the warrant of the word, should we not also with much assurance believe that Antichrist's wound is deadly and incurable, which he hath got by the preaching of the Gospel, which all the Physicians of the earth shall never help.

2. This is one of the *greatest* and most *signal* acts of the judgment of God on his Church's enemies; one of the most eminent manifestations of his glory, which he hath reserved for *the last times*, wherein the appearance of his hand and great power shall be very manifest; and we are to expect by this remarkable stroke that way shall be made for that *glorious house*, which Christ is to have for himself in the latter days, which shall be built upon Antichrist's ruins, when that *new bride*, both of Jews and Gentiles, shall be prepared for the *marriage-supper of the Lamb*.

3. Though we are to expect, on clear ground from the word, *the Lord's eminent appearing by his immediate hand in this great work*, which shall be so convincing in that day, and witness an extraordinary providence, that all lookers-on must with fear and astonishment confess, that this is God's own work: yet it is also clear, that *he will therein make use of instruments*, fitted and chosen for that end, who shall be raised and acted forth with a more than ordinary Spirit, to execute the vengeance of the Lord, even *the judgment* written: amongst whom the *feeble* shall then be *strong*. Yea, we have ground to expect, that of the *Kings* of the earth, and the race and successors of those who in former times had *given their power to the Beast*, shall the Lord raise up, *to hate the whore, and make her desolate*. O blessed are they, who shall have a hand in so noble a work, to sack and destroy that accursed City, built up with the blood of the Saints and martyrs of Jesus Christ.

4. We

4. We are not to bound the Lord, as to any particular time for accomplishing this piece of his word: yet, we have clear ground to believe, that *Babylon's ruin maketh haste, and the day of the Lord upon her is near*; whose sword is bathed in Heaven, and that the instruments of his vengeance are making ready. One stroke upon that party is already past; Antichrist hath begun to fall before the word, and must fall further until that great stroke, which shall destroy his seat and lay waste that land, be accomplished. Some promising evidences of its near approach I would here point at. (1.) The many *prayers* of the saints, which are now before the throne, and cannot fail of a return. Many who wrestled oft with the Lord on this account, though they are gone, yet are their prayers on the file, and wait for this solemn manifestation of the judgment of God: and the *blood* of the Saints doth not cease to cry, yea, hath as loud a cry as ever.--(2.) It is clear, that the *preached Gospel* now since the light began to break forth, doth ripen and help to make the *harvest* more *white*, than many ages formerly. And truly, if we consider how long the word hath been founding a retreat to that party, to come out of *Babylon*, and that for these 150 years they have been still acting in opposition to so clear a light, to such a solemn call, so many warnings, yea, to such convincing discovery of the Lord's being against them in very remarkable providences, doth it not shew, at what an height their sin this day is, and an obstinate rejecting of cure?--(3.) We cannot but see how that judgment which should be poured forth on Antichrist under the *vials*, is in a great measure now verified in the event.--(4.) It is clear, and consonant to the Scripture, that the Lord's work is now *hastening* in the latter days, providence in a swift motion and making great advance, more quick changes in the case of the Church, both as to storms and calms,

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and her trials now must not be so long as in former time. *Rom. 9. 28. He will cut short his work in righteousness; for a short work will the Lord make in the earth.*---(5.) That *Antichrist* and his followers do this day seem to be at such an *advantage*; the Lord's work as it were at a stand, yea, rather going back. This late reviving of Antichristian Prelacy in *Britain* and *Ireland*, with so visible a growth of Popery there, and so dark an hour upon the reformed Churches abroad, I think, on very solid grounds, is a promising evidence of the near approach of a further stroke on that party. For it is clear, both from the word and God's ordinary way of procedure, how a sharp storm is usually *previous* to some remarkable enlargement of the Church; a very low ebb, before the turning of the tide; yea, that every step of her advance, whereby she hath gained ground on Antichrist, hath still had some conflict and wrestling going before: and thus the Lord, by suffering, doth ripen his People for such times of mercy. For which times, O let us pray and wait, when the smoke of that accursed City shall ascend up to Heaven, and his People be made to triumph in his praise, and sing that song, *Hallelujah! Salvation, glory, and honour to the Lord God, who hath judged the great whore! Rejoyce ever her, thou Heaven, and ye holy Apostles and Prophets: for God hath avenged you upon her.*

II. We have a clear prophecy about the *incalling of the Jews*, and their conversion to Christ in the latter days, held forth by the prophets, and in the New Testament very expressly mentioned; the fulfilling whereof the Church must yet wait for, and long after, when God shall bring again the captivity of his ancient People, and say to that valley of dry bones, *Live!* about which we would consider, *Isai. 11. 15. Rom. 11. 24. Rev. 16. 12.*

1. That

1. That this promise doth not only concern particular persons, or a few, but the *body and generality* of that people, is most clear from the Scripture, if men would compare *Isa. 11. 11. Zach. 12. 10. with Rom. 11. 25.* Where it is undeniable, that their gathering must be as full and remarkable, as their scattering: and as there is no nation so remote whither some of them are this day driven, that shall not hinder the fulfilling of the promise; but as *Isaiab* sheweth, *the Lord shall then assemble the dispersed and outcasts, and bring them back from the four corners of the earth, and furthest places thereof.* Yea, doth not the Apostle expressly shew, that it is *all Israel*, whereat this promise pointeth? For though they are enemies concerning the Gospel, yet are they beloved for the fathers sakes, because of the Covenant which was made with *Abraham* and his seed. And truly we have in this, ground also to expect something further than their conversion; that in this day the Lord shall raise up the tabernacle of *David* which is fallen, and plant them upon their own land, *Amos 9. 11, 15.* Not only bring them to a visible Church-state, but even therewith some temporal restitution and recollection of them as a Nation: yea, we may expect a return of the old blessing of that land's fruitfulness, which I think is clearly held forth in that of *Amos. 9. 14.* that the very hills shall drop down sweet wine, and melt as it were in outward blessings on them.

2. That this promise hath not yet had an accomplishment, is also clear from the Word. For it must follow the rejection of that People, and should not take place until the fulness of the gentiles be brought in: which harvest for many ages after was not to be reaped. Yea, did not the Apostle hold this forth as a mystery, a piece of the Scripture which the ancient Jewish Church could not well comprehend, when it

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was pointed at Prophets, and even at that time was not understood? Which surely could have been no *mystery*, if their conversion had reached no further than the Apostles time; and it is known, how small a number since of that People hath yet been brought into Christ.

3. We have much ground from the Scripture, that this day, this great day of *Jezreel*, shall be a very remarkable and solemn time: which will cause astonishment to the Nations round about, & make a wonderful change on the face of the earth; a time of God's eminent appearance for that People, when his singular respect shall be as manifest, as formerly his great displeasure and anger was; a time, on which many of the choicest mercies of the Church do certainly wait, the return of many prayers, a large pouring forth of the Spirit, even on the body of that People and on all ranks, not only the families of *David Nathan*, and *Levi*, but also the families of *Shimei*, with a large Dispensation of gifts; yea, such a time, wherein the converted of *Israel* shall then see and understand how far the glory of the second Temple doth exceed that of the first, and shall be a very conspicuous part of Christ's universal Kingdom, eminent for the power and purity of the ordinances, to which others shall look as to a most choice and excellent pattern of a purely reformed and glorious Church.

4. Beside the promise of him, who is not like man to lie, or the son of man, to repent, there want not some very convincing providences, to confirm our faith concerning this: if we consider how this People are still kept by themselves, amidst all their scatterings not mixt or incorporated with other Nations, which is most usual thro' long converse, that people of several parts of the earth will unite & join in one. Is not their great increase also remarkable? What great multitudes of them are in the eastern parts, yea, through most of

Asia,

Asia, Africa, and in those places of Europe where the Christian Church is? & all this time their land not possessed, but by a rabble of the *Turks*, under whose yoke they groan. And though the genealogies of particular families are at this day much lost, yet there is still so much sure and evident, as to the series and genealogy of the Nation, that doth difference them from any other People.

5. It is true, the authority of the word should silence all our thoughts how so great a thing shall be brought about: yet we may judge, that (as a mean) this shall eminently contribute to the same, such a convincing stroke upon *Antichrist* which must go before their conversion, wherein so manifest an appearance of God, and the fulfilling of one of the greatest promises of the New Testament, cannot but stare them in the face; and with this the taking away of that stumbling block of idolatry, which hath so long helpt to harden them against the profession of the Gospel.

I must shut up this with a sad regret that whilst we have so clear a promise, there is no more tender respect, and further essay to promote the good of that People. Who knoweth, what a blessing might attend the use of ordinary means? since this is an unquestionable duty, and men know not, when they sow the seed, whether this or that shall prosper, alas! that the usual deportment of *Christians*, with whom they converse, doth oft further help to heighten their prejudice against Christianity; let us long and pray more for this day, a day which shall bring so great a blessing with it to the gentiles.

III. There are many prophecies both in the Old and New Testament, that do clearly point at a great flourishing & prosperity in the days of the Gospel: which I humbly conceive, are not yet fully made out, but shall

shall have a more remarkable accomplishment before the close of time. *Isaiah 65. 25. Isaiah 66. 12. Mich. 4. 1, 2.*

I confess, the event will be the surest commentary; and until this appear, men should be sober and cautious, that they *darken not the counsel of God*, and his truth, with any wild fancy, and aim to be *wise above that which is written*: yet I must think, that there are *great things laid up* in these promises for the Church, that we cannot now well reach; yea, would scarce get believed, until the appointed time unvail their meaning. I shall here but only touch how it may appear these promises are *not yet fully accomplished*, and *what with a safe warrant* we may expect in their accomplishment. As to the *first*, we would consider these things,---

1. That these great promises, which hold forth so eminent an enlargement and flourishing of the Church, do also point at some *particular limited time*; some period and revolution of the Church's condition, which is not agreeable and common to other times; until which these promises do not take place.

2. This promised flourishing concerneth both *Jews and Gentiles*, and the word doth clearly point at some further encrease of the *gentile Church* by the calling of the *Jews*: which must have a peculiar respect to that solemn time of *Israel's restoration*, and *Antichrist's ruin*; a time, on which the return of many prayers, and the fulfilling of many promises in the behalf of the Church, do surely wait. So that as *Isaiah* and other of the Prophets do put over this great flourishing of the Church to the days of the Gospel, the Apostle *Rom. 11.* doth point at a more precise time, wherein this in a larger measure shall be made out.

3. We cannot find the *Christian Church did ever enjoy*

enjoy so great an enlargement and flourishing state as these *promises* seem to import. For persecution and suffering hath most been her lot, first from the *Jews*, next from her *heathen* adversaries, and last from *Antichrist*, whose fall and ruin, we have ground to expect, shall make room for so great an increase of the Church: for, how much power Antichrist hath, in so far is the Church kept under; yea; it is clear how very short all her breathings have been.

4. It would appear, so solemn a time of the Churches flourishing, whereat the *Prophets* did so oft point, as it hath an undoubted respect to the days of the *Gospel*, so in its full accomplishment must answer to that remarkable day of *Satan's binding* and the *Saints Reign with Christ*, when the *Kingdoms of the Earth become the Lord's*; which we find doth immediately precede *Satan's last losing*, and his going forth to gather his broken forces, for that *great battel*, which is to be very near the end.

I shall but add, we have ground to judge, the Lord will usher in that glorious everlasting state of the Church, even by some *preparative degrees* here: the *latter times* are there to be reckoned the more blessed, the more near they approach to the dawning of glory.

Now, in the *second* place, I shall but point at *some things*, which with a safe warrant we may understand and look after in the accomplishment of these promises.

It is very clear, they hold forth a great enlargement to the *universal Church*, both of *Jews and Gentiles*. Particular Churches may be in a sad withering condition, whilst other parts do flourish: but these promises seem to point at a day, which will concern the saints in all corners of the earth, who shall not want their share with the rest of that blessed time. It may

be also clear, some more *bright* and *hot sun-shine* of the Gospel is held forth; some such remarkable *spring-tide of the Spirit*, that shall be as discernable, as the Churches low ebb sometimes was; a day of the *great power of God*, his presence very manifest among his people and with the ordinances, beyond former times; so that *Ezek. 48. 35. The name of that place shall be called Jehovah Shammah, the Lord is there.* Yea, that in this day *Christ's visible Kingdom*, in a *settled Church-state*, shall more eminently flourish: and the flowing in of people and nations with much fervour, who shall *joyn themselves to the Lord*, pure ordinances, a more universal oneness amongst the worshippers of God, the walk of Christians with a discernable lustre of holiness, will be made to commend the Gospel; *Christ's goings* full of Majesty, and *the shout of a King* which then shall be heard among his People; the noise of such sad complaints and bitter exercises from the spirit of bondage, not so much among the saints, as in former times. And though we see no sure ground from the word, to expect such a favourable time, wherein the Church militant shall not have trouble and persecution from the World: yet there seemeth so much clearly imported in some of these great promises, as point at a *great calm*, and more favourable gale of *outward prosperity*, which the Church shall then have, yea, this in some longer continuance than in former ages; a day, wherein the *haters of the Lord* shall even be made to *feign subjection*, with much of the countenance & concurrence of Magistrates, and the civil authority in behalf of the Church; yea, a time of much holy fear amongst the people of God, and of much terrour and aw upon his enemies, to which the great works of the Lord in that time shall then effectually contribute, and cause them to *fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days.*

IV. There

(q) IV. There is a special prediction of *Satan's binding up*, or restraint, and of some remarkable *reign of the Church with Jesus Christ*, held forth, *Rev. 20. 2.* The full accomplishment of which we on clear ground may judge, is not already come: yet is so far now verified in the event, as may clearly witness its meaning, and let us see how at this day it is taking place. I confess, this seems one of the most dark and abstruse prophecies, we have in the Scripture; on which there hath been many strange thoughts and glosses held forth: but to set down these various judgments of men on the truths of God, I humbly think, may tend to a further darkning of the same, more than to any solid edification. I shall only offer some things to be considered, which by undeniable consequence from the Scripture seem most clear and obvious, and may only help to the understanding this Prophecie, but that manifest correspondence which is betwixt it and the event at this day.

(i.) There can be no debate, this solemn time of the *Saints reign with Christ* concerns the *militant* condition of the Church, and must be expected here on the *earth*, not in heaven. And therefore we find immediately after, there is a very sore assault of the *Devil* held forth, who should occasion a new trial to the Church; and he for a time let loose, to *deceive the nations*.---(2.) Since the Scripture is the best interpreter of it self, we must here understand (comparing one place with another) this raising of the Saints and Martyrs of Jesus Christ to reign with him, *figuratively*, and in such a sense as that is *Rev. 11. 11.* must be understood; to wit, a rising of the witnesses in the *same spirit and power*, and of such a party who should bear the *same testimony*. To which also that in *Mal. 4. 5.* and *Mat. 11. 14.* about *John's* coming in the same Spirit of *Elijah*, with which he did appear to the World, gives light. So that we see how consonant and

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agreeable

agreeable the Scripture is with it self. (3.) Is not the meaning of the Spirit in this prophecy clear, that the *greatest enlargement* of the Church, yea, & of the longest duration and continuance, that it should have under the New Testament unto the second coming of Christ, is held forth in the *reign of the saints*? So that it manifestly points at a more solemn time, a more sweet refreshing interval, which shall be remarkable both in measure and duration beyond all she formerly had: and shews, that there is no such happy time else to go over the Church's head, till she be *triumphant* in heaven. Therefore it is called, by way of eminence, the Church's reign, considered *comparatively* with any other such change. (4.) Is it not very clear, that this so remarkable time cannot be judged *previous* to *Antichrist's* coming, nor under his advance and growth? Since, first, this points expressly at those who were *beheaded for the witness of Christ*, and had *not worshiped the beast and his image*, nor *received his mark*, who should thus be raised to reign with Christ.--(2.) We find that it doth very immediately precede that *last assault* the Church shall have, upon *Satan's* loosing, to gather the nations to that *great battle*; and so must concern these *last times*, when the Lord is pouring out his *vials* upon the throne and Kingdom of the *beast*. It is strange, when the Scripture is so plain, that some choice and excellent men, writing on this prophecy, will have it contemporary with the Church's condition *before* Antichrist's appearance: for it is sure if by *the beast and his image and mark*, Antichrist must be understood, and if there be but *one* great assault mentioned *after* this, which the Church militant shall have before the close of time, this prophesie must *now* be fulfilling, and with no other time before this could quadrate, according to the Scripture.--(5.) Is it not clear, that this great restraint of *Satan* is no such

absolute

absolute binding, that will put the Church wholly beyond trouble and reach of his assaults? No, this belongs to *heaven*, and is there only to be expected. But the Scripture very evidently shew's, this shall be such a *binding up of Satan*, that he should *not deceive the nations*, nor have that wonted power to darken the face of the Church by any great or universal apostacy, during this time. And I am sure, it is undeniable, that since the Church's raising from under Antichrist, Satan hath been thus restrained: & by all his violent assaults, he hath not reached the *full* withdrawing of any one *nation*, which was brought under the yoke of the Gospel; whatever may be said of poor *Bohemia*, by a violent course of persecution so born down, that this once famous Church is now scattered in other places where there are yet considerable numbers, yea, it is not altogether without hope, that the great avenger of blood will yet visit her cruel usage on that bloody *Austrian* family, and return yet her captivity again, when it seems now furthest off and hopeless.--(6.) Must we not see, that this great sunshine, as it takes in *Antichrist's* fall, hath a special respect also to *Israel's* return and conversion? Which, according to the Scripture, is one of the most solemn and flourishing times that the Christian Church shall have, and therefore shall be to the *gentiles as life from the dead*. Now, do but seriously judge what the Church's condition *hath been* through all the times of the New Testament, first under *Heathens*, and after under the tyranny of *Antichrist*, and now how far providence does unfold the meaning of this prophecy in the event, since the *man of sin* began to decline; and I humbly judge, it may be easy to see, that at *this day* it is *clearly taking place*, though this solemn *reign* be not yet advanced to its greatest pitch, but will have a more remarkable period ere this prophecy be fully made out. I shall but add, this *resurrection* mentioned

oned in the prophecy, must be in a *spiritual* sense understood, and can be no bodily raising of the Saints; since it is so expressly there called *the first resurrection*, to difference it from the second, and is held forth in an opposition to the first death. (9)

VI. We have a prophecy held forth, *Rev. 16. 12.* which compared with *Rev. 9. 13.* seemeth clearly to point at *the fall and destruction of the Turkish Empire*, who have been these many ages so great a scourge to the Christian World. For it's manifest, that this *drying up of the river Euphrates* must relate to the very party, which we find in that *9th Chap.* raised up from about that river, where the *Turk* hath so considerable a part of his dominions. It is true, the event will more clearly make this known: Yet these Things are undeniable, ---

1. That *such a Party* was foretold by *John*, in that *9th Ch.* and a solemn warning given to the Church, of so dreadful a storm; the *time* also there pointed forth, when *Antichrist* should be at a great height; yea, the *portraiture* of such an adversary most evidently held forth, such as indeed they were found to be, a *terrible cruel destroying party*, and therefore are said to have *breast-plates of fire*; their *number* also there held out to be a *very great multitude*, which those huge armies usually brought by the *Turk* to the field, can witness.

2. The *cause* why the Lord should raise up so dreadful an enemy, and thus let them loose, is also expressly declared in that *9th Chap. 20th ver.* that it was in judgment, and for a plague on men, for *Antichristian idolatry*, which then had so much overspread the earth: and it was no wonder, when so much of the visible Church was turned almost brutish in their Religion, and from the pure worship of God was carried after idols of gold and silver, the work of men's

men's hands, that so brutish and barbarous an adversary should be let out for a scourge. I truly think, that as *Antichrist*, and the abominations of that party, hath been hitherto the let of success against the *Turk*; so we are not to expect the prospering of any such design, and his fall and ruin, until the cause be removed, for which the Lord did make use of this dreadful rod.

3. That such a party was raised up, according to the *prophecy*, yea, at the appointed time thereof, is very clear, who like a *mighty deluge* did overthrow a great part of the earth, and with strange prodigious success did over-run much of *Asia*, some parts of *Africa*, and brake in on *Europe*, to give work to those *kings* and *great men*, and be a scourge to them, who had *given their power* to uphold the throne of the *Beast*.

4. There is also clear ground from the Scripture, that the *Lord* shall as eminently appear in the *fall and destruction* of this adversary, as in the raising of them up; and that by *their fall*, he is to make way for the accomplishing of his promise, about the *Church's* further *increase*, his ancient people, where-to this prophecy seems to have a particular respect. This we are to look for, as one of the great works of the Lord, that is reserved for the *latter days*, which shall no less shew forth his power and glory, *even the drying up of that great Euphrates*, than in the day that he divided the sea, and made *Jordan* a dry channel for his people to go through. We are not to be further positive about means and instruments, how such a thing shall be brought about: it is enough, what the Lord hath spoken; and the word that is gone out of his mouth, shall *not return empty*.

VII. Now to close this, there is yet one *great assault*, which we find the Church shall have *before the*

the end, and then *her warfare* will be near *finished*: about which the Scripture is clear, that *Satan* for a little time must be *let loose*, and that solemn and perfect *victory*, which the *Church* in the close of time will get over all her adversaries, shall be ushered in with a very sharp trial, & once again this *ungodly World* will shew its *rage*, rally its broken scattered forces, in a general muster (*Rev. 20. 8.*) with as much fury as ever: and then shall the *Lord* eminently appear, that by one full stroke he may for ever decide that long continued war and feud betwixt the *Church* and her enemies. A deliverance, which as it will be the last, so one of the greatest that ever the *Church* had; the *Lord* thus finishing his work of providence, by so stately and magnificent a close? And truly, after this, we know no more of Canonick Scripture to be fulfilled, but the *coming of the Lord*, when the poor, tost, afflicted *Church* shall enter into a *triumphant estate*, above all the violence & oppression of men. O blessed, & long looked for day of *Christ's* return to judgment, when *the dust of the Saints*, that for some thousand years past have been *resting in hope*, shall *awake*; and this earth and all the glory thereof, like a poor vain shew, disappear! O blessed and comfortable time, in which the saints shall then fully know what *Heaven* is, which they have so oft admired at a distance! shall *behold his face*, in whose presence is *fulnes of joy*! and shall need no further confirmations of the truth of the word, when once this great promise of the *Lord's* return is verified, a promise; wherein all those precious truths, which concerned the *Church* in her journey, as so many streams, shall empty themselves in this great deep! Then there is no more to do, the work of the *Gospel* is finished, the redeemed all brought in, and the *Bride* made ready to go forth and meet him, who shall fully satisfy and comfort his
People,

People, according to the days of their former affliction, and be for ever *their exceeding great reward*.

THE FIFTH ARGUMENT.

That which not only is for the most part already accomplished, but is a thing whereof we have so sure confirmations, yea, so great a pledge in our hand from the *Lord*, that what yet remaineth shall be certainly fulfilled, must it not be an undoubted truth? But the Scripture, as to those special predictions that are not yet made out, is such, concerning which the *Lord* hath given his People a very large pledge and strong confirmations, now in these latter times, to believe their certain accomplishment. Therefore, &c.

It is sure, that a part of the Scripture, some special prophecies, which do concern the state of the *Church* in these last times, hath not yet had an accomplishment; which are already touched in the former argument, and are indeed so great concerning truths, that may cause us to sit down, and wonder, when we think these shall shortly come to pass! Yet such, whereof we may be fully persuaded, if we consider, that they are held forth and promised by him who is the God of truth, and the begun performance hereof now so manifest, yea, what hath been the *Lord's* way, and the eminent providences of these last times, which may fully satisfy our spirits, that *God's* work is near to a close, and the accomplishing of the whole Scripture now at hand.

I shall here point at some special grounds, whence the godly in these times may be thoroughly confirmed about the truth and certain fulfilling of the Scripture, and those prophecies thereof, that yet are not fulfilled: which we should look on as a very convincing pledge in our hand of the same.

(9) I. Is not the being of the world, yea, the heavens and the earth which we see, with the continued course of nature, given from the Lord, and held forth, to his people, as a witness to his truth, and a sure pledge to confirm their faith of its accomplishment? That when we look upon the heavens or the earth, we may there read a visible seal of the certain performance of the whole Scripture of God, which for that very end are set before our eyes. We have this clear, *Jer. 33. 20.* that the Covenant with the day and the night is there given to the Church to confirm that Covenant betwixt the Lord & his people. This also is held forth, *Jer. 31. 35.* Thus saith the Lord, who giveth the sun for a light by day, and the moon & stars by night, if these ordinances shall depart, then may the seed of Israel cease and fail from being a nation. It is also clear, *Pf. 89. 2.* That the faithfulness of God is established in the very heavens; and these given as a special convincing pledge, to confirm the faith of his people in the matter of his truth, and of the performance of his word: for which, we will find in *ver. 37th* of that Psalm the sun and moon given to the Church as a witness. Is not the rainbow also, *Gen. 9.* (though not natural, but an instituted sign, because there is no correspondence betwixt the sign, & the thing signified) given as a visible sign of the Covenant of God, to seal unto men the assurance of his word and promise?

I must think it strange, that we do not consider this world, and look on the frame thereof with more astonishment, yea, that it is not a greater and more marvellous thing in our eyes, if we would but think seriously, *Whence* it is, and how it came to have a being! Let us suppose one were brought forth into the light, from a dark place where he had never seen it before, and there let his eyes wander a little upon the heavens and the earth, O what a dazzling & amazing sight

sight would that be! But it must be said, we look on these every day, yet know not how to read or understand what is written thereon: Oh this great universe is for the most part as a sealed book.

But for clearing of this truth, there are two things we should gravely consider. (1.) Something which must be previously known and believed, that those visible heavens and earth are the very work and product of this God, whose word and promise we have in the Scripture, and have their being and original from him: for otherwise there could be no reasoning from these, about the truth of his word. (2.) We should also consider, what a convincing pledge is here, for confirming our faith of the Scripture, and of the sure performance of all that is yet remaining thereof to be accomplished.

As to the first, it might seem unnecessary so much as once to mention it, since it is so little questioned, or under debate; but oh! it is too clear, that many truths are easily admitted, which are not really believed. I know the world would find it hard to shift so manifest a demonstration, that this universe is the work and product of the great God, when there is in it so bright a discovery of infinite power and wisdom. Truly it is strange, how men could admit its being, who have denied its beginning, which not only by Faith we understand, but is most evident from solid grounds of reason: And though men are undone with implicit faith and a common assent to the greatest fundamental truths, without any solid persuasion thereof, yet the greatest Atheists cannot keep off the discovery of this, but by keeping at a distance from it. Which truly Aristotle and others of those ancients did not so much deny the same, but not knowing the Scripture they could not know how it should be. Thence Epicurus and others of his followers finding that they could not solve the *Phænomena*

mena of nature, and shun unanswerable absurdities, if they admitted an *eternity* of the world, did fall on such an irrational fancy, to avoid this, of the *fortuitous concurrence of atoms*; yea, some held an eternal *præexistence* of the *first matter*: which pitiful notions may shew what sad case men are in, who grope after the truth by the twilight of nature, and are strangers to the Scripture. But I leave this, and shall only touch a little some most clear and satisfying evidences of this truth, that the beginning and original of the world is not more clear from the Scripture, then it is also demonstrable from solid convincing grounds of reason. And truly a clear discovery of this hath a further reach, than may be apprehended, to give the Atheism of men a deadly stroke, and shake all its grounds. Now let these few things be seriously considered, (1.) If you confess there is a Deity, that God blessed for ever is, must you not necessarily admit a *creation and beginning*? since eternity is a thing, that is only communicable to the first cause: and you cannot conceive that the earth could produce it self; for to exist, & not to exist at the same time, is a contradiction. And I am sure, they must shut their eyes, who do not every where discern some witness of the glorious being of God. (2.) You cannot deny, that there is such a thing as *time*; since there is no judging days & years & ages to be infinite, or how one thing in a continued order should go before another, without coming to some first & beginning.--(3.) Does not this gradual advance of human *knowledge* in the earth and that further discovery which *arts and sciences* have made, by a continued improvement of the same, witness very clearly a beginning and original of the world? For ye could not conceive a *perpetual succession of mankind*, with a constant essay after further knowledge, with such a *continued progress in experience*, as an *eternity* (supposed before this)

this) would produce, and yet the most concerning *arts and sciences*, yea, the choicest *experiments and inventions* we have in the world, to be of so *late* a rise and date; such as the use of printing, and of the Mariners compass by the load-stone, the use of guns, the improvement of minerals in Medicine; yea, the very motion and convoy of the blood in man's body; which are but of late discovery. (4.) May not so *short a history* which to this day we have of the world, witness its *late Original*, and that it is of no eternal duration? since the ancientest records of time, or of things past, do not exceed some thousands of years. And could this be possibly conceived, that *infinite ages* preceeding (if such had been) should give no account nor leave a remembrance to posterity, when these *late ages* holds so *much* forth? Yea, how could it be, that it is but of late one *part* of the world is *known*, and discovered to another part thereof? (5.) It is very manifest, from the known records we have of past times, what hath been the *rise and increase of nations*; yea, how a great part of men have from a rude and savage estate been brought into Society, and under laws and government; which shews, this world must be of a *short* duration; which none could conceive, by admitting such a supposal of its *eternal* being.--(6) It is sure, man is *born and dies*, and in that ordinary way of generation mankind is still propagated: and is not here the *world's beginning* very obvious? For you cannot judge, that men should beget other eternity, without going back at last to some *first* man, who could not beget himself.--(7) If *eternity* be preferable to time, can you judge the *excellentest* things of the earth, such as *man*, and next unto him the *beasts*, are *perishing*, and only these things which are *inanimate*, and the mass of the earth whereon they tread, are of a *perpetual* duration?--(8) It is manifest, what an *increase* a few men (not to speak of other living

living creatures) may in an ordinary way have, to people a vast country, even in *some ages*. Now is it not thus clear, the world can be of no eternal duration? For, if you should this way turn back on an *infinite* number of ages, and suppose that every age should but add and multiply to the race of man two or three, it would come at last to this, *the earth could not bear them*: since we must thus suppose some *infinite increase*, from an infinite continuance of the world, which no wars or consuming strokes could in such a measure diminish.---(9.) Can you conceive *that* should be *eternal*, which is wholly made up of *corruptible* and *perishing* things? since the things of the world have all their set times and seasons, wherein they appear, and are quickly gone. In a word, must not men deny a *dissolution* of this world, or an *after-judgment* and *life to come*, yea, the whole truth of religion, if this great truth be not received and believed?

But having premised some few evidences, that may witness the *original* of the world, yea that this marvellous frame, with the whole continued course of nature, is the product of a *divine power* and *wisdom*: I shall here in the *second* place, point at some few things, which may shew how great a *pledge* this is, and what a *quieting ground* it should be to the faith of the godly, that the *Scripture* is certainly *true*, and must have an accomplishment; since from the very being and beginning of the world, we may clearly reason to those things which by undeniable *consequence* follow.

(1.) That the world now is, is a sure and confirming witness to its *last close*, and of the accomplishment of that promise of its *dissolution* in the end of time. We know, it is not long since there was no earth, no sun, moon or stars. Now, upon no less security than that word, by which it was formed, we must believe

believe it shall ere long cease to be what now it is; and thus when we look upon the world, and see such a thing before us, ought we not to read that promise of its after-dissolution, clearly written thereon before our eyes?---(2.) It is a very clear consequence, that this God, *can* bring his word unto performance, and his *power* therein cannot fail or fall short; yea, that *his counsel* and purpose hath no dependence on *means* or instruments, who did once bring this world out of nothing, and said, Let there be heaven and an earth, when there was none. O when we open the bible, and read the great promises thereof, should we not have that impression on our souls, *These are the true and faithful sayings of God*, and *his* word, with whom the *doing* thereof is as easie as to *say* it; who without the concurrence of instruments, or any co-workers, could bring this great creation forth! We truly so far mistake the meaning of the heavens, and these great celestial bodies, with the marvellous order that is there, when we cannot read the truth and faithfulness of God in all his promises writ thereupon: for they are held forth to men as a confirming *pledge* of the same; and this were indeed an excellent study and improvement of Astrology.--(3.) Since it is sure and undeniable, that this *earth doth hang in the empty place*, though men see not whereon it leans and rests, O what a strange thing is it! Could the air bear up so vast and ponderous a body! But herein is a marvellous divine power convincingly witnessed, which hath so *established* it, *that it cannot be moved*. Now, is not this *his* very word, that bears up such a weight? And thence, with as clear ground, we may reason for adventuring of the Church with its weight, and every Christian's burden, whatever it may be, on the promise of this God, on whose word the great bulk of the earth doth this day lean. I must say, no mathematical demonstration does follow

follow by a clearer evidence, than this consequence from such premisses is undeniable.---(4.) We see the Lord keeps *covenant* with the *day* and the *night*, yea, that *summer* and *winter* do not fail before him, according to his promise : and are not these a visible witness for God, that his truth and *Covenant with his Church* shall not fail ? For it is sure, the continued course of nature hath such an audible voice, if we could but listen thereto.---(5.) Does not the Lord clearly witness by such a strange *contrariety* that is amongst the *elements*, and those *different qualities*, whereof he *sewes himself*, in this great frame and composure of the world, that this promise shall not fail, but it is easie for him to verify the same, in *making all things work together*, were they never so *cross* and *disagreeing* among themselves, for an accomplishment of his design ?---(6.) When we see the rage and violence of the great *Ocean* bounded by a bank of *sand* ; for which there could be no true reason given, how such an impetuous and furious motion could be restrain'd, and the sand be a bridle to the sea, if it were not to make out the faithfulness of *God*, who by a *perpetual decree* hath thus bounded it ; O is there not thence a visible confirmation of his truth ! that he can also *restrain the rage of man*, and *turn it unto his praise*, and for attaining this end, serve himself of most improbable means. It was a notable saying of a grave Minister of Christ, when he was upon the sea in a storm, O shall I fear (says he) the face of a tyrant, that serve him who can restrain and tame the rage of this swelling sea !--(7) If we consider the *earth* and its original, and look aright on that so oft repeated discovery we have of the *seed-time* and *harvest*, &c of the earth bringing forth such innumerable kinds of vegetables in the spring, after a dead winter, as out of their graves, may we not thence have a very clear confirming seal of that great truth

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of the *resurrection*, and of the raising of the dust of men's bodies, that is buried under the earth ? I shall but say, does not God thus give a continued wonder, and set the same before our eyes in the continued course of nature, to assure us of his truth and promise, that it shall not fail, though there were no appearance how in an ordinary way it could be accomplished ? (9)

II. Ground, whence we may be thus confirmed in our faith is this ; that not only the most part of the Scripture is already proved and verified in the event, but also *Those truths, which of the whole Scripture are most strange and marvellous, yea, would have much staggered our faith, if they were yet still in a promise, are this day certainly accomplished.* I shall but only instance in the coming of the *Messias*, which the Prophets of old foretold ; that *God* should be *manifest in the flesh*, and a *virgin* bring forth a *son*, whose name should be *Emmanuel*, that was to dye and be *cut off of out of the land of the living, not for himself, but for the transgression of his People* : is not this now surely accomplished ? Which, we may say, is the greatest wonder, the most astonishing thing that ever was or shall be ; and should fully silence our thoughts about any other Scripture-truth, that is yet to be made out. For we know, that the great business of redemption is put to a close ; the ransom and price thereof fully told down ; now is the doctrine of the Gospel sealed and attested by blood, even the blood of the Testator : it is now sure, the promised *Messias* hath come, and this is he, who in the days of *Pelate* suffered at *Jerusalem*, in whom all things which were written by the Prophets, were truly accomplished. And is not this a great pledge, to assure us of the real making out of every other promise ? It is sure, he did dye, his blessed side was pierced with a spear, and upon the

cross

cross he cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost. O here lieth the greatest cause of wonder; not what doth yet remain of the Scripture, but that which is already fulfilled; not that Christ should come again to judge the World, but that once he did come to the World, and become man! For God to be found in the form of a servant, and die, this is beyond expression wonderful: for the other must necessarily as a consequent follow, that he who hath redeemed the Church, and did pay her ransom, should see the travel of his soul, and be satisfied: that, having made such a purchase, he should also have possession, and finish the building, the foundation whereof was his own blood. I confess, what we do yet expect according to the promise, are great and astonishing truths, the full overthrow of *Antichrist* and his Kingdom, that the dead bones of the *Jewish Church* should again live, but specially *Christ's* return to judgment, who shall be revealed from heaven with flaming fire, the sound of the trumpet, and voice of the Archangel: yet, how great soever they are, and may seem hard for us to believe, O how small comparatively are they with that which is already done and accomplished, the *Incarnation of the Son of God*, a mystery hid from ages, wherein the Angel's with wonder do look! Which, we may say, is unspeakably more great than to create this World, and turn it again to nothing. It may be truly strange, whilst we read these prophecies about Christ and his Kingdom, in so plain an history, and profess that we believe he did die and rise again, we should have such hesitation about the performance of any other Scripture promise. Is it not at this day much more easy, to believe the Scripture and fulfilling thereof, than it was of old for the *Jewish Church* before Christ's coming? And now may we not with as much assurance wait for the second coming of the Lord, and a full perfecting of his word,

word, even from that which is already verified thereof, as we are sure of the return of the sun after it is gone down, and of the breaking of the day when once the night is past!

III. Ground, whence the godly in these times should be confirmed about the full performance of that which is yet remaining of the Scripture, that it is sure, yea, now near at hand, is this, That *Jesus Christ* is come to action against the *Enemies of his Church* and hath taken the fields; that surely he is now gone forth in the greatness of his strength, conquering, and to conquer.

This is a grave truth, which might give us very sweet refreshing thoughts in so shaking a time, that whilst we have seen the Lord's appearing by a great and outstretched hand for his people, have seen those terrible stirs and concussions of the nations, have seen him strike through Kings in the day of his wrath, and fill the places with the dead bodies of his adversaries, we may also on clear Scripture-grounds conclude, that the Lord is now awaked as a mighty man, and upon the fields; yea, that the war is surely begun against *Antichrist*, and all the adversaries of his Church, which shall not cease until the full victory be obtained. For indeed those providences which in these last times should be very affrighting and terrible, when we go into the word, we shall find they have a comfortable aspect on the Church, and do preface her greater enlargement; as the tender buds and leaves of the fig-tree are put forth to shew the summer's approach. Luke 21. 28. It is true, the Church is now low, and the work of God meets with very sad interruptions, which are needful, both for trial, and rebuke: But this also is sure, which none can deny, that the Lord hath eminently appeared, and done great things for his Church;

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yea, we must say, he hath by a confluence of very remarkable providences thus condescended to strengthen his people's hands, to confirm such who are ready to stagger, even as it were by crutches, about the greatness of these things which are yet promised.

Now to clear this truth a little, we would consider, (1.) How it is very consonant to the Scripture, and expressly held forth in the same, that in the *last times*, and turn of the Church's case from *Antichrist*, the Lord will thus appear, in his great strength, and set up his standard against his adversaries ; yea, will then in a special way call forth his people, to glorify him by an active testimony. (2) That the Lord hath thus begun to appear, according to his word, is a truth that is also undeniable ; and should much help to confirm our faith, about the performance of that which further remains of the Scripture.

(1.) That the Lord will thus appear in the *last times*, this is manifest from the word. To clear which observe, 1. Though the Church militant must not want an adversary, and some persecution from the World, even in her best estate : Yet we have a safe warrant to expect that the Lord will glorify himself in a peculiar way in his people now in these *latter days*, by their doing and acting for the truth, as in former ages his glory did most appear, during *Antichrist's* Reign, in his Church's suffering ; for then the faith and patience of his Saints was to be witnessed in its season, *Rev. 13. 10.* And thus he would serve himself of his people, and bring forth his glory, until that time of retribution, when those who had killed with the sword, should be killed by the sword, and those who led unto captivity, be so dealt with : which doth also clearly promise some special out-pouring of the Spirit, for acting with these gifts of courage and resolution, suitable to the service of the Church

Church in the latter days. And truly I think it is a great defect, we study not more the accomplishing of the promises, and how to improve the same, for gifts, as well as grace, in order to the several times and necessities of the Church.

2. It is very clear from the Scripture, that in the *last days*, when Christ is to raise his Church from under the power and tyranny of *Antichrist*, he shall then appear in a *warlike posture*. Which *John* had shewed to him, *Rev. 19. 13, 14.* as one at the head of his forces, with his vesture dipped in blood, to shew when once the war is begun against his adversary, and this *Lion of the tribe of Judah* begins to rouse himself up, what a terrible appearance he will have in that undertaking. And it is clear, that the Lord hath declared in this his counsel and will, that his Son *Christ* should in the latter times take unto himself his great power, and reign (*Rev. 11. 17.*) yea, cause the World to know him to be *Head of principalities and powers*, as well as of the Church. For his glory in this truth as a *King*, which former ages seemed in so great a measure to darken, must then clearly shine forth. I truly think, men's appearing with such violence and rage against us concerning a truth now in these days, doth promise some eminent appearance of the Lord therein, and that he shall yet more solemnly assert the same before the World.

3. Doth not the Scripture point at the *last times*, as that special time of recompence for the *controversy of Sion* ? to which the Lord hath reserved a solemn triumph of his justice, over all his Church's enemies ; when he shall inquire for the blood of his Saints, shed upon the earth since the days of *Abel*, at *Babylon's* hand (*Rev. 18. 24.*) that great adversary, who stands in law guilty, and hath served herself heir to all the violence and cruelty done in

former ages. For in *her hand* must that *cup* be found full, which the enemies of the Church from the beginning have been filling up, and as so many rivers and fountains hath run into this great sea.

4. It is also clear, that in the *last times*, when the Lord shall *bind up the breach of his people*, and *heal the stroke of their wound*, who for so long a time had been trampled under by *Antichrist*, he shall by some signal providences *roll away this reproach* and scandal of *mansness contempt*, and *persecution*: shall put some *glory* on his Church, proportionable to its former abatement; yea, thus *comfort her*, according to the days wherein he had *afflicted her*, and cause his people's uprising, in measure and kind, to answer their low and suffering state from *Antichrist*, even in the *last time* when the Lord shall make them appear with *the face of a Lion*, when *the feeble shall be as David*, and as the *Angel of the Lord*, *Zach. 12. 8.* Which promise doth clearly point at the Church's raising, and delivery from *Antichrist*; upon the back whereof we find the Prophet doth foretell the last conversion, & incoming of *Israel*.

5. I shall only add what the Scripture doth most expressly shew, that the Lord shall so gloriously appear in *bringing his Church out of Babylon*, and *executing his judgment* on that adversary, as in the day when he brought his people out of *Egypt*, and therefore shall they sing *the song of Moses and the Lamb*, *Rev. 15. 3.* his *great power* and *out stretched hand* being no less discernable therein, than if they had been standing with *Israel* at the red Sea, when they saw their enemies lying dead upon the shore. Yea, have we not ground to believe, that the Lord shall make himself very evidently known in raising *instruments*, and acting them forth? Which hath been already seen; and I am sure, the World must confess what great things have been done by those of whom little was expected. (2.)

(2.) That the Lord hath thus begun to appear, and make himself known to the World in these *last ages*, according to his word, is a thing very easy to demonstrate. For,

1. Is it not clear, how in these *last times* he hath met his enemies upon their high places, and in their greatest strength? that by a *strong hand* he did make room for his truth, when both Law and force did withstand the same, and put the marks of his wrath on such who would oppose the spreading of his Kingdom, so that they have been as visible, as sometimes their rage and violence against the Church was. Yea, since the Lord begun to *lift up a standard* for the truth, and call forth his People to act, hath it not been seen they have left their ground more by underhand-treaties, and turning aside to carnal politick shifts, than by open force and violence? Which the *French Massacre*, with other sad instances can witness; for indeed the Church hath still lost least by greatest opposition.

2. Have we not seen by what dreadful shaking and alterations of the earth, this late glorious reformation of the Church from *Antichristianism* hath been ushered in? Which have been more change, and frequent, than in many ages before. Hath not the Lord caused the Nations to shake, and the earth to reel like a drunken man; to shew men that though he suffered long in former times of the World's ignorance, he will not so now bear with opposing his truth!

3. Have we not also seen the Lord's raising up men fit for action, in these *last times*; Men of a great heroick spirit, with some more than ordinary elevation of the same to appear for his interest? Such, we may say, that many former ages could not instance; in which the Lord's helping his People to do great things, his suiting them with endowments for the service

vice and work of the time, hath been most discernable ! Was not that excellent man the *Admiral of France*, with many others in that place, eminently raised up, for the necessity of that time ? And do we not find those Princes of *Orange, William*, and *Maurice*, and *Mauritius of Saxony*, whom the Lord raised against *Charles the V.* and caused him to flee over the *Alpes* ? Yea, what marvellous resolution and courage did attend the actions of the confederates of the *Low Countries* ? And in latter times do we not find *Gustus King of Sweden*, *Bernard Duke of Weymar*, *Lantsgrave of Hesse*, with many others, eminently raised to avenge the Lord's quarrel against that bloody house of *Austria* ? Have we not also seen very great instruments raised up in *Britain*, and *Ireland* (who were followed with wonderful success) to act for the truth against Antichristian Prelacy ? And truly we must say, the *withdrawing* in such a measure of that spirit of courage and resolution, which once was so visibly let forth in the first dawning of the *Reformation*, may sadly point at a great decay of zeal, self-confidence, & unfaithfulness as to the improving of opportunities. For the Lord was with his People whilst they were with him, and did singly follow him in his way : but alas, with their departing, it may be said *their strength hath departed from them*. However, the quarrel is clear for an oppressed People's acting, upon so just, so necessary an account as the interest of Religion, against the cruelty and violent encroachments of Antichrist, wherein, as the Lord hath eminently owned his People, so (I dare not question) he will yet appear, and silence the adversaries of his truth, by such an argument, against which they shall not debate.

4. That universal deluge of blood, which for the 100 years past hath overflowed much of *Europe*, can be a witness to this, that the Lord hath taken peace from

from men, who would not embrace the peace of the Gospel offered in these last times, and given his enemies who had shed the blood of the saints, blood to drink, in great measure. I am sure, poor *Germany* can prove this, which for 20 years together was a field of dead men ; and *France* from the days of *Henry the II.* to the establishment of *Henry the IV.* How long was the *Low Countries* made a stage of war, where many a cruel *Spaniard* did fall under the sword of an avenging God ; besides the late bloody wars in *Britain*, and *Ireland*. And what doth this declare, but that Jesus Christ hath taken the fields, and it will not be now with the Kings of the earth, to oppress his Church, and withstand the truth as in former times ?

I shall but add, how wonderfully hath the Lord appeared in delivering his Church at the greatest extremity, hath turned his enemies counsels and designs upon themselves, brought about the great works of these last times by means so unexpected and improbable, that we may say, what of his judgment is already executed against *Antichrist*, hath been no less marvellous than that *Jericho's* walls should fall at the sound of a trumpet of ram-horns ; or a cake of barley bread tumbling into the host of *Midian* should smite and overthrow the same ! Surely, when we consider what the Lord hath done, and how exactly that doth answer the Scripture, we may have much to confirm us about the further accomplishment of his word ; and be assured, that the term of his long suffering towards *Babylon* is at an end, war is denounced, and the execution already begun, which must not have a close until judgment be accomplished into victory.

IV. Ground, which may confirm the faith of the saints, & be as a pledge in their hand of the full accomplishing

plishing of the Scripture, yea, that this is near, is this, That *the day is now turned, and that prophesied victory, which the Church should have over Antichrist before the end, is not only begun, but in a great measure advanced.*

This is indeed a great confirmation, when we see so marvellous a *crisis* in the Church's case, her *recovery* from so desperate and hopeless a disease already begun, that it shall be further *perfected*. We are apt to wonder at the greatness of those things yet *promised*, but why should we not also wonder at that which God hath *already done* for his Church, in *our days*? The Scripture doth shew, that Antichrist's ruin must begin by the word: that this stroke shall be gradual; and however that great work of God meet with much opposition, yet it shall no more go back in the whole. And must we not say, in all this the word is fulfilled; it hath not hitherto failed the Church, but the event in every circumstance is made to answer to the same?

Now to clear this, we would consider these two. First, that the *Church's victory* over Antichrist is *this day* so far advanced. 2. How the *Lord's* very immediate hand hath been most *discernable* therein.

The *first* I need but name, whilst it is so manifest, *what the Lord hath wrought for his Church*. For we have seen Kingdoms and Nations subject themselves to the truth: the kingdom of *Antichrist* grow dark, with the breaking out of the light, and many of his followers made to *gnash their teeth*, being *scorched* with the heat and power of the gospel; in how great a measure is that interest now shaken, if we consider what the Lord hath wrought, what a great *reformation* hath been in *Britain and Ireland*, thro' much of *France, Germany, Sweden, the Low Countries, Poland, Denmark*, yea, even in *Hungary, and Transilvania*! Sure this was a great work, which should be marvellous in our eyes, how that *Anti-christian*

christian Empire, contrived with such wisdom, underpropt with so great strength, whose commands not long since were received as Oracles, with an awe and respect only due to God, hath in such a measure begun to fall before the Power of the word! O the *righteous judgment of the Lord*, which he hath shewed forth upon that adversary, and should be a pledge to us of the further manifestation thereof; an adversary, we may say, the greatest that ever the Church had: whose *little finger* hath been heavier than the *loins* of all who went before, if we consider his cruelty over men's bodies, tyranny over their consciences, with so long a continuance of that trial! in respect of whom it may be said, *Pharaoh* was an easy taskmaster; *Antiochus* and the Roman Emperors mild, who for near 1200 years did carry on a desperate and bloody war against the Church.

The second which I would at some more length prosecute, is this, *How the Lord's hand and something of an extraordinary providence hath been no less discernable in this late raising of the Church, and her begun victory over Antichrist, than in the first planting of Christianity by the Apostles*. This is a truth, which to many may seem strange: but when seriously considered, if prejudice do not darken men's judgment, will appear from sure and solid grounds. Now to demonstrate this, I would here offer some very *convincing* WITNESSES, which may help to strengthen the faith of the Godly, and give Atheism some dash.

FIRST Witness to this truth, is *that wonderful success which the Gospel in these last times hath had*: wherein men must see the great power of God, and efficacy of the Spirit, in some measure as manifest, as in the first rise of the Christian Church, if we consider,

1. From what a *small spark*, so *great a fire* did break out, which in a short time put *Europe* in a flame, and made so great a change therein, even *Luther's* appearing against *Texelius* upon the account of his indulgencies. O but God's time of working may be oft contrary to our time of expecting!

2. What a *swift progress* did the gospel have? may we not say with wonder, *Can a nation be born at once!* yet this we have seen, how many Nations and Cities in one and the same age, yea, in less than 40 Years, were brought into subjection to the truth; and those instruments whom scarce any durst own at first, made to see great Princes with armies on the fields for the interests of Christ.

3. Have we not seen Religion *propagated by martyrdom*, no less than in the primitive times; and men's essays to ruin the Church, helping it further to grow? O what but a divine power could thus bring gold out of iron and clay, bring a flourishing Church out of their ashes, and turn her poison to a preservative! But alas, it is sad, that whilst men were burned for the truth and reading the Scripture, then their affection did also burn in reading the same, but *now* with our liberty there is so great a decay.

4. Must not the *wise* and *politicians* of the World confess, this late increase of the Church is a thing *above their reach*, most cross to all their rules which they cannot see how in an ordinary way it could be bro't about.

5. Were not *instruments* most *unlikely* for so great a work, if we would judge as men? That such a poor handful, as *Luther, Zuinglius, Melancton, Bucer, &c.* should go forth to confront that power, which then *made the earth to tremble*, might it not seem as improbable, as the sending forth of some fishermen to subdue the Nations?

6. It

6. It is known, they were *none* of the *Rabbies* of the time, whose repute and fame might have purchased easy access, to their message: nay, they were loaded with all the *reproach*, which their adversaries could devise, with novelty of doctrine, deceit and falshood in their dealing, represented to the World as Monsters. *Luther* was forced to answer himself a printed relation of his death, how he was carried away soul and body by the Devil.

7. Was not the *message* they carried, most *opposite* to men's *carnal inclinations*, to these principles, they had suckt in from their infancy, to the religion of their Fathers; yea, in a word, had no outward encouragements! The whole World seemed to combine against them; *Luther*, at his first appearance excommunicated by the Pope, prescribed by the Empe-
rour; and good *Melancton* was oft made to faint, when he thought on so great a storm of opposition: so that without the convoy of an extraordinary power, nothing could have looked more improbable.

SECOND Witness, that may let the World see a wonderful providence in this late raising of the Church, is this, *These sharp assaults which the Church met with, from a party, no less cruel and powerful, than any adversary which the Church had in the primitive times.* For I am sure, the World must confess, that no ordinary means had wanted for an essay, to crush the gospel in its first budding forth; that both counsel and force, the authority of Law, backed with greatest rage and violence in its execution, yea, the Power of the Princes of the earth, were put forth to the utmost, to withstand this great work of God in these last ages. To clear this, I shall only point at some remarkable assaults which did attend the dawning of the gospel, that may shew something above nature going along with it.

1. We

1. We find a *Spanish Emperor*, devoted to the *Popish* interest, & more powerful than any who went before, brought in on *Germany* with the very first breaking out of the light, which might seem a dreadful *hindrance* to the Gospel's spreading.

2. The rise of the *Boeres*, and *Anabaptist* party, whose being so gross, & destructive to civil order, to the interests and proprieties of men, did look like a sad incident, and a probable means to beget much prejudice against the truth.

3. That sad *overthrow* of the Duke of *Saxony*, and Landgrave of *Hesse*, who were such great patriots to the Church, did then threaten the very ruin of the *Protestant* interest in *Germany*.

4. The *Council of Trent*, where the *Popish* party had all their politicks on foot in a strong combination, how to ruin the Church,

5. The *Interim of Germany*, a most subtle contrivance to divide, and thus break the strength of the *Protestants*, was also a sore assault, a snare to some, and cause of persecution to others.

6. That *Spanish Inquisition*, established through *Spain*, *Italy*, and the *Low Countries*, a horrid cruel engine which did reach to prevent the smallest glancings of the truth.

7. The *French Massacre*, where not only the Admiral, but most of the considerable *Protestants* were through all *France* in a few days cut off. O would not this seem an irrecoverable stroke! together with that *Catholick league*, which did quickly follow upon the back thereof, a very strong and formidable combination to root out the *Protestant* interest.

8. The taking away of *Edward* the sixth, of *England*, and establishing of a cruel persecuter, *Queen Mary*, did indeed look like a stroke that should root out the Church in that part, and destroy that famous plantation of the Gospel, in its tender growth.

9. I

9. I must add, that which was as fore an assault to the Church as any, so greivous a *difference* which with the first breaking out of the work of Reformation did begin betwixt *Luther* and *Zuinglius*, about Christ's presence in the Sacrament; yea, come to such an height and with so great heat and animosity was followed, as in appearance would have wholly frustrated the work they were about.

THIRD Witness to this truth is that wonderful *patience and resolution of the Saints*, yea, with much *cheerfulness* in their greatest sufferings, which in these late times did appear. Wherein the world must confess, that same immediate support from Heaven, yea, the Lord's owning his People in a very extraordinary way, was no less manifest, than in those primitive sufferings of the Church from heathens. Sure, no past times, even in those bloody days of *Nero*! *Domitian*, &c. can shew more horrid, more strange engines of torment and cruelty, than what in these last ages the Church did endure from the *Popish* party: whose savage and barbarous usage of the poor flock of Christ, where ever they had access, may witness a cruelty more than human. And as to the number, are they not almost without reckoning, who in *France*, *Germany*, *Britain*, and the *Low Countries*, beside other parts, were slain within this 150 years; for the word of God, and the testimony of his truth? Now, as this is most manifest, it is also known what a divine and an invincible spirit, with an astonishing courage, and resolution, did appear in the carriage of the People of God, under this sore persecution; how they triumphed over their oppressors, and did cheerfully meet death in its most terrible shape; a thing which the Schools of *Socrates* and *Plato* with all their rules could never reach: yea, should be reckoned amongst the miracles of these latter

latter days. About which we would consider these things.---

1. That something *more than nature*, a spirit and resolution *above* the ordinary rate of *men*, yea, some thing much *above themselves*, their own natural temper and disposition, did in their most extream sufferings oft appear; and this without the least shadow of affectation, and deceit. I am sure, the World in these last ages, yea, the conscience of their persecutors, and of the greatest Atheists, must witness this.

2. That many of the most *soft & tender* disposition, many *women*, whose complexion would declare more weakness than others, yet in this late *Antichristian* persecution did endure greatest *torments*, and by suffering *triumphed* over the fury and rage of their adversaries; whereof we have many instances upon record.

3. The World hath been also witness, how *serious* and *deliberate* the Saints were in this, that they made *suffering* their choice; which they could easily have shunned, at the rate of yielding something in the truth: but ere they would do this, or give the adversary such a bribe, they chose to embrace death, and go to a stake for Christ, even when they wanted not most perswading offers to turn them aside. For instance, I would here mention that excellent man in Queen *Mary's* time, *Julius Palmer*, who not only had life, but preferment offered, if he would recant; to which his answer was, that he had quitted his *living* in two places for Christ, and now was ready to yield his *life* also on that account. Likewise one *William Hunter*, whom Bishop *Bonner* did urge with many offers to recant, told him, it must be by *Scripture*, and not perswasions of that kind; for he reckoned all earthly things but dross and dung in respect of Christ; and at the stake, when a pardon by the Sheriff was offered upon such an account, did peremp-

torily

torily reject the same. *Antonius Riccio*, a Venetian, who condemned for the truth had a large offer to have his patrimony restored, which was much mortgaged with debt, and made free, besides his life, if he would but a little yield, and likewise had his son weeping on him for that cause, gave this answer, he was resolved to lose both Children and estate for Christ. I shall add what we have related of one *Herwin*, who suffered in the *Low countries*, to whom the Magistrates made great intreaties with large promises to recant, which he wholly slighted. Many more instances of this kind here might be set down.

4. It is known, that such who were of *great repute* in the World, and had a *large share of outward things* to tempt them, did in these last times most chearfully part with the same, and chose rather *suffering for the truth*. We may instance those two great witnesses, *John Frederick* of *Saxon* and the *Landisgrave* of *Hesse*, who under that long imprisonment by *Charles* the 5. bare out many sharp assaults, both by threatnings and offers, without yielding in the least to the prejudice of the truth; yea, on this account did the *Duke of Saxon* forego his estate and dignity. *Annas Du Burg*, counsellour of the Parliament at *Paris*, of great parts and repute, who before *Henry* the II. had an excellent speech in Parliament, for the Protestant party, for which by him being imprisoned, did forego all his honours and interests in the World (which otherways he might have kept) and embraced death for Christ. The Prince of *Condee* at the massacre of *Paris*, when the King expressly shewed him he should within 3 days die, if he did not renounce his Religion, told him, his estate and life were in his hand, but ere he renounced the truth he would quit both. *Charles de Zereton*, a Moravian Barron, of great interest and authority

thority in that country, in the late *Bohemian* persecution did quit all his estate and possession for the Gospel, notwithstanding of many large offers and persuasions. We find also in *England* the Dutchess of *Suffolk*, a lady who lived in the fulness of the world and pleasures thereof, yet in *Queen Mary's* time, did quit both estate and country for the truth, and on that account did choose a very hard lot in other parts.

5. Is it not also known, how those who had been ready to faint, & to be overcharged with discouragement, yet at death, in the extremity of their suffering, did shew a marvellous resolution and cheerfulness? A thing which no Atheist can possibly answer, & sheweth God's very immediate support. *Mr. Glover*, how sore was he cast down, and could feel no joy or comfort after much wrestling; but no sooner did come in sight of the stake, but his soul was filled with the joy of the Lord, and with his strength, which forced him to clap his hands, and cry forth to a friend who knew his former damp, and discouragement, *Oh Austin, he is come, he is come!* and thus cheerfully went to death. *Thomas Hudson*, a choice Christian who suffered in *Queen Mary's* time, when at the stake, did slip suddenly from under the chain, to the astonishment of the People; yet not from fear of death, but from the want of feeling of Christ, which made him full of heaviness: but after his turning aside, that he had got his soul poured out to God, he returned as one raised from death to life, crying out, *Now I am strong, and do not care what man can do!* and thus with much joy did yield up his spirit. Likewise *Annas du Burgh*, whom we before mentioned, being through fear and discouragement drawn to recant, had no rest in his spirit until he retracted the same, and after did cheerfully undergo death. With what marvellous resolution did that excellent

cellent man, *Doctor Cranmer*, put his right hand to the fire when he came to the stake, and suffered it to burn without shrinking, which (as he said) he would punish for subscribing a recantation, which was so much thereafter his grief!

Last I must add, that marvellous joy and resolution, which the Saints in these late times did in their greatest sufferings shew, is very evident, and known to the world; for their suffering was not in a corner, and we may say, hath not come short of the primitive Martyrs, but did witness the same spirit and power accompanying them. I cannot pass this in a general, without giving some touch, amidst such a multitude of convincing instances. Let us hear blessed *Bradford* at the stake thus speak to his fellow-sufferer, *Be of good comfort, for we shall have this night a merry supper with the Lord.* *Latimer* to *Ridley*, *We shall this day light such a candle in England, as I trust shall never be put out.* *Mr. Sanders*, *I was in prison until I got into prison;* and at the stake embracing, cries, *Welcome the cross of Christ, welcome everlasting life.* *Dr. Farrer*, to a gentleman who bemoaned his death, and the painfulness of it, *If you see me once stir in the fire, believe not my doctrine:* as did after appear, for he stood without moving in the the midst of the flame *John Ardley*, -- *If every hair of my head were a man, it should suffer death, in the faith I now stand in.* -- *Elizabeth Folks* embracing the stake, cried, *Farewel World, farewell faith and hope, & welcome love.* -- *Robert Agurion* son, when at *Lile* in the Low countries he suffered with his father for the truth, in the year 1556. did cry forth at the stake, *Behold millions of Angels about us, & the heaven opened to receive us!* after he had sometime fixed his eyes on heaven: and when the fire was kindled, says to his father, *Yet a very little, and we shall enter into the heavenly mansion.* *Mr. Tims*, an English minister in *Queen Mary's* days, thus

thus writes to his friends, " I am going to the Bishops coal-house, but shall not be long there before I be carried up to my brethren, who are gone to heaven before me in a fiery chariot; follow you after me, where you shall find me singing merrily at my journey's end, *Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth.* -- *Algerius*, an Italian martyr, thus writes from his prison a little before his death, *Who would believe that in this dungeon I should find a paradise so pleasant! in a place of sorrow and death, tranquillity, and hope of life! where others weep, I rejoice. O how easy and sweet is his yoke!* And this he subscribes from that delectable orchard of the *Leoline* prison. *Guy deBres*, *The ringing of my chain hath been sweet musick in my ears; all my former discourses were but as a blind man's of colours, in respect of my present feeling. O what a precious comforter is a good conscience!* The Lord *Henry Otto*, a Bohemian, who suffered in the late persecution, said to the minister, *I was troubled, but now I feel a wonderful refreshment. O now I fear death no longer, I will dye with joy; and on the scaffold cryed out, behold, I see the heavens opened:* pointing with his hands at the place where others observed a certain brightness that did dazzle their eyes; and thus died with great cheerfulness. I shall but add the last words of that holy and great *Mr. Whart*, who thus spake amidst the fire, *This flame doth torment my body, but no whit abate my spirits.*

FOURTH Witness is, *these great and remarkable judgments of God, which in these last times have befallen the adversaries and persecutors of the Church, who have been most notorious for their opposition to the truth;* therein we must say, a divine hand hath been so discernable, that ordinary observers could not pass the same without a remark, but must acknowledge the righteous judgment of God, that it cometh not by guess and at an adventure, but doth convincingly seal the word.

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This is indeed a grave subject, wherein we should be very serious and sober; for *the judgments of God are a great depth*, nor can we determine from events but in so far as they answer to the word. It may sometime happen to wicked men according to *the work of the righteous*; but on the other hand it is a sure truth, that *God is known by the judgment he executes*, and in every age doth point out sin to the World by remarkable strokes, some great examples of judgment, which as a beacon are set forth for men to observe. And truly we may say, those remarkable instances of the judgment of God, since he begun to found a retreat to his Church from *Babylon*, are far beyond other preceeding ages. I would be spating to repeat what of this kind is published by others, but that in speaking to this truth, I cannot pass it in a general, whilst there are so many instances wherein the Lord hath made himself known, and these such a convincing seal and confirmation of the truth. And in the following relations, I dare with confidence say, there is not any passage or matter of fact, here set down without some clear and satisfying grounds as to the certainty thereof.

I shall first instance *Charles* the V. whose undertakings for many years were followed with success, until once he set himself to persecute and oppress the Church, and bathed his sword in the blood of the *Protestants*, with his cruel and unjust usage of the Duke of *Saxony*; from which time his affairs begun visibly to decline, he is forced to fly before *Mauritus*, and seek a retreat in the furthest confines of the empire, and after broken with melancholy and discontent, like another *Dioctesian*, doth resign his empire, and turn to a private life.

Philip the II. of *Spain*, one of the greatest persecutors of the Church in these last ages, whose work was to root out the *Protestant* Religion in his domi-

nions, and therefore set on foot that horrid engine of the *Inquisition*, yet at last finds all his essays frustrated, and after the loss of many millions of treasures, and of some 10000 lives by war, yea, of a considerable part of the *Netherlands*, and after the breaking his great *Armado* at sea against the *English* by a very remarkable stroke from Heaven, is at last smitten of the Lord in his body by a strange disease, or rather a confluence of diseases, which his physicians could neither understand, nor cure; his body falling out in grievous boils, whence (besides putrid matter) there did issue such abundance of Vermin, that standers-by could hardly cleanse, or endure the horrid smell thereof. And he who had put so many of the Saints to cruel torments by the *Inquisition*, was himself tormented, for 2 years together, with unexpressible pain and anguish.

Henry the II. of *France*, a most violent enemy to the Church, whilst he had caused sentence of *Annas De Burg* to death, having solemnly protested in such words, *These eyes of mine shall see thee burnt*; a little before the appointed time of his execution, running in the lists with a spear against Count *Montgomery*, it pierced through the eye, with such a wound, that in a short time sent him to his grave, and frustrated his expectation of seeing the death of that excellent man. His son *Charles* the IX. that bloody persecutor, I shall mention elsewhere how remarkably the judgment of God did pursue him.

Henry the III. who (whilst he was Duke of *Anjou*) did assist at that horrid Counsel kept at *St. Cloud*, near *Paris*, where the Massacre was concluded, is some years after stabbed to death by a *Jacobin* frier in that very chamber: a thing which *Du Serres* doth twice mention with a remark, as a marvellous instance of the judgment of God.

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The Duke of *Guise*, the great executioner of that Massacre, and his brother the *Cardinal*, a special contriver of the same, are not long after killed by *Henry* the III. at *Blois*, with whom they had off joyned in Counsel, to root out the Protestants; and which is very observable, by a specious show of friendship were circumvented, and with solemn Oaths and promises as teacherously reached, as the Admiral and Protestants by *Charles* the IX. were at *Paris*: and these two who were his great Counsellors, thus are dealt with, having blood measured out to them for blood, and treachery, as they had dealt treacherously with the Saints.

We find also the Duke of *Amale*, who was a joyned actor with the Duke of *Guise* in that massacre, doth a little after fall by a shot off the walls at the siege of *Rochel*; which not only *Du Serres* but also *Davilla*, who was very popish, doth particularly relate; where we may see, what a bloody end the great contrivers and actors of that horrid massacre had.

Henry the IV. a Prince of excellent parts and great natural accomplishments, was followed with marvellous success, whilst he owned the truth: yet, after many victories and the breaking of the *Catholic League*, turns popish, and abjures the protestant Religion; but lo, within a little he is stabbed in the mouth by a *Jesuit*. On which, a protestant Gentleman used this freedom with him, *Sir, you have denied God and his truth with your mouth, and he hath given you there a stroke; take heed you deny him not also with your heart, lest the next stroke be there!* Which as the French History sheweth, did accordingly fall out, when he was stabbed by *Ravilack*; *Du Serres* his own Historiographer doth shew it was through the very heart: and it was too evident, that sometime before his death he had turned cordial and zealous for the popish interest.

Ferdinand

Ferdinand the II. a great persecutor of the Church in *Germany*, who after his victory over *Frederick* and the *Bohemian* States, made it his work to root out the Church and Protestant Religion there, and turned that country unto a bloody shambles; not sparing any rank, who would not abjure the truth: but a short time after, we find the avenger of blood (in whose fight that of his Saints is precious) pursueth him, raiseth up the *Swedes* for an adversary, under whose sword most of those cruel wretches, that were the *Bohemian* scourge, do fall, turneth *Germany* and the Emperors countries into a field of blood; breaketh that great army, which for many years had given Law to *Germany*, so that (as some historians mention) an army of 24000 *Captains*, because all old expert soldiers, was broken in the plain fields with a huge slaughter; yea, the violence and cruelty of the popish party was thus measured out to them, as they had measured to the poor Church of *Bohemia*, and the *Palatinate*; and *Ferdinand* the Emperor broken with breach upon breach, that men may see the judgment of God pursuing a bloody persecutor.

Those barbarous cruel *Irish*, who of late carried on that horrid *Massacre* there, sparing no Protestants, what ever was their age or rank, without compassion to women or children, O how visibly did the judgment of the Lord reach them, and for that savage blood shed give them blood to drink in great measure! their chief leader *Macguier*, *Machune*, and after *Philomy Oncale* taken, publickly executed, most of them consumed by the sword, their spirits so debased, that a few *English* or *Scots* Soldiers would have chased multitudes of them; so that the world might see divine vengeance eminently pursuing them, which in a few years did root out most of that cruel generation. We have an observable instance also recorded of *Sir James Hamilton*, natural brother to the Earl of *Arran* who

who in *King James* the V. time was by the popish Clergy promoted against such as were then suspected of favouring the Protestant Religion, in which place he was most terrible and cruel against all he could reach, yea, so violent that some of his near kinsmen were by him brought under the lash of his power: But lo, when at his greatest height, whilst he is making it his work to crush the Gospel in its budding forth, this is made the means of his ruin, and by one of his friends whom he pursued on the account of Religion, he is accused of treason, and notwithstanding of the solicitation of the Popish clergy for him as their great Patriot, he is presently arraigned, beheaded and quartered in the publick street of *Edinburg*.

It is also known, what violent persecutors Cardinal *Beaton* & his successor *Bishop Hamilton* were, who were no less conspicuous instances of the judgments of the Lord in that time: also what befel one frier *Cambel*, who did bitterly rail on that excellent man *Mr. Patrick Hamilton* when he was burnt at *St. Andrews*, to whom *Mr. Hamilton* at the stake in great vehemency said, "Wicked man, thou knowest the contrary, and hast sometime professed the same, I appeal thee to answer before the judgment-seat of Christ." And within a few days after (which in that time was well known) this frier fell sick, and in great horror of conscience, as one mad, died.

There are indeed many such remarkable instances. It is known, how the judgment of God did pursue those three great Apostates from the truth, *Olivares* Chancelour of *France*, *Latomus*, and *Francis Spira*, who after they had quitted their profession, and against their light denied the truth, died with great horror of conscience, crying out to standers by, what a hell they found within them! *Du Serres* doth shew, how that Chancelour of *France*, thro' the torment and anguish of his mind, caused the very bed to shake under

der him. But since there are many examples of this kind already upon record, I do the more briefly touch it; and shall only add some few which are worthy of a remark in our own land (*Scotland*) how visibly the Lord did pursue by his judgment some who had deserted the truth, and turned opposers and persecutors thereof in their promoting *Antichristian Prelacy*, contrary to their former profession and engagements.

1. I shall instance *Mr. Patrick Adamson*, a Preacher once of great repute in this land, but one whom ambition and private interest swayed more than the interest of Christ, who insinuating himself in the King's favour, made it his work to overturn the established government and discipline of the Church, until he got himself settled Archbishop of *St. Andrews*, and Prelacy by his means advanced, which the Church from her first Reformation from Popery had disclaimed; yea, in this height of his power and grandeur, turned an avowed persecutor of his brethren: at which time he used to boast of 3 things that he said could not fail him, his *riches*, *learning* and the *King's favour*. But a little after, as was then most known, he was by the righteous judgment of God brought to this pass that his *parts* did so far wither and dry up, that in seeking a blessing on his meat he could scarce speak a few words of Sense, though once admired for his eloquence: as for his *riches*, he was forced to get charity from those Ministers whom he before persecuted: and for the *King's favour*, he was so abhorred by him, that as he himself professed when the stroke of God brought him to some sense of his condition, *he was sure the King did care more for the worst of his dogs than for him*. And thus in great misery he died, cast off by the World whose favour he had only sought. His publick acknowledgement of his guilt and apostacy, and of the

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Lord's hand pursuing the same, was by himself subscribed, before divers eminent and worthy Ministers of the Church, who did also by their subscription attest the same, and was afterwards printed.

It is also manifest, how the Lord in his judgment did pursue that wretched man, his successor, Bishop *Spotswood*, who in a more subtle way did endeavour the overturning the discipline and liberties of the Church, for setting up of Prelacy, and by under-hand-dealing got himself first thrust into *Glasgow*, and after to be Archbishop of *St. Andrews*, yea, at last was chancellour of *Scotland*, his eldest Son a Baron in *Fife*, and his second Son President of the Session, his Daughter also married to *Rossine* then a considerable Barron. But let us see where this ends, what an eminent example in all these respects of the judgment of God, he was, and therein the prophecy of that great man *Mr. Welsh* accomplished, who did foretel in a letter, whilst he was prisoner at *Blackness*, that *he should be as a stone cast out of a sling by the hand of God, his name should rot, and a malediction on his posterity*. And truly this is known what become of him in the year 1638. How he was excommunicated by the Church; did flee into *England*, where in great misery he died; his eldest Son, *Sir John Spotswood*, was sometime brought to beg his bread, which is known to many yet alive; his second Son, who was President of the Session, being taken at the battel of *Philip-hauch*, was beheaded at *St. Andrews*, and his Oy young *Darzie* beheaded at *Edinburgh*; and for his daughter who was married to *Rossine* it is known, how quickly after, that estate was rooted out, and turned from that race.

Mr. James Nicolsonne, one very eminent in his time for parts, and judgment in the affairs of the Church, yea, once very zealous for the truth, and a great opposer of Prelacy, when it first begun to assault the

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Church, but at last was turned aside, by Court-insinuations gets the *Bishoprick* of *Dunkel*; yea, turns most forward to promote that interest. But lo! in a short time he is stricken by the Lord with sickness, and great horror of conscience within, can get no rest, his friends in vain endeavouring to comfort him; and when they would have brought physicians, he told them, his disease was of another kind, for which they could give no physick, which pressed him more then his sickness, that against so much light and against his conscience he had opposed the truth, and yielded up the liberties of the Kingdom of Christ, to please an earthly King: and he charged his Children, that nothing which he had acquired since he was *Prelate*, should go amongst the rest of his estate. And thus in great bitterness and grief he died, whereupon his brother in Law *Mr. David Lindsey*, then a witness, made some Verses in Latin.

*Solatur frustra, conjunx, solantur amici,
Et medicum accersi, sedulo quisque jubet.
Sed dare solamen nemo, dare nemo salutem,
Te præter pœterit, Rex Jacobe, mihi,
Quæ corpus gravat, atque animam, tantum exime mihi
Huc capui, hujus onus me premit, & perimit.*

Mr. William Couper, sometime minister of *Perth*, one who witnessed much zeal against *Prelacy*, both by preaching and writing; in a letter to *Mr. George Graham*, who had writ to him entreating his charity towards his own conforming, he hath these words,---*Sir, for your self I never hated you, but the course you are in I never loved: how dangerous is their estate, who cannot rise, but with the fall of many who in Christ have entred the right way to the ministry; closing these fountains, which God hath opened? Doing in a matter of conscience with doubting, turns men's light to darkness;*

ness; whence follows induration: therefore I cannot stand with you, except to witness to God in my heart against you! And thus shuts up his letter, *Consider your self, where you was, and where you now are, & quantum sit illud propter quod nos reliquisti.* This I set down, to shew what sometimes he was: yet shortly after, this man turns to a *Bishoprick*, was loathed by the Godly in that time, some of his old friends brought his own sermons to him, and desired him to reconcile them with his after-actings, which did visibly affright and disquiet him; and one day being at pasture near to *Leith*, he was suddenly terrified with apprehension that he saw armed men coming upon him: those who were with him, told him, there was no such thing, it was only a dream; whereupon he became silent, and fell a trembling; but after he went home, took bed and died in much anguish and trouble of spirit, being observed to point out with his finger to the earth, crying out these words, *A fallen Star! a fallen Star!* It was also known, how for divers years he had been seized upon with an *Hypochondriack* distemper, apprehending he was all glass; whereupon worthy *Mr. Simson* of *Sterling* who had sometimes been his familiar, hearing of his Court-advancement, had this line.---

Aureus, heu! fragilem confregit malleus urnam.

A very convincing instance of the judgment of God in that time, was one *Mr. Andrew Poyer*, Minister at *Dunfermling*, who being sent Commissioner to the Assembly at *Glasgow* 1610, and solemnly adjured, as he should answer to Jesus Christ, by his brethren, not to consent to any alteration of the government of the Church, yet notwithstanding voted for *Prelacy*, having got 50 Marks from the Earl of *Dumbar* (who made use of that argument to break some

some of these wretches) a small sum indeed to sell the cause of Christ, and by him very dear bought. For after his return, he falleth into sickness, and upon his recovery from that was seized with horror of conscience, so that he run out of the pulpit whilst he was going to preach, confessing he had sold Christ at that Assembly for money ; that being poor and having a numerous family, he had chosen rather to *make haste*, than *believe* ; and thus laid aside his ministry, requesting Mr. John Murrey, who then was silenced by the Bishop, that for Christ's sake he would take the charge of that place. After which he fell into a great distraction, and became in some measure mad : and though he did something recover, yet died in great infamy, poor, and drowned in debt, a very convincing example of the judgment of God. This, old Mr. Row of Carnock, being then a minister in the same Presbytery, sets down under his hand, which he most certainly knew.

I shall only add two remarkable instances of the Lord's judgment within these few years, that should not be past without a remark.

The First relates to a considerable family in this country, who made it their work to trouble and persecute the Minister of that Parish, an eminently holy and faithful man ; yea, upon the account of his faithfulness the old Laird of that house out of malice doth pursue him with a false libel before the Synod, using all means he could to reproach his name, having it as his design, either to get him broken and put out of the Parish, or at least to crush his spirit, and weaken him in the exercise of the ministry ; but doth there meet with a disappointment, the Lord clearing the innocence of his servant, and the malice of the other, so that even such who other ways wanted not a prejudice at him, were forced to acknowledge this : at which time that Gentleman, whilst he went to the stable where his horses were, being then

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at the Synod upon that account, is in the place stricken with sickness, forced to haste home and take bed, and there seized with horror of conscience, which made him oft cry, intreating most earnestly for his Minister whom he had thus persecuted, and oft had these words, *O to see his face*, yea, told his friends that if he would not come to him, they should carry him to his house ; but his Lady out of malice did in a most rude and violent way hinder the Minister's access to him, and thus that poor Gentleman in great horror and anguish dieth. After his death his Lady doth still pursue the quarrel, with no less malice, until she also falleth sick, and therewith had much terror upon her conscience ; yea, did no less cry out for the Minister, who then was providentially absent, so that she was put to cry, and in that denied, which she did hinder to her poor husband ; though at last, he came to her before her death, to whom she with much bitterness confessed her wrong. After this a young man their chaplain, who had been engaged by them to appear as a witness against that godly man, was so terrified in his conscience, that he could get no rest until he went to the next Synod, to acknowledge that horrid sin, in bearing false witness against his Minister ; but being there kept by some from a publick appearance, he went to another part of the country, where, it is certainly reported, he died distracted. Now last of all the young Laird, who did succeed in that estate, would needs pursue the quarrel, and finding more access, through the change of the time, did so endeavour with some who were in power, that an order was past for banishing him out of that Parish : and though he was then otherways staged, upon the account of the publick cause, yet, it was known, the violent pursuit of that Gentleman was the main cause of this sentence, which those who had hand in passing it, did themselves confess. For he

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had solemnly sworn, that if he lived in that place, that man should not be Minister there: but lo! a few days after, having returned to his house, and boasting, how he had kept his word, and now got his Minister cast out of the parish, he was suddenly struck by the Lord with an high fever, which plucked him away in the very strength of his years. This I had related, as it is here set down, from a grave Christian, the party himself being present, which he did humbly decline to relate, though he could not but assent thereto.

The Second is one *David Macbryar*, who was a member of the late Parliament, being one of the commissioners of the Burrowes, a man most notorious in the country where he lived for a lewd and gross practice, but most remarkable and known beyond others for his violence and rage against the Godly, as he shewed by his carriage, both in the Parliament, and afterwards where he could have access, did set himself to trouble and persecute such under that reproachful name of *Fanaticks*; but within some time thereafter, whilst we was forced to retire by reason of debt, for fear of caption, he was found one day walking alone, by one who was then come out of the North to that country, and had ridden forth, to see if he could catch any of that party whom he judged was then lurking, and supposing upon his rencounter that he was surely one of these, would needs apprehend him, but he upon his resistance and struggling against him was by him run through with a sword, and immediately killed on the place, upon that very account, and persuasion, that he was a *Fanatick*, and *Rebel*, as he then termed him. Thus he who had declared himself an enemy to the people of God, whom he was wont in reproach to call *Fanaticks*, was himself under that very notion and upon that ground cut down by one of his own stamp and principles.

ples. O was not this *the finger of God*, and a convincing proof of his righteous judgment!

F I F T H Witness, which holds forth the Lord's eminent appearing, and something of an extraordinary power, in the late raising and reformation of the Church from Antichristianism, is this, *that large measure of the Spirit, and outpouring thereof, which did convincingly follow the Gospel and ministry of the word in these last times*; a truth which, we must say, hath been manifest, and by many solemn proofs thereof demonstrated, no less than in the first planting of the christian Church.

It is undeniable, how great a witness to the truth, the *Spirit* and down-pouring thereof is. For this is God's own seal, which is not put to a lie, or falsehood. Thus he bears witness to his *work* in the hearts of his people, and by this also the Lord doth seal and attest the *doctrine* of the Church, and the *commission* of his servants who publish the same; yea, at some *special seasons*, as when the truth hath least countenance or encouragement from without, times of contradiction when men will not receive its testimony, and a strong current of opposition to the Gospel, then hath this in a more full and large measure been discernable. Thus did the Lord eminently own and confirm the Christian Religion in the days of the *Apostles*, and for some following ages, by so great a downpouring of the *Spirit*, such visible and extraordinary effects thereof as did then astonish the World, and force men to confess something *above nature*, that this was surely the great work and power of God: and have we not also cause to say, that thus the Lord hath born a very solemn testimony to his truth, the work of reformation, and doctrine of the reformed Churches, in these *late times*? about which I dare appeal to observers, yea,

the adversaries, to their own conscience, if without shutting their eyes they could shift the conviction of a convincing appearance of God, in the power and efficacy of the Spirit, even in a more than ordinary way accompanying the word and ordinances; power, which carried kingdoms and cities before it, yea, in a very short time against the greatest violence and opposition. To clear this a little, I shall point at some few remarkable Evidences, which might stare the grossest of men in the face, & in some measure convince them of this truth.

1. It is evident, that marvellous conquest which the Gospel had in Germany, by the ministry of Luther, Melancton, Bucer, Martyr, Musculus, and a few others of those excellent instruments, whom the Lord then sent forth. O was not this a day of the Spirit, and the pouring forth thereof in a large measure, a day of the gospel's triumph, not by might, or by power; yet such as before it the World could not stand! cities and countrys might then be said to be born at once; the arm of the Lord revealed with the same, that men were either scorched, or truly warmed and gained thereby. Did not that marvellous power and efficacy of the Spirit also attend the ministry of Zuinglius, and Oecolampadius, in Zurich, and Basil, when so through a reformation followed, to the throwing down of Images, abolishing of the Mass by publick authority, notwithstanding of its long continuance; and all this in a short time! The Spirit, and power of God did very eminently appear also, in those famous plantations of the Gospel by the Ministry of Calvin, Farel, and Viret in Geneva, Lausanna, and other adjacent Provinces. It is written in the life of Viret, that at Lyons, which was a great populous city, he preached in an open place, where divers thousands were converted to the truth; yea, some who came by with no purpose to hear, only

only out of curiosity stepped in, were so wrought and overcome with the power of the word, as for that time made them even neglect their other business.

2. That great success, which did attend the ministry of Mr. Wishart in Scotland, can also witness this truth: whence so marvellous a change did quickly follow, in those places where he preached, through Angus, Lothian, and the western parts; yea, how much the spirits of the people were then raised and affected with the word. But this, being a thing so known from the histories of that time, I only name.

3. Besides those which are more known, and upon publick record, I must here instance a very solemn and extraordinary outpouring of the SPIRIT, which about the year 1625. and thereafter, was in the West of Scotland: whilst the persecution of the Church there was hot from the prelatick party. This, by the prophane rabble of that time, was called the Stewarton Sickness: for in that parish first, but after through much of that country, particularly at Irwine, under the ministry of famous Mr. DICKSON it was most remarkable. Where it can be said (which divers Ministers and Christians yet alive can witness) that for a considerable time, few Sabbaths did pass without some evidently converted, and some convincing proofs of the power of God, accompanying his word: yea, that many were so choaked and taken by the heart, that through TERROUR (the SPIRIT in such a measure convincing them of sin in hearing of the word they have been made to FALL OVER and thus CARRIED OUT OF THE CHURCH, who after proved most solid and lively Christians: and, as it was known to me of the most gross, who used to mock at religion, being engaged, upon the same that went about such things, to go to some of those places, where the Gospel was then most lively, I have heard of many reached before their return, with a witness of the

following the same. And truly, this great *spring-tide* (which I may so call) of the Gospel, was not of a *short* time, but for some YEARS continuance; yea thus, like a spreading moor-burn, the *power of Godliness* did advance from one place to another, which put a marvellous lustre on these parts of the country, the favour whereof brought many from other parts of the land to see the truth of the same.

4. I must also mention that solemn Communion at the Kirk of the *Shots*, 20 June 1630. at which time there was so convincing an appearance of God, and down-pouring of the SPIRIT, even in an *extraordinary way*, that did follow the ordinances, especially that sermon on the *Monday 21st June*, with a *strange unusual MOTION on the bearers*, who in a great multitude were there convened of divers ranks; that it was known (which I can speak on sure ground) near 500 had at that time a discernable *change* wrought on them, of whom most proved lively Christians afterward: it was the sowing of a seed through *Clidesdale*, so as many of most eminent Christians in that country, could date either their *conversion*, or some remarkable *confirmation* in their case, from *that day*. And truly this was the more remarkable, that one after much reluctance, by a special and unexpected providence, was called to preach *that sermon* on the *Monday*, which then was not usually practised; and that *night before*, by most of the Christians there, was spent in *prayer*; so that the *Monday's work*, as a convincing *return of Prayer* might be discerned.

5. I shall here also instance that solemn and great *Work of God*, which was in the Church of Ireland some years before the fall of prelacy, about the year 1628. and some years thereafter. Which, as many grave and solid Christians yet alive can witness, who were there present, was a *bright and hot sun shine*

of the Gospel; yea, may with sobriety be said, to have been one of the largest manifestations of the SPIRIT, and of the most solemn times of the down-pouring thereof, that almost since the days of the *Apostles* hath been seen: where the *power of God* did sensibly accompany the word with an *unusual MOTION upon the bearers*. and a very great Tack as to the conversion of souls to Christ; the *goings of the Lord* then full of *Majesty*, and the *shout of a King* was heard in these solemn meetings of his people; that as a judicious old Christian who was there present, did express it, he thought it was like a *dazzling beam and ray of God*, with such an unusual brightness, as even forced bystanders to an astonishment; a very *effectual door opened*, with more than ordinary enlargement, which the *Ministers* of Christ there did find in preaching the word, whilst the *People* might be seen hearing the same in a *melting frame*, with much tenderness of spirit. Surely this was the very *power of God*, a convincing *seal* to the truth, and ministry of his Servants, who were then persecuted by the Prelates; yea, a thing which (as it was known) had an awful impression, and was a *terror to their adversaries*. I remember amongst other passages, what a worthy Christian told me, how sometimes in *hearing* the word, such a *power and evidence of the Lord's presence* was with it, that he hath been forced to rise, and look through the Church, and see what the people were doing; thinking, from what he felt on his own spirit, it was a wonder how any could go away without some *change* upon them. And then it was sweet and easy for Christians to come 30, 40 miles to these solemn Communions, which they had; and there continue, from the time they came, until they returned, without *weariness*, or making use of *sleep*; yea, but little either meat or drink, and as some of them professed, did not feel the need thereof; but

but went away most fresh and vigorous, their souls so filled with sense of God.

6. That was also a remarkable time, wherein the Lord did pour forth much of the SPIRIT on his people in the year 1638, when this Nation did solemnly enter in Covenant, which many yet alive at this day do know, how the spirits of men were raised, and wrought on by the word, the ordinances lively, and longed after: for then did the Nation own the Lord, and was visibly owned by him; much Zeal and an enlarged heart did appear for the publick cause; personal reformation seriously set about; and then also was there a remarkable gale of providence, that did attend the actings of his people, which did astonish their adversaries, and forced many of them to feign subjection. Alas, how in our night come on! For the Lord hath in anger covered the face of the Daughter of Zion with a dark cloud.

7. Must not we also say, since the land was engaged by Covenant to the Lord, is these late times, what a solemn outpouring of the SPIRIT hath been seen! A large harvest, with much of the fruit of the Gospel discernable, which we may say with a warrant, hath been proved in the inbringing of thousands to Christ! a part whereof now are in glory, and many yet live, who are a visible seal to this truth: of whom, I am sure, some will not lose the remembrance of those sweet refreshing times, which the land for several years did enjoy, of the Gospel & of many solemn communions, where a large blessing with much of the Spirit, and power of God, was felt accompanying the ordinances. If it were expedient to set down circumstances, I could here point at many such remarkable times and places, which would clearly demonstrate this.

Now, besides these more publick and obvious proofs, it is known, what a great testimony the experience

of the godly in these late times could give to this truth, what they have in a large measure felt of the power and refreshing effusions of the SPIRIT within their soul; yea, how oft after forest down-casting have been wonderfully raised above themselves, and filled with the consolation of God, and joy unspeakable: this would indeed make a great volume, to reckon over all these instances, even these whose experience in these last ages could in a large measure witness this truth. Only, to shut this up, I shall name these two,---

1. Mr. *Walsb*, and Mr. *Forbes*, two great witnesses of Christ in this land, when they were prisoners, give this account of their case in a letter to Mr. *James Melvin*, and his Uncle, then at London, which under the said Mr. *Melvin's* hand is set down in a manuscript of his; their words are these,--*Dear Brethren, we dare say by experience, and our God is witness we lie not, that unspeakable is the joy, that is in a free and full testimony of Christ's royal authority, unspeakable is the joy of suffering for his Kingdom.* (For on that truth was their suffering stated) *We had never such joy and peace in preaching of it, as we have found in suffering for the same: we spoke before in knowledge, we now speak by experience, that the Kingdom of God consists in peace and joy.* And in another letter, thus they say, *Our joy hath greatly abounded, since the last day* (Which was after passing sentence of death on them by assize at *Linlithgow*) *so that we cannot enough wonder at the riches of his free grace, that should have vouchsafed such a gift upon us, to suffer for his Kingdom, in which there is joy unspeakable and glorious; and we are rather in fear, that they (to wit the sufferings) be not continued, and so we be robbed of further consolation, than that they should increase. Surely there is great consolation in suffering for Christ: we do not express unto you the joy, which our God had caused to abound in us.*

2. I shall also mention that great Servant of Christ Mr. Rutherford, whose Letters now published can witness what solemn days of the SPIRIT, and sensible outpourings thereof, he oft had in his experience; though books can tell but little what he really felt, and enjoyed. I shall only set down some of his last and dying expressions, which I had from those who were then present, and caused the same to be writ down from his mouth, that may shew how lovely he also was in his death, and how well that did correspond with his former life. Some of his words are these; *I shall shine, I shall see him as he is, and all the fair company with him, and shall have my large share; it is no easy thing to be a Christian, but as for me I have got the victory, and Christ is holding forth his arms to embrace me. I have had my fears, and faintings, as an other sinful man, to be carried through creditably, but as sure as ever he spake to me in his word, his spirit witnessed to my heart, saying, Fear not, he had accepted my suffering, and the out gate should not be matter of prayer, but of praise.* He said also, *Thy word was found, and I did eat it, and it was to me the joy, and rejoicing of my heart.* And a little before his death after some fainting, he saith, *Now I feel, I believe, I enjoy, I joyce!* and turning to Mr. Blair then present, he said, *I feed on manna, I have Angels food; my eyes shall see my Redeemer, I know that he shall stand at the latter day on the earth, and I shall be caught up in the clouds to meet him in the air.* And afterwards hath these words, *I sleep in Christ, and when I awake, I shall be satisfied with his likeness.* O for arms to embrace him! and to one speaking about his painfulness in the ministry; he cryeth out, *I disclaim all; the part I would be in at, is redemption and forgiveness of sins through his blood.* And thus full of the SPIRIT, yea, as it were, overcome with sensible enjoyment, he breathes out his soul. His last words being, *Glory, Glory, dwelleth in Emmanuel's land!*

SIXTH

SIXTH Witness is that convincing appearance of an extraordinary and Apostolick spirit on some of these instruments, whom the Lord raised up in these last times, and those great endowments wherewith they were sent forth for the service of the Church, and the overthrow of the kingdom of Antichrist: a truth which, we must say, if not in such measure, yet hath been no less evident, than in those primitive times, when the Christian Church was planted.

It is clear, that extraordinary gifts & endowments have been given, forth to the Church under the New Testament, for with the first dawning of the Gospel there were both Apostles, & Prophets raised up. It cannot be also denied, that since the Cannon of the Scripture was closed, yea, in these late ages, there have been very extraordinary men given to the Church, who had special revelations from the Lord, of his mind about things to come; which though we should not now look for, yet wherein did the Lord remarkably condescend, when some great piece of service, and necessity of the Church did more call for it. And truly these were led in no other path than that of the Word; though they had a more special discovery and immediate inbreathing of God's mind, as to the application thereof in particular cases: neither did they press upon men's conscience, to credit the same, but were most cautious, witnessing much humility sobriety on that account.

It is known, what extraordinary instruments, how wonderfully called and qualified, Luther, Zuinglius, Calvin, Wishart, and Knox were, whom God sent in these latter days to grapple with Antichrist, and found a retreat to his Church from Babylon; likewise Melanthon, Beza, Bucer, and Martyr, with divers in England, such as Latimer, Ridley, Bradford, &c. who indeed were burning and shining lights in their time, mighty in the Scripture,

ture, fervent in spirit, were cloathed with the power and authority of God, before which the World could not stand. But besides these famous witnesses, of whose life we have something this day on publick record, I must here crave liberty to set down a few more, more late instances of our own Church in *Scotland*, to confirm this truth; such as are but little known to the World, nor any thing of their lives published, which I think a great loss to after-generations; who, we may say (and this with a warrant and in sobriety) were men *truly extraordinary*, eminently serviceable in the work of the Lord, yea, of a *Prophetick and Apostolick Spirit*, and such who through grace did not even come short of the *first three*; I mean not only those before mentioned, but also some of those great lights, who were in the *first age* of the Church after the ascension of Christ.

I. I shall instance Mr. *John Welsh*, whom the Lord called forth to the ministry at *Kirckcubright* in *Galiloway*, and afterwards was transported to the Church of *Air*, whom Mr. *Rutherford* in one of his books called that heavenly Prophetical and Apostolick Man of God, and sheweth that from the witnesses of his life, he had this account, that of every 24 hours he gave usually eight to prayer, if other necessary and urgent duties did not hinder; yea, spent many days and nights which he set apart, in fasting and prayer for the condition of the Church, and the sufferings of the reformed Churches abroad. I can also add this, from very fere information (and truly about any of these particulars, I seriously study to have satisfying grounds of the certainty thereof) that it was his usage even in the coldest winter-nights, to rise for prayer; and oft-times his wife, who was an excellent woman, hath risen to seek after him, where he hath been found lying on the ground weeping and wrestling with the

the Lord; yea, sometimes he would have been much of the night alone in the Church of *Aire* on that account. One time especially his wife finding him overcharged with grief, he told her, *he had that to press him*, which she had not, *the souls of 3000 to answer for*, whilest he know not how it was with many of them. And an other time whilest she found him alone, his spirit almost overcharged with anguish and grief, upon her serious enquiry, said, that the times which were to come on *Scotland*, were heavy and sad, though she should not see them, and this for the contempt of the Gospel.

Whilest he was prisoner in the *Blackness*, in a letter to a Christian lady, he giveth this account, *What large joy he had, to suffer for such a truth, that Jesus Christ was a King, and had a visible Kingdom in the World, even his Church, which was as free to keep its Courts, and exercise discipline by vertue of an intrinsic power from Christ, as any Kingdom on the earth, for which he was ready to lay down his life, yea, would rejoyce to be offered up a sacrifice on so glorious a truth.* In the close of that letter, he doth also forewarn, that judgment was coming to *Scotland*, which should be blood, first by an intestine sword, and then by the sword of a stranger, and that a great sacrifice should be there, both of great men, and mean. The fulfilling whereof hath since been very sensible, and is known by many alive, who had that letter long before the late troubles begun. Whilest he was thus prisoner, several remarkable passages I have had confirmed by divers worthy of credit, some of whom shewed me they had them from those who were most familiar with the persons themselves; they are indeed strange, but we must also consider he was an extraordinary man.

The first was this, that one night whilest he did expound the Scripture after his supper, in the prison (as his custom was) whilest he with much power

power and authority was pressing home the truth, one of the company who had some charge in the Castle, fell a jeering; which *Mr. Welsh* observing, and looking earnestly to him, did presently close the Bible, and cease, and a little after having a drink in his hand, he saith to a friend at the table before all that were present, *There is one so profane and gross, as to contemn and mock at the word of the Lord, but ere a little God shall smite him with a remarkable stroke of his judgment.* Which accordingly fell out, to the astonishment of the company; for that man did presently drop down to the ground, and died. A lady that was then Popish, being present by reason of a friend of her's that was prisoner in the castle, was so moved therewith that it proved an help to her after-conversion.

The other passage is this, one *John Steward*, an eminent Christian, who lived at *Aire*, having come to visit *Mr. Welsh* in prison, found him in a more than ordinary way troubled and sad, and upon his enquiry thereabout, he saith, " *John*, ye should not be here, go home to *Aire*, for the plague of God is broken out in that place, and cause *Hugh Kennedy* provelt of that town (who was also a very singular Christian) to convene the people to the streets, and pray together; and the Lord shall hear *Hugh Kennedy*, and remove that stroke. This at the first did something astonish the said *John*, and put him to question its truth, having so lately come out of that place: but at his return found it so, and accordingly in every thing it fell out as the man of God had shewed.

After his banishment, to which the King did change the sentence of death past upon him at *Lirlib-gi*, he in a very short time acquired the French tongue, with such a facility therein, as was thought strange by those who knew it. *Trocbriq* in his commentary on the *Ephesians*, sets down this passage

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how being called to preach at *Salmur*, a famous University, yea, one of the most learned auditories in *France*, he did with such boldness and authority preach, as though he had been before the meanest congregation: whereat *Trocbriq* being astonished, could not but on his acquaintance with him question him thereabout, whence he had such confidence, and was so little moved, whilst he preached before strangers, so grave and judicious an auditory, and in a strange tongue? To whom in a humble way, as one more dejected, than lifted up, he gave that answer, When he considered his being before the LORD, & that he was delivering his message, he could not regard, either great or small, but all flesh did than go out of his mind.

Whilst he was Minister at *St. Jane de Angeli*, a Protestant town in *France*, where his Ministry was much blessed with success, the civil wars did break out, where that city was twice besieged on the Protestant interest; during which time these passages fell out most remarkable: one was, the town being sore straited, and ready to be taken, the enemies having raised a battery, and by a close approach had made a great breach in the wall, *Mr. Welsh* hearing thereof (who had much encouraged the people, that their adversaries should nor then prevail) went himself with the Canonier up the walls, and desired he would charge such a piece of cannon, and shoot, for *God should direct that shot and cause it prosper*: which accordingly did, to astonishment of lookers-on, dismount that battery, and the Lord so ordered things after, that the King did parley on favourable terms with the city, and did only himself with his court come in without doing any violence. Another marvellous passage was this; the following Sabbath some of the godly in that place, fearing *Mr. Welsh* his hazard, did seriously deal with him, that he would

would forbear to go forth, and preach, the Court being there; from which he by no intreaty would be hindred, but shewed them he would adventure to preach the word to his People, and trust the Lord with what concerned himself, being more grieved at their fear and despondence: and that day had a very great auditory, both of friends, and others who came upon the fame of such a man; but in time of sermon, a great man of the Court with some of the King's own guard was sent to bring him forth with before the King, and whilst he was entering the Church, which had some difficulty by reason of the multitude, *Mr. Welsh* did turn himself toward that entry, and desired the people to give way to one of the great *Piers* of *France*, that was coming in; but after whilst he was coming near the pulpit, to execute his commission, by putting force on the Servant of Christ, for his desisting, *he did with great authority speak to him before all the people, and in the name of his Master Jesus Christ charged him that he would not disturb the Worship of God; wherewith that man was so affrighted, that he fell a shaking, yea was forced to crutch down, and make no further trouble.---* A third passage no less remarkable was upon the close of Sermon, whilst *Mr. Welsh* with much submission went to the King, who was then greatly incensed, and with a threatening countenance asked, What he was, and how he durst preach hereby so near his person, and with such contumacy carry himself? To which, with due reverence bowing himself, he did answer. *I am, Sir, the Servant and Minister of Jesus Christ, whose truth I preached this day, which if your Majesty rightly knew, ye would have judged it your duty to have come your self, and heard: and for my doctrine I did this day preach these 3 truths to your People. (1.) That man is fallen, and by nature in a lost condition,* yea,

yea, by his own power and abilities is not able to help himself from that estate. (2.) *That there is no salvation or deliverance from wrath by our merits, but by Jesus Christ and his merit alone.* (3.) I did also preach this day the just liberties of the Kingdom of *France*, that your Majesty oweth obedience to Christ only, who is Head of the Church; and that the Pope, as he is an enemy to Christ, and his truth, so also to the Kings of the earth, whom he keepeth under slavery to his usurped power. Whereat the King for a time keeping silence, with great astonishment, turned to some about him, and said, *Surely this is a man of God!* Yea, after did commune with him, and with great respect dismissed him. The year following, whilst the differences betwixt the King and Protestant party did grow, that city was again besieged, taken, and in part sacked as *Mr. Welsh* did publickly foretell: at which time, it is known, how the King past a solemn order, that none should in the least wrong *Mr. Welsh*, or any thing that belonged to him, under highest pains, and did after give a safe conduct to him, for transporting himself to *England*, where he died; King *James* refusing his return to his own country, though earnestly petitioned by his wife, for her husband's health.

During his sickness, he was so filled and overcome with the sensible enjoyment of God, that he was sometime overheard in prayer, to have these words, *Lord, hold thy hand, it is enough! thy servant is a clay vessel, and can hold no more!*

II. I shall also here instance *Mr. Robert Bruce*, who in a very extraordinary way was called to the Ministry, having for a long time followed the study of the Law, both in this country and in *France*, yea, had some ground to expect a place amongst the Lord's of the *Scillion*, his father being then a considerable Barron, who

who had many friends : but a more pressing and irrefragable call from God did otherwise determine,

Whilst he was in the Ministry at *Edinburgh*, he shined as a great light through the whole land : the power and efficacy of the SPIRIT most sensibly accompanying the word he preached, he was a terrour to evil doers : and the authority of God did so appear upon him and his carriage, with such a Majesty in his countenance, as forced fear and respect from the greatest in the land, even those who were most avowed haters of Godliness ; yea, it was known, what an awful impression King *James* had of him, and did once give him that testimony before many, that he judged Mr. *Bruce* was worthy of the half of his Kingdoms.

He was a man that had much inward exercise about his own personal case ; had been oft assaulted about that great foundation of truth, if there was a God ; which cost him many days and nights wrestling, and when he hath come up to the pulpit, after being sometimes silent, which was his usual way, he would say, *I think it is a great matter to believe there is a God ; telling the People, it was an other thing to believe that, than they judged.* But it was also known, by his friends with whom he was familiar, what extraordinary confirmations he had from the Lord therein, what near familiarity he did attain in his secret converse with God : yea, truly some things, I have had from persons worthy of credit thereabout, would seem so strange and marvellous, that I forbear to set them down.

The great success of his Ministry at *Edinburgh*, *Inverness*, and other places whither providence called him, is abundantly known. Whilst he was confined at *Inverness*, that poor dark country was marvellously enlightened, many brought in to Christ by his Ministry, and a seed sown in these places, which

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even to this day is not wholly worn out. I shall here set down one passage of famous Mr. *Henderson*, who at his first entry to the Ministry at *Leuchars*, was very prelatick, and by the Bishop of *St. Andrews* brought in against the parish's consent, so that on the day of his admission, the Church doors being shut by the People, they were forced to break in by a window to get him entrance. But a little after this, upon the report of a Communion, where Mr. *Bruce* was to help, he would needs from a longing he had to hear and see such a man, go secretly there ; and placed himself in a dark part of the Church, where he might not be known : when Mr. *Bruce* was come to the pulpit, he did for a considerable time keep silence, as his manner was, which did some way astonish Mr. *Henderson*, but much more when he heard the first words wherewith he begun, which were these, *He that cometh not in by the door, but climbeth up another way, the same is a thief and a robber.* Which did by the Lord's blessing at the very present take him by the heart, and had so great an impression on him, that it was the first means of his conversion.

He was one that had the spirit of discerning in a great measure, did prophetically speak of many things which afterwards came to pass ; yea, which I had attested by sober and grave Christians, who were familiar with him, that divers persons distracted, and of those who were passed all hope of recovery in the falling sickness, were brought to Mr. *Bruce*, and after prayer by him in their behalf were fully recovered. This indeed may seem strange, but it is also true ; Mr. *Bruce* was a great wrestler, who had more than ordinary familiarity with his Master.

A little before his death, when he was at *Edinburgh*, and through weakness kept his chamber, there was a meeting of divers godly Ministers at that time there, on some special ground of the Church's concernment,

cernment, who hearing he was in the town came together, and gave him an account of the actings of those times, the Prelates then designing the service book : after which Mr. Bruce prayed, and did therein tell over again to the Lord the very substance of their discourse, which was a sad representation of the case of the Church, at which time there was such an extraordinary MOTION on all present, so sensible a downpouring of the SPIRIT, that they could hardly contain themselves ; yea, which was most strange, even some unusual motion on these who were in other parts of the house, not knowing the cause at that very instant. One Mr. Weemes of Lotbaker being then occasionally present, when he went away, said, *O how strange a man is this ! for he knocked down the Spirit of God on us all.* This he said because Mr. Bruce did divers times knock with his fingers on the table. I had this from a worthy Christian Gentleman, in whose mother's house this was.

He was deeply affected with the naughtiness and prophanity of many Ministers then in the Church, and the unsuitable carriage of others to so great a calling ; and did express much his fear, that the ministry of Scotland would prove the greatest persecutors of the Gospel that it had. If there were a full collection of those remarkable passages, which have been known to others in his life, it would further witness what an extraordinary man that was. I shall only shut this up with learned *Didoelavius's* testimony, in his Preface to his *Altare Damascenum*: *Robertus Brusius, Vir genere & virtute nobilis, majestate vultus venerabilis, qui plura animarum millia Christo lucrificavit; cujus anima, si ullius mortalium (absit verbo invidia) sedet in caelestibus : anima mea, cum anima tua; Brusii, si ex aliena fide esset pendendum.*

III. Mr.

III. Mr. *Davidson*, Minister of the Gospel at *Salt-Prestoun*, may be truly here instanced as one of an extraordinary, prophetick Spirit, who was likewise eminently zealous and faithful for his Master in a time of the Church's defection ; as *Didoelavius* in that forementioned preface terms him, *Cato et constans Cato sui temporis.* He did then foresee Prelacies breaking in upon the Church, when King *James* were pressing the setting up of *Superintendents* under a very specious pretext, and was for that end himself present at the Assembly in *Dundee*, having engaged many, alas too many ! to consent thereto, but Mr. *Davidson* with great boldness rose up, and warned the assembly of the hazard, and told them he saw the *knave Bishop*, with his mitre, coming in under that mask, yea, did solemnly in his own name, and name of the Church of Scotland, enter a protestation against that step of defection, and their yielding up in so far the liberties of the Church, to please men.

Whilst he was Minister at *Salt-Prestoun*, the building of a Church was by him much endeavoured, which he did advance much out of his own private interest ; my Lord *Newcastle* who then had a great interest in the Parish engaging to help it forward : from which he after refused, and thereby frustrated the work. Whereupon Mr. *Davidson* told him, these walls that were then begun to be builded, should stand as a witness against him, and that ere long God should root out him and his estate out of that Parish, and he should not have a piece of land in the same ! which shortly after had a visible accomplishment. It was very clear from many passages of his life, that the secret of the Lord was in an extraordinary way with him. Some of those which have been transmitted from them who particularly knew the same are indeed most worthy of a remark,

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At a certain assembly of the Church, Mr. *John Spotswood* & Mr. *James Law*, who were then entered into the ministry, were processed for some gross acts of prophanity: where Mr. *Davidson* finding the assembly too easy to pass the same, in regard of their parts and gifts, only with a rebuke, he did with much vehemency press their deposition; and after being crossed therein, said, *You will needs spare these two men, whereat I am grieved, but the time is coming when they shall trample upon your necks and upon the Church of Scotland.* And it is well known what an accomplishment this prediction had.

Being with Mr. *Bruce* one time at dinner, who was then in great favour with the King, he had these words in giving thanks after meat. *Lord, thy servant here is now a great favourite of the Court, and in much respect: but he shall be within a little as much persecuted as he is now in favour, and go down the streets, when many who have him this day in esteem will not give him a salutation.* Which was very manifest afterwards. And at another time, whilst Mr. *Robert Bruce* and he were dining together in the house of one of the Magistrates of the town, who was then a cordial friend to godly Ministers, he did also in his plain and free way break forth with these words, whilst he was giving thanks, *Lord, this good man hath respect for thy sake to thy servants, but he little knoweth that in a short time he must carry us both, who are here to prison.* Which words did much trouble that honest man, tho' afterwards it came most exactly to pass.

There is one more remarkable passage, which I should fear to set down, it is so strange, but that I had the same confirmed by some worthy of credit, who shewed me, that from those that were present, and familiar with Mr. *Davidson*, they had it related. A Gentleman nearly related to a great family of that Pa-
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rill, but a most violent hater of piety, did upon that account beat a poor honest man who lived there, having not the least shadow of a provocation, and amongst other sore strokes gave one upon the back with these words, *Take this for Mr. Davidson's sake.* After which the honest man was for a time forced to keep his bed, and complained most of that stroke, which he gave him on the back, as that which he felt more than all the rest; but the Sabbath following, Mr. *Davidson* speaking in the close of his Sermon about the oppression of the godly, and enmity which wicked men had to such, did very particularly touch that late instance, saying, *It was a sad time, a prophane man would thus openly adventure to vent his rage against those who were seekers of God in the place, whilst he could have no cause but the very appearance of his image:* and with great authority said, *He who hath done this, were he the Laird, or the Laird's brother, ere a few days pass, God shall give him a stroke, that all the Monarchs of the earth dare not challenge.* Which was then publicly known how in the close of that week, standing before his door, he was struck dead with a thunder-bolt, and all his bones crushed.

A little before the death of this great Servant of Christ, having an occasional recounter with Mr. *John Ker*, a young Gentleman who was lately come from France, and had then no thoughts of the ministry, but was in a very courtly dress, Mr. *Davidson* did in a solemn way charge him to cast off his scarlet cloak, and lay aside his gilded rapper, and take him to his book, *For you are the man, says he, who is to succeed me in the ministry at this place.* Which, so very astonishing to that Gentleman for the present, yet accordingly fell out, he did immediately succeed him there, where he was for many years an holy and faithful Minister of the Gospel. This last passage many yet alive, who had the same from the said Mr. *John Ker* can witness.

IV. Mr. *Patrick Simpson*, who was once Minister of *Cramond*, and after transported to *Stirling*, may be here also instanced, as a very extraordinary man in the Church. In his youth he attained to great knowledge in the languages, did much study Greek and Latin Authors; and gave this reason to such who wondred he should spend so much time in reading those who were but pagans, That he purposed to dedicate all these jewels which he borrowed from the *Egyptians*, to the building of the house of the Lord. It is known, with what zeal he did oppose himself to the corruptions of that time. In the year 1584, whilst there was an expresse charge from the King, for acknowledging Mr. *Patrick Adamson* Archbishop of *St. Andrews*, or else lose their maintenance, he did with great vehemency appear against the same, tho' that man was his uncle upon the mother's side; and some who seemed willing to subscribe thereto with such a condition, according to the Word of God, he did gravely rebuke, shewing them it could be no salvo to their conscience, since it was *repugnantia in adjecto*, to subscribe to any humane institution according to the word, when the word did expressly condemn the same. It was also known, he refused the offer of a *Bishoprick*, and afterwards of a yearly pension from the King, which he looked on as a design only to bribe his conscience, which was more dear to him than all the World. And when that assembly at *Aberdeen* was condemned by the State, he did openly own and avow the same, and in a very solemn manner denounced the wrath and judgment of God against these accusers and convictees of those excellent men, at *Linlithgow*, who stood for the liberty of that assembly. That notable paper and protestation, given in to the Parliament 1606 (where Prelacy was further established) was by him penned, and out of his own hand given to the

the Earl of *Dumbar*, subscribed by many Ministers of the Church, who were then there on that account.

His life was most exemplary for piety, and faithfulness in serving his Master; which did preach no less to that part of the country wherein he lived, than his doctrine. One very remarkable passage of his life I do here adventure to set down, having very satisfying grounds as to the certainty of it, from those who knew the same, and had a particular relation of all its circumstances from a grave Christian, who had it out of his own mouth, and likewise hath it written under old Mr. *Row* of *Carnock's* hand, who was his familiar intimate friend; it is this. His Wife, *Martha Barron*, a gracious woman, the wife of his youth, with whom he had lived in great love, fell sick, which proved her last sickness; when she was first fore assaulted by the Devil, who pressed in upon her that she should be given over to his hand; and after, it did resolve in a visible distraction, which for a time grew upon her, so that most unlike to her former way, she would have broke forth with dreadful and horrid expressions; it did most appear on a Sabbath-morning, whilst Mr. *Simpson* was going to preach, and whilst for a time he was forced with a heavy countenance to stand silent, he at last kneeled down, and prayed, which she did no ways regard, but a little after he turning to the company that were present, told them, he was sure that those who now were witnesses of that sad hour, should yet see a gracious work of God on this his Servant, and that the Devil's malice against that poor woman, should have a shameful foil. Her distraction did still continue until the *Tuesday*, which was the 9 of *August*, which morning at the very dawning of it, he goeth to his garden, and shut the door behind him, where for many hours he was alone, but a godly woman

who that night was with his wife, *Helen Garner*, wife to one of the Bailies of *Stirling*, being apprehensive of his hazard, through his grief and fasting, could have no rest till she knew his case, and by some help climbed up, and got into the garden, but on a near approach to that place, where *Mr. Simpson* then was, she was terrified with an extraordinary noise, which through fear made her fall to the ground: it seemed, as she related after to others, it was like the noise of a great rushing of multitudes together, and therewith such a melodious sound, as did make her know, it was something more than humane, and turned to prayer, entreating the Lord would pardon her rashness, which affection to his Servant, who had been the instrument, of her good, had carried her to. And after, going forward, finds him lying upon the ground; it was with much intreaty, that he did then reveal himself in that particular, until she promised secrecy, not to speak it to others so long as he lived but had his allowance if she should survive him: which promise she kept, but after his death, did relate it to those from whom I have had this; he said, *O what am I, being dust and ashes, that the holy Ministering spirits should be sent by the Lord to deliver a message to me!* and shewed he had a vision of Angels, who did with an audible voice give him an answer from the Lord, of his wife's condition, and coming over to his house, he said to all who were present, *Be of good comfort, for ere ten hours of this day, I am sure that brand shall be plucked out of the fire.* After which he went to prayer at his wife's bedside, where for a time she lay quiet, but whilst he mentioned *Jacob's* wrestling in prayer, she sits straight up in the bed, casting aside the curtain, and sayeth, *Thou art this day Jacob, who hast wrestled, & also prevailed: & now God hath made good his words, which he spake this morning to you; for I am plucked out of the hands of Satan, & he shall have no*

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power over me. Which interruption made him for a space silent, but after with great melting of heart proceeded in prayer, and magnified the riches of God's love towards him; and after prayer there was sweet and Christian embracements betwixt them: yea, from that hour she did speak most Christianly and comfortably, even to her death, which was on the *Friday* following, *August 13. 1601.* whose last words in the moment of her departure were with a loud voice, *Come, Lord, into thy hands I commend my spirit.*

After this, *Mr Simpson* lived several years, fervent and faithful in the work of the Lord, & one who in private walk witnessed such mortification, that all who knew him, might clearly see, his converse was little in the World. In *March 1618.* he said, *Now shall this month put an end to all these things!* And accordingly, towards the close of it, was removed by death; at which time he expressed much joy, blessing the Lord for his kindness, that he had not been perverted by the sinful courses of these times; & might say, as the Lord sed *Elijah* in the wilderness, so in some respect he had dealt with him all his life time. And having these words upon some of his books written, *Remember, O my soul, and never forget the 9 of August, what consolation the Lord gave thee, and how he performed what he spake, according to Zach. 3. 2. Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?* upon which some of his friends speaking to him about the same, his answer was, *Absti mihi gloriari in aliquo, nisi in Domino Deo meo!*

Now, besides these great men, many others who at that time did shine as lights in the Church, may be here also mentioned; who were indeed stars of the first magnitude, eminently zealous and faithful, and their Ministry followed with much of the power and authority of God. Such as *Mr. Andrew Melvin*, of whom it might be said, he had the face

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of

of a lion in his master's cause, and feared not to speak before Princes and great men, when the truth called for it. Likewise his neveu, Mr. *James Melvin* that holy grave, and prudent Servant of Christ, Mr. *Andrew Dunkan*, Mr. *John Scrimger*, Mr. *Charles Fereme*, Mr. *James Balsure*, &c. One passage I shall here set down, worthy of a remark, of Mr. *Andrew Melvin*, who being prisoner in the Tower, a Gentleman of his acquaintance, got access to visit him, but found him in a sad deep muse, about the defection of many Ministers in *Scotland*, and did deplore the state of the Church there, having lately got an account of their way at that assembly at *Glasgow* 1610. where the Earl of *Dumbar* had been active to corrupt divers with money: this Gentleman, desiring to know what word he had for his own country, got no answer; but upon a second enquiry, he said, *I have no word to send, but am heavily grieved, that the glorious government of the Church of Scotland should be so defaced, and a Popish tyrannical government set up, and thou Manderston* (for out of that house *Dumbar* was come, and he thus stiled him) *Hast thou no other thing to do, but carry down to Scotland such commissions, whereby the poor Church there is wracked: the Lord shall be avenged upon thee, and thou shalt never again go down for all thy grandeur!* Which words took such impression on that Gentleman, that when he went forth, he desired some friends, who then waited to get a business at court expedited by *Dumbar's* mediation, that they would in time put their affairs to a close, for he was perswaded, *the words of that servant of Christ should not fall to the ground.* And truly this did very quickly take place, that Earl being suddenly struck by death, within a few months after, and thus thrown down from the top of his grandeur, whilst he was busie, perfecting that great house of his at *Berwick*, and had appointed a sumptuous feast

feast for his daughter's marriage, even then did his thoughts perish.

I shall here but add one instance more of one, whom we before-named, though not a Minister, yet a great instrument for promoting the work of the Gospel in the place where he lived; and one we may say, of an extraordinary spirit, *Hugh Kennedy*, provost of *Air*: of whom I would mention these two passages, from sure knowledge. One was this whilst the Merchant-Ships of that town were at sea, amongst whom his son *John*, who was also a choice Christian, was at that time, he did one night rise before the breaking of day, and came to the house of his familiar friend *John Steward*, desiring he would rise and go along with him to some room. Whereat the said *John* being exceedingly astonished, he saith to him; *It is no time to linger, let us go pray, for my son with the rest of our friends now at sea are at this hour on the very nick of perishing.* And after they had spent some time in prayer, he arose chearfully and said, *Now they are safe!* Within a little after, *John Steward* who had writ this down, with the day and hour, at the return of the Ships did most particularly enquire, and found how it did answer in all the circumstances, and in that very hour of that night they were to appearance past hope of safety upon a very dangerous place, and by an extraordinary unexpected providence then delivered.

The other is this, one day being for many hours alone in prayer, whilst some of his Christian friends did wait long for him, at last with an unusual chearfulness he came forth, and upon their enquiry about his stay, he told them, *It was no wonder, for he had that day got mercy to him, and all his.* And truly it was very evident, that not one of his Children, but there was large ground of charity, that they were truly godly.

Whilst he was dying, Mr. *Ferguson* a godly Minister saith to him, You have cause, Sir, to be assured that the Angels of God are now waiting at the stoups of this bed to convoy your soul into *Abraham's bosom*. To whom his answer was; *I am sure thereof, and if the walls of this house could speak, they could tell how many sweet days I have had in secret fellowship with God, and how familiar he hath been with my soul.* -- I shall only add Mr. *Welsh's* testimony, in a letter from *France* to this great man: his words were these, *Happy is that city, yea, happy is that Nation, that hath a Hugh Kennedy in it! I have my self certainly found the answers of his prayers from the Lord in my behalf.*

(9) I. Reader, besides these more remarkable passages which in the perusal of this treatise thou wilt find dropped apart, concerning the way of God with some of his more eminently faithful Servants, I have in this place cast together some few instances, which in the former impression were not hinted.

In the first place, thou mayst take notice of these two concerning that walker with God, great Master *Bruce*, of whom some things have been spoken elsewhere: & first, beside that blessed frame of spirit which appeared in the whole of his converse, he endeavoured more especially whensoever he was to appear in publick as an Ambassador of *Jesus Christ*, to have his Spirit deeply impressed with the Majesty of that God, of whom he was to speak, and of the high importance it was to the souls of men, to have the mysteries of salvation unfolded unto them, not with *enticing words of man's wisdom* but in *demonstration of the spirit and power*; without which this preached Gospel, though in it self the *world of life*, will never prove the power of God to salvation. And therefore though he was known to take much pains in *searching*

ing the Scripture, that he might know the mind of the Spirit of God by comparing spiritual things with spiritual, and in preparing apposite matter for the edification of his hearers, which he durst not neglect, and wherein he durst not be superficial, as knowing he was to speak of God, and afraid of the curse threatened for doing of his work negligently; yet this was the least part of his preparation-work, the main of his business lay in having his soul wrought up to some futableness of frame for preaching the *unsearchable riches of Christ*, and making manifest the mystery of the Gospel as he ought, that so his Master by his service might see of the travel of his soul and be satisfied. And knowing, that the success of preaching depended wholly upon the presence of God accompanying the dispensing of Ordinances, his manner was to be much in prayer and supplication in private before his publick appearances, pouring forth his heart before God, and wrestling with him, not so much for assistance to the messenger, as to the message. One instance whereof take as followeth: Being to preach at a solemn occasion, he was long in coming to the congregation, some of the people beginning to be weary, and others wondering at his stay, the bells being long rung, and the time far spent, the Beadle was desired to go see what the matter meant: who coming to his house, and finding his chamber-door shut, and hearing a sound, drew near and listening overheard Mr. *Bruce* often with much seriousness say, *I protest I will not go, except thou go with me.* Whereupon the man supposing that some person had been with him, withdrew without knocking at the door; who being asked at his return by a Gentleman the cause of his delay, answered, he could not tell, but I suppose (said he) there is some with Mr. *Bruce*, who is unwilling to come to Church, and he is so pressing and peremptory to have them come along, that I overheard

verheard him protest most seriously he would not go, if they went not with him. However a little after, Mr. Bruce came accompanied with no man, but he came *in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ*, and his speech and his preaching was in such evidence and demonstration of the SPIRIT, that by the shining of his face and that shower of divine influence, wherewith the word spoken was accompanied, it was easy for the hearer to perceive that he had been *in the mount with God*, and that he had indeed brought that God, whom he had met with in private, *into his mother's house, and into the chambers of her that conceived him*. Nay, he preached ordinarily with so much life and power, and the word spoken by him was accompanied with such a manifest presence, that it was evident to the hearers he was *not alone* at the work, but that in his strivings to *persuade the things which did belong to the Kingdom of God*, and to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus, he laboured thereunto striving according to his working which wrought in him mightily. For though he was no Boanerges, as to his voice, being of a slow and grave delivery, yet he spoke with so much authority and weight (as becomes the Oracles of God) that some of the most stout-hearted of his hearers were ordinarily made to tremble; and by having those doors, which formerly had been bolted against Jesus Christ, as by an irresistible power broke open, and the secrets of their heart made manifest, they went away under convictions, and carrying with them undeniable proofs of Christ's speaking in him, and that God was with him of a truth.

The other passage, which I present thee with, is concerning his death. Being now aged and through infirmity of body confined to his chamber, where he was frequently visited by his friends (to whom a conversation in Heaven and the abundant grace of

God

God in him had endeared him) and being asked by one of them, How matters now stood betwixt God and his soul! he (with that severity of soul, which is the effect of the love of God shed abroad in the heart, and that plerophory, under which such walkers with God and workers of righteousness as he was, are frequently taken off the stage) made this return, *When I was a young man*, said he, *I was diligent, and lived by faith in the Son of God, but now I am old and am not able to do so much, yet he condescends to feed me with lumps of sense*.

And that morning before the Lord removed him (his sickness then being mostly a weakness through age) he came to break-fast at his table; and having, as he used, eaten one single egg, he said to his daughter, I think I am yet hungry, ye may bring me another egg; but instantly thereafter falling into a deep meditation, and after having mused a while, he said, *Hold, daughter, hold; my Master calls me!* with these words his sight failed him. Whereupon he called for the Bible; but finding his sight gone, he said, Cast up to me the eighth Chapter to the Romans, and set my finger on these words, *I am persuaded, that neither death nor life, &c. shall be able to separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus my Lord*. Now said he, is my finger upon them? when they told him it was, without any more he said, *Now God be with you, my children, I have break-fasted with you, and shall sup with my Lord Jesus Christ this night*. And so gave up the Ghost, death shutting his eyes that he might see God. Thus that valiant Champion for the truth, whom in his appearing to plead for the Crown and interest of Jesus Christ knew not what it was to be daunted by the face and frowns of the highest and most incensed adversaries, was by his Master taken off the field as *more than a conqueror*, and as the reward of much faithful diligence about

about

about the souls of others, and much pains and ser-
ousness about making his own calling and election
sure, had an entrance ministred unto him abundantly
into the everlasting Kingdom of his Lord and Sa-
viour Jesus Christ.

II. In the next place, Reader, I shall in profes-
sion of my design, which is thy edification, hint to
thee some things concerning that burning and shining
Light Mr. *John Welsh*, whose name is so famous and
savoury for the great things which God did by him and
for him, that I shall much disappoint thy expecta-
tion, if making mention of him, I should not ac-
quaint thee with some thing rare & extraordinary: and
therefore, though it be beside my design to give thee
the full history of his or the rest of these great men's
lives, yet that I may not altogether frustrate thy expecta-
tion, take these few remarkable passages which fol-
low. As first, an eminently holy Minister, yet alive
and deservedly of esteem in the Church of Christ, told
me from certain knowledge, that two men coming
with packs of cloath to the town of *Air* from a neigh-
bouring place, &c. where there was yet no suspi-
cion that the Lord's hand had smitten it with the
plague, which was then fore in the land, the sentry
at the bridge held them out, notwithstanding they
had a pass, till the Magistrate came; who though he
could not disprove their pass, yet would not permit
them to enter the town, till he sent for Mr. *Welsh*:
So the Baylie bids them dis-burden their beasts, till he
considered what was to be done: a little after, Mr. *Welsh*
coming, the Magistrate says to him, Sir, here are
men come from such a place, we have heard of no
plague there; besides, they have a pass from known
men, what shall we do? Mr. *Welsh* made no answer,
but uncovering his head, stood in the midst of the
company which then followed him, and having his
eyes directed to Heaven (yet speaking nothing) near
half

half a quarter of an hour, at last said, *Bayly*, Cause
these men to put on their packs again and be gone; for if
God be in Heaven, the plague of God is in these
packs. These men returned and opened their packs
in *Comnock*; and it was observed, that such conta-
gion was therein, that all in that village died, there
was not a man left to bury the dead.

He was famous in his generation for the power he
had in prevailing with God by prayer and supplica-
tion: whereof take these following instances amongst
the many which might be given.

One is, that being on a certain night under an ex-
traordinary pressure of spirit to go and pour forth
his heart to God, he left his wife in bed, and
going out to a garden, spent most of the night in that
exercise (a thing so ordinary to him that he used to
say, he wondered how a Christian could lie a bed all
night, without rising to spend some of the night in
prayer and praise!) but his wife weary, at last went
to seek for him, but missing him in his ordinary
place, went into other gardens, by such passages as
she knew, at last she heard a voice, and drawing
near to it, could hear him speak a few words, but
with great force and fervency, mixed and accom-
panied with floods of tears; which were these,
*O God, wilt thou not give me Scotland! O God, wilt
thou not give me Scotland! ---* She being weary, and a-
fraid to interrupt him, went home, and heard not
the close. At last he came home, and re-entring
his bed, his wife began to reprove his unmerciful-
ness to his own body; then asked him, what it
was he was saying? for she told, she heard him.
Well, said he, you had better have been in your bed,
but since ye heard, I tell you, I have indured a great
fight for Scotland this night, and hardly could I get
a remnant reserved, yet he will be gracious.

After

After this he arose another night, but went not out of doors, but in a chamber he travelled and groaned so, as that his wife impatient did rise several times, calling him to bed; but he waited his time: and when he came, she began a modest expostulation with him for tarrying. *Hold thy peace*, said he, *it will be well with us; but I shall never preach another preaching in Aire.*--And having fallen asleep, before he awaked, the messenger was come, who by command carried him prisoner to the Castle of *Edinburgh*.

When he was prisoner in the Castle of *Edinburgh*, the Lord *Uchiltry* was Captain, whose sister was Mr. *Welsh* his mother in law, being *John Knox's* wife; Yet being much taken up in King *James* his Court, he took not time to be so comfortable, to his cousin *Welsh* as he should: But being convinced of his own unkindness, he caused Mr. *Welsh* to sup with him one night in the Castle, where were also several other Gentlemen, and amongst them a *Papish* youth sat toward the lower end of the table; Mr. *Welsh* being by the Captain set at the upper end, entertained the company with grave and edifying discourse, which all delighted to hear, save this young *Papist*, who with laughter and derision laboured to silence him, which was little regarded by Mr. *Welsh*. But after supper, while the guests sat a little, this youth stood up at the lower end of the table, and while Mr. *Welsh* proceeded from grave to gracious entertainment of his company, the youth came to that height of insolence as with the finger to point at him & with the face to make flouting grimaces, whereby he grieved the holy Man, so as on a sudden he was forced to a silence.--

The whole company, who had heard him with delight, were silent with him. Within a little, Mr. *Welsh* as moved by the Spirit of God, broke forth into these words: *Gentlemen, the Spirit of God is provoked against us, and I shall intreat you not to be afraid to see*
what

what God shall do among you before you rise from the table, for he will smite some one of you with death before you go hence. All were silently astonished, waiting to see the issue with fear. And while every man feared himself, except the insolent youth, he fell down dead suddenly at the foot of the table, to shew the power of God's jealousy against the mockers of his Spirit and of the offers of his grace. This History with variation of some circumstances, is set down before.

One day while Mr. *Welsh* looked out at his chamber-window in the Castle, he happened to see the Captain, and called unto him, saying, God save you, my lord! The Captain acknowledging his neglect, and asking for Mr. *Welsh* his welfare, desired to know how he might serve him. *In nothing*, said Mr. *Welsh*, *if you be well, except you would carry my petition to his Majesty, intreating for liberty to preach the Gospel.* I willingly will, said the Captain, therefore send it to me. Nay, said Mr. *Welsh*, I am your Kinsman, I love you so well as to warn you not to take it in charge, except you resolve to deal truly in delivering it and in getting me an answer. I shall bear the blame, said the Captain, if I do it not. I beseech you, my lord, said the other, undertake not unless you mind to do it, for the hazard is great. Well, *Uchiltry* takes it: but not coming in an opportune season (for he came when the King was passionately moved on another occasion) he thought not fit then to give it; & as at that time he deferred, so thereafter he neglected, and at last quite forgot to deliver it at all. For which his heart smiting him, he durst hardly be seen of Mr. *Welsh* for three months. Yet conscience forgetting as well as he, he came to the same place where Mr. *Welsh* at first called him: And now Mr. *Welsh* asked, how he did, & what was become of his petition? The Captain surprised answered,

answered, I delivered it to his Majesty, but he was in a passion, and it seems it hath fallen by, for I have not gotten an answer. Nay, my lord, said Mr. *Welsh*, you should not *lie to God*, and to me : I know you delivered it not, I am sorry (my lord) for your lot, I warned you not to be false to God ; and now I tell you, God shall take your estate and honours in *Scotland*, and shall give them to your neighbour, and this in your own time. ---- This troubled the lord *Uchiltry*, and came truly to pass : for he being the eldest son of the good Lord *Uchiltry*, a reformer, was forced in his own time to quit all, and give both estate and honours to *James*, the son of Captain *James*, the second brother, who was the last of that house.

III. Concerning Master *John Scrimger*, Minister at *Kinghorn*. There was a godly Woman under his charge, called ----- who fell sick of a very lingering sickness, and was all the while assaulted with strong temptations, apprehending she was a cast-away (yet had she not only given ground for charity, but her Christian conversation for a long time had put the reality of the grace of God in her beyond debate with the more discerning who knew her) Mr. *Scrimger* often visited her, while in this deep exercise, conferred with her, prayed over her ; but her trouble remained notwithstanding, and the terrors of God still lodged with her. When she drew near her dissolution, she became worse both in body and spirit ; and sent for Mr. *Scrimger*, who at that time took two of his elders with him, and in their presence first endeavoured to comfort her by exhortation and conference, then he prayed, and seeing her the nearer her end seemingly the worse, he made some of the elders to pray, and again he himself prayed. But Satan still raged the more, and her soul the more removed from peace. Then he sat in a muse a little space, and said, What's this !

this ! our laying before her grounds of comfort will not do it, conference will not do it, prayer will not do it, we must use another remedy. Sure I am, this is a *Daughter of Abraham* ; sure I am, I am the *Elder* ; sure I am, she hath *sent for me*. And therefore *in name of God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*, who sent him to redeem sinners ; *in name of Jesus Christ*, who obeyed the Father, and came to save us : *in name of the holy and blessed Spirit*, our Quickner and Sanctifier, *I the Elder command thee a Daughter of Abraham, to be loosed from these bonds*. And immediately peace and joy succeeded.

An Example it is of God's power in that time, to make our hair stand, at the force of faith and boldness of Spirit ; rather than to be imitated by such as wanting the ancient holiness would rather have a Spirit for miracles, than for salvation.

IV. I shall here insert some special and edifying remarks of the life of that great and worthy servant of Jesus Christ, Mr. *Robert Blair* (well known to this Church, it being but a few years since his death) who was deservedly numbred among the first of those great and worthy instruments, whom the Lord raised up amongst us for carrying on the late blessed reformation. Some of which I knew from himself (tho' from much humble modesty he too much in these things concealed himself, and shunned the setting down thereof under his own hand, whereto he was much pressed) but the most of them I had from one of his special intimate friends, and a grave and eminent Minister of this Church.

In his younger years, it was known, how much he outran others in his studies, and gave those who knew him ground to hope, what after was seen ; the Lord was pleased to call him by the Ministry of famous
Trachrig

Trochrig, in whose hand (these were his own words) did the Lord put the key that first opened his heart. Upon his first coming forth to preach, he by a remarkable providence had Master *Bruce*, whom you have formerly mentioned, to be his hearer ; and as I heard himself declare, it was his desire to have the judgment of so great a man upon his discourse ; whose censure, he said, he would never forget, it had been so much blessed. Which was this, *I found* (saith he) *your Sermon very polished and digested* (which was indeed easie to one of his parts) *but there is one thing I did miss in it, to wit, the Spirit of God ; I found not that.* This grave Mr. *Blair* did often speak to others, which then took a deep impression upon himself, & helped him to see it was something else to be a minister of Jesus Christ, than to be a knowing & eloquent preacher. He was for *several years* Regent in the colledge of *Glasgow* ; where he made it his work, to train up those under his charge in the study of *godliness*, as well as of humane learning : but by reason of the prejudice of some who had power in that place, he could not long stay. One passage whilst he was there, I did hear him relate : upon the report of some sinful oath to be pressed upon the Master of the college, he inquired at a fellow-Regent of his, Mr. *Gawin Forsyth*, what he would do in that matter? whose answer was, *By my faith, I must live.* To whom Mr. *Blair* said, *Sir, I will not swear by my faith, as you do ; but truly I intend to live by my faith. You may choose your own way ; but I will adventure on the Lord.* That wretched man did continue, to whom the matter of an oath was a small thing, after he was gone : but which is worthy of a remark, many years after, Mr. *Forsyth* fell into such poverty, as forced his supplicating of the general assembly of the Church for some relief, where worthy Mr. *Blair* was then made choise of to preside as Moderator, & upon his appearance in that deplorable case could not shun the observing of that former passage,

passage, and upon his address to him in private put him in mind thereof, though with great tenderness, as he said, not in the least to upbraid him in his low condition, but to let him see that he had been truly carried through by his *faith*, at which he formerly had scoffed.

After his being put from the college, he went to visite his brother, then Minister at *Dumbarton*, and confessed that by the way he could not forbear *singing*, from joy in the remembrance of God's being with him, and helping him to be instrumental in the good of the *Youth*, who had been under his inspection. He went after to *Ireland*, having received a call from *Bangor* ; and upon the sight of land, his heart was so immediatly made to exult within him for joy, that (as he said) he could scarce bear the same. Whilst he came near *Bangor*, he had a strong impression born in upon him, that the Dean of *Bangor* was sick unto death and should rise no more ; which at first he rejected, as an unpertinent suggestion ; but going further on his way, it was with such power impressed upon his spirit, as forced him to take notice of it. When he came to the place, he found, the Dean was indeed lying sick, and though a most naughty man, made him not only welcome upon his visit, but encouraged him to hold on in his way, and told him he was to succeed him in that change ; yea, he spoke so unlike himself, and in a strain so different from what was usual unto him, that a Gentlewoman standing by said to some others, an *Angel* is speaking out of the Dean's bed to Mr. *Blair* ; thinking, it could not be such a man.

He had been once troubled with an appearing of the *Devil*, whilst he was a Regent in the college ; who, like a crooked boy that waited on him, stood up and laughed him in the face, whilst he was serious in his chamber, and immediatly disappeared : but after, whilst

whilst he was at *Bangor*, there was one in that Parish, who went to *Scotland* with horses to sell, and at a fair he met with a man who at once was willing to buy them all; but pretending he had not all that money at present, gave him bond until *Mer-timers*: the poor man having no suspicion, returns; and near that time, going homeward from *Bangor* one night, his Merchant meets him, who was the *Devil*; now said he, you know my bargain, how I bought you at such a place, and I am come as I promised to pay you the price. Bought me, said the other trembling, you bought but my horses: nay, says the *Devil*, I will let you know I bought your self, and to the poor man confounded with fear, said, he must either kill some body, and the more excellent the person were, the better it would be for him; else he would not free him, and particularly charged him to kill *Mr. Blair*. The man overcome with terror, and through the violence of that temptation, determined the thing, and went to *Mr. Blair's* house with a dagger in his right hand hid beneath his cloak, & though much confounded, was moving to get it out: but after *Mr. Blair's* speaking to him, the poor man fell a trembling so extremely, that upon a further inquiry he freely declared for what end he was come, and told he had laboured to draw out his dagger, but it would not come from the scabbard, though he knew not what hindred it; for then, when he essayed to draw it forth again, it came out with much ease. Master *Blair* blessing the Lord, exhorted him to chose him for his refuge. He was after threatned and much terrified by the *Devil*, but nothing more followed.

After some time in the Ministry at *Bangor*, he with others of his worthy brethren was silenced by the Bishop; and as he told himself, was in the Church when the Bishop (one *Eckline*) did himself intimate the sentence. Upon which, *Mr. Blair* rose up

up publicly in the congregation, and with great Authority did cite the Bishop to appear before the tribunal of Jesus Christ, to answer for what he was doing, contrary to his own light and conscience, against those whom he knew to be faithful Ministers of the gospel: whereupon the man was so astonished, that he immediately cried out, I appeal from the tribunal of the justice of God to the throne of his mercy! To whom *Mr. Blair* replies; Sir, your appeal is rejected: for you know, what you are doing is directly against your conscience, which hath made you bear witness to us as the servants of Jesus Christ. A few months after, the Bishop fell sick; and the physicians inquiring about his case, he only could say, *My conscience!* and so died.

Whilst under restraint, he was by his brethren sent to *England*, to deal with the King for their liberty. When he was on the road, he was taken with a mighty fit of the stone, which made him lie upon his horse's neck, not being able to hold up his back; which much disquieted him, as being a probable let upon such an important business. And in this posture he turned to the Lord in prayer; but immediately after, essaying if he could possibly lift up his back, he found to his astonishment, his tormenting pain quite gone, and perfect ease, nor did it recur to him for two years after. A few days after, in the same journey, his horse fell very lame; which did in some measure trouble him, having no convenient access to provide himself of an other: and even upon this, did address to the Lord by prayer, that in such a strait he might be helped, which he graciously condescended to do, so that the horse was to his amazement healed, and without the least halt did carry him to *London*.

Whilst he was there, he did essay what he could to accomplish his business, but could have no access to the King; yea, some who were his friends at court, after trial assured him, he had no ground to hope in that mat-

ter: yet he resolved to continue, and roll the business over on the Lord, for whose service he was only importuning an open door. And one day having gone to *Greenwich*, where the court then was, being wearied with waiting without access, he retired into the park to pray, where after much wrestling with the Lord, he was in a more than ordinary way brought near, and had so clear a return, that he could not withstand the assurance he got, that his way should be successful: but the appearance thereof in an ordinary way being so small, pressed him to adventure humbly the asking of a sign from the Lord; and immediately, after there being a considerable wind that blew hard and made a noise among the bulrushes that grew there, so great a calm did presently follow, that not the least plant of the ground did any ways move or stir. He went thence to *London*, and within a few days in a most strange way had his petition presented to the King, and accepted; yea, in *St. James's park* was particularly called for, where the King with his own hand did not only sign it, but wrote these words in the margin, which he directed to the Deputy, *Indulge the education of these Ministers, for they are Scots-men.*

When he was in *England*, he had a strange discovery of his wife (an excellent gentlewoman) her dying, and that she was lying in such a bed, and a Christian friend of his particular acquaintance beside her. When he come home, he found his wife in health; but a little after, she fell sick and died in that same bed, with that friend sitting by her, and with all those particular circumstances. These are but a few of many great and remarkable passages in that excellent man's life, who was himself as great an observer of providence as any in the age he lived in: and this he had notably verified in himself, which was an usual saying of his to others, *Observable things do follow them who are given to observation.*

V. This

V. This seems an eminent instance of the providence of God, and worthy to be on record, that concerns the Laird of *Raith*, of a known and ancient family in this country, who in the beginning of the reformation was a professed *Papist*; but the Lord directing that great servant of his, *Mr. Wisbart*, one night very late to his house, who after some repulse from a servant got access to this Gentleman, and told him, He was come with the offer of the Gospel of Christ to him, and his family, if he would receive it; which was in that manner backed with the authority of God, and his power on that Gentleman's conscience, that he most kindly received *Mr. Wisbart*, and told him, His offer was welcome. And a little after, this visit was made so successful, upon *Mr. Wisbart's* instructing him and his family in the truth that they publickly professed the same; and this worthy Gentleman evidenced his being truly taken by the heart. But sometime after, upon a snare laid for him by *Cardinal Beaton*, he was seized upon in the Laird of *Grange* his house, and thence carried prisoner to the castle of *Edinburgh*, and so hotly pursued by this wretched man's rage, who then was in his greatest power, that in a short time he was sentenced to die; his *Lady's* being overwhelmed with grief, upon her husband's suffering and the forfeiture of that estate, having five sons, besides some daughters, to provide, did move him. But as one then much with God, he with much confidence told her, having gotten this assurance from that God, for whom he suffered, concerning his house and posterity, that she had no cause to be troubled: for, as to her outward case, she should yet live to see the youngest of her sons in a better condition than he had been himself. Which most clearly fell out, and is well known to many in this time: his second son went to *France*, was there raised to great honour, and upon his returning home, purchased a considerable

V

considerable

considerable estate, and was made Lord *Melvin*; and which calls for a remark, bought a part of the *Cardinal's* estate, the then great instrument of the present ruin of his house, which continues to this day. His *third* son was Lord *Tongland*, as one of the judges of the *Sesson*; and *another* of them Laird of *Halhill*; but, which was most strange, the *French King*, (it seems moved from the great respect he had, to that worthy Gentleman *Sir Robert Melvin*, the second son formerly mentioned) did, upon some treaty with *Scotland*, press and procure the taking off the forfeiture of that estate of *Raith*, whereby the *eldest* son was also restored. And it is known to this day; in what a measure the Lord hath graciously witnessed his respect to that house and family, which now is enjoyed by my *Ld. Melvin*, who, as he is by a continued succession the descent of that worthy Gentleman, who thus suffered for the truth, so it is hoped he shall be found *walking in the steps* of his truly renowned Ancestors, who *walked with God*, and adhered to his truth, while forsaken and persecuted.

VI. I shall mention, among these late instances, a notable passage of an excellent man, and deservedly of great repute in his time amongst the first restorers of the Gospel and of learning in *France*, after the reformation, which grave and famous *Rivet* sets down in a letter of his to his brother, and is since his death printed in the French tongue; which relation I shall give to those who have not access to that book, It is this. *James Faber*, native of a steeple in *Piccardy*, a most faithful and eminent Minister of the Gospel there, did in the persecution of that time flee with others, and for security retired to the Queen of *Navarre*, then in *Albret* in *Gascogne*, who had him in high esteem: on a certain day the Queen did advertise him, she purposed to come and dine at his house, and for that end did invite some learned men, in whose conference she took
much

much delight: at dinner *Faber* became exceedingly sad, and now and then fell out in bitter weeping; at which the Queen complained, and inquiring the cause, why he weeped whilst she had come to be merry with him, he in the end said, Most serene Queen, how can I be glad, or make others glad, who am as wicked a man as the earth bears! And what is that wickedness, says she, you have committed, who are known from your youth to have lived so holy? He answered, I am now the age of an hundred years, free from the touch of any woman, and remember not that I have committed what would burthen my conscience, or make me afraid to leave the world; except one sin, for which I am assured propitiation is possible. And as she pressed him to tell it, whilst he could scarce speak for abundance of tears, He said, How can I stand before the throne of God? who having taught others in purity and sincerity the holy Evangel of the Son of God, many of whom having followed my doctrine, have constantly suffered a thousand torments, & death it self, & in the mean time I, an unconstant Doctor, did flee; and though I had lived long enough, and should not have feared death, but rather desired it, did yet withdraw, and thus cowardly transgressed the command of my God! Whereupon the Queen, as she was most eloquent, did by reason and example shew him, this had befallen others of the holy servants of God: and others there also, did add such considerations, as that he became more chearful, & said, there remains nothing, but that I go from hence to God, and after I have now made my Testament, I have that impression, I must delay no longer, knowing the Lord calls for me. After, he fixed his eyes on the Queen, and says, Madam, I make you my heir: and to your preacher, *Gerard*, I leave my Books: and my cloaths, and other things I have, I leave to the poor. Whereupon the Queen smiling, asked, What
then

then *Mr. Faber* shall I have? The care, said he, Madam, to distribute this to the poor. It is well, said she; I solemnly profess, this Legacy is more acceptable to me, than if the King, my Brother, had named me his heir. Thereafter they saw him more joyful; then he said, I have need of some rest, be you merry and joyful, and in the mean time *adieu*; and having spoke this, he turned him over on a bed that was near; where, as they judged, he lay sleeping, but was indeed fallen a sleep in the Lord, without the least sign of a previous indisposition: for when they were about to awake him they found him to their admiration dead. Such was the end of this personage undoubtedly holy, which the Queen of *Navarre* did her self relate to the Elector *Frederick* the second of *Palatine*, when he was sick at *Paris*, in his return from *Spain*, from the Emperor *Charles* the fifth, and it was communicated by a worthy Gentleman *Hubertus Thomas*, a counsellor of the said *Frederick's*, who was present at this relation of the Queen's from whom *Rivost* had it written by himself.

VII. I shall subjoin two passages worthy of observation, which concern a grave and eminently godly Minister in the Church of *Ireland*, *Mr. Andrew Steward*, Minister at *Dunegor*, which (together with some of these other remarkable instances here mentioned) were transmitted unto me from his worthy Son *Mr. Andrew Steward*, Minister of *Donabade*; who both knew the certainty of them, and was himself also a great observer of such confirmations of the truth; whom I cannot mention without sorrow at the remembrance of the late removal of so eminent and useful a Minister of *Jesus Christ*.

The first is an instance and evidence of the power and prevalency of *Prayer* with God. On a Sunday after

after a communion where a great multitude being gathered, and these of the choicest of that country, whilst as a *Shepherd* he was feeding his flock in a large place (for the numerousness of the hearers imposed a necessity upon him to preach in the field) an horrid black cloud, and fearful to look on, hang'd directly over their head, which to all present threatned a strange pouring down of rain, whereby the exercise would have been interrupted; yea, some drops were begun to fall: but *Mr. Steward*, then at great advantage in his own spirit as to nearness with God, begg'd their leave to retire a little from the place, and went to an other part for prayer, and while he prayed, it was observably seen, that the cloud did remove half a mile off on the South hand, and there fell down in such a mighty rain, that albeit it was the heat of summer, the brooks so swelled, that some coming too late to sermon could not have passage over; but where they were gathered, there was not one drop more. So that he went on with a full gale to the close of the work, to the no small advantage and conviction of his hearers.

The next concerns his death. Being called to the burial of that excellent man of God, *Mr. Josiah Welsh*, Son of that great man formerly mentioned, who was his neighbour-Minister, he stood sometime at the grave, as a sad observer of such a thing, and to some who were by, said, *Who knows who will be next?* But none answering, he said to them, *I know!* and thus turned away, and went home to *Dunegor* on foot, and entering into the Church did bolt the doors, where he tarried some two hours; and after, going to his house, he fell a sleep on his bed with an excess of grief, whence he never in health rose again, but was buried that day month. When his Wife returned, whom he had left with *Mr. Welsh's* Widow, she inquired, what he had been doing? to whom he

said, I have been taking my leave of the Church of *Dunagor*; and I was there taking timber & stones to witness, that in my short time I had laboured to be faithful, and that according to my light I have revealed the whole counsel of God to the People. (How great a testimony of the conscience was this!) After fourteen nights lying, Mr. *Ridge* a choice English Minister there came to visit him, and said, I hope, Sir, you do not now rue that ye have been faithful. He answered, I rue nothing, but that I was too long in beginning (he mean'd his resisting, for several years, a call to the ministry, to which he had been much pressed) and I will tell you a strange thing, which hath helped me to be faithful. These last seven years there hath not one day passed me, without thoughts of death, and renewed submission to it; yea, this made me neglect my body, which should have served the Lord, as if it hath been mire in the street; which now troubleth me.--That night when he died, several godly and grave Christians were with him; where for a long time he fell in a deep silence; which ended with heavy groanings often reiterated: at last a Christian there desired to know, what troubled him? but he refused to tell. At last being urged he said, I shall tell you, My hair stands, to behold what I see coming on these Lands (this was in the Year, 1634.) and being further pressed, he said, the bloody wars of Germany shall never be ballanced with the wars of these three Kingdoms. What do you speak, Sir! said one of the company. To whom he answered, *The dead bodies of many thousands, who this day despise the glorious Gospel, shall lie upon the earth as dung unburied.* And whilst asked, what then shall be come of us and our posterity? He lifted up his voice, and said, *He that is for the sword, to the sword; he that is for captivity, to captivity; & he that is for famine, to famine:*

and

and God shall be avenged on these Lands. And whilst one said, Is there no remedy? He cried thrice, *No remedy, no remedy, no remedy!* Then he held his peace a little, and said, *I tell you what must be; The broken Covenant of Scotland must be renewed; the Formality of Ireland must be purged; the prodigality of England removed; & the sons of Saul must be hung up before the sun.* By which last word, none knew what he mean'd. Some of his own Parish being present, asked, What he would say to them? to whom he replied, *Wo to thee, Dunagor! for the nettles & the long grass shall be in greater plenty in thee, than ever were people to hear the Word of God.* This the forementioned relater said, he was a witness to three years together after the late rebellion. They asked, if he would have his children? he said, *No be had done with them.* And whilst they mentioned one of his daughters, he desired to be forborn, and said, *She should see glorious days after all this!* and then takes his wife by the hand (who having but a fourth night lien in of child, crept out of the bed to get and give a long farewell: to whom he said, *Thou hast in faithfulness suffered many things with me in my pilgrimage, and now wherewith shall I comfort thee, my love!* (think, that he left her with four children, much debt contracted whilst he resisted a call to the ministry, and but 30 Shillings Sterling then to do all with) *A father to the fatherless, a judge to the widow, is God in his holy habitation. As God is God, thou shalt never want, nor none of thine: but in all the sad days that are coming you shall be a wonder of mercy in every place, whither you are carried, and not a hair of your head shall fall.* Which was to the conviction and edification of many fully accomplished: which the forementioned relater does himself also attest, though with much humble modesty, because of his near relation.

VIII. This passage also I must instance, of a remarkable providence to a grave & to this day famous Christian in our country, *John Steward*, provost of *Air*; who from his very young years did witness a respect to godliness. He had a considerable estate left him by his Father: but having so great a weight and impression on his spirit, of the distress and straitned condition of many good people whom he knew in the country, and love to Jesus Christ and his truth having got the command over him and all his interests, he did deliberately call them (as he had access) together in *Edinburgh*, and having spent some time in prayer, took their solemn promise, not to reveal while he lived, what he was going to do: he said, he knew in what straits many of them were, to hold up the credit of the profession, and therefore he had brought a little money to lend each of them; yet so as they should never offer to repay it, till he required the same. This was not known until his death, that some of these found themselves obliged to make it known. Some time after he had bestowed this money, the plague having been sore in *Air*, and trade much decayed, he himself fell under some straits, and some of the profane in that place begun to make it their boast that *Religion* had made him poor, and his giving much to others like a fool had made him now want himself: the profession and the credit of it was always this godly man's darling, which made him quit the country at that time; and borrowing a little money, he went over to *France*, that he might the better conceal his strait. When he came to *Roebel*, the salt and other commodities were become exceeding cheap, because there had been no trading of a long time, on which he adventured to freight a ship, and load her upon credit: he himself came over the nearest to *England*, and thence to *Air*, with expectation of the ship's return. But after long waiting he was informed

med for certain, that his ship was taken by the *Turks*; which became matter of great exercise to him, (not because he knew not how to be abused, as well as how to abound; but fearing lest the mouths of wicked men might so much the more on this occasion be opened to reproach the profession) that for many days he kept his chamber. At last a maid, who had heard amongst the people, that *John Steward's* ship was arrived in the road, came running, & cried at the door, that his ship was come: but he being at prayer, could not be moved from his Master's company, till he was satisfied, and then went forth and saw it was a truth. But as a further ground of present exercise to him, a worthy Christian and great intimate of his, *John Kennedy*, who for joy had gone forth in a small boat to the ship, was by the sudden falling down of a storm carried by the ship, and in the judgment of all that looked on, he and the boat were swallowed up; yea, the storm increased at that rate, that they feared the loss of the ship also: which did so deeply affect this gracious man, that for three days he could be seen by none, under the weight of a such trial. But at last, having gone forth to visit the widow (as then supposed) whilst with that family they were mutually witnessing grief, *John Kennedy* immediately comes in; who had not been cast away, but by a strange providence the boat had been driven a far way to another place of the coast. Here, at once many mercies did meet; he vended the commodities of the ship; which having paid all his debt, returned him twenty thousand marks more to himself. Thus was that bread, cast upon the waters and to appearance lost, after many days returned; and this witnessed, that by liberal devices the liberal man doth stand.--I must add a word upon the death of this worthy man. Whilst then his friends came to see him, he oft used this word, *Be humble*. And about his own case, he said, *I go the way of all flesh; and it may be*

some of you doubt nothing of my welbeing; yea, I testify, that except when I slept, or was on business, I was not these ten years without thoughts of God, so long as I could be in going from my house to the cross: and yet I doubt my self, and am in great agony, yea, at the brink of despair. But a day or two before he died, he turned his face to the wall, from company, for two hours: & then Mr. John Fergusson came in, a great and godly Minister of that place, who asked what he was doing? upon which he turned himself, with these words, *I have been fighting, and working out my salvation with fear and trembling: and now I bless God, it is perfected, sealed, confirmed; and all fears are gone!*

It is a memorable instance, known yet to many in the north of Ireland, of a choice and godly Gentlewoman, when the rebellion brake out there, who fled with some other persons with her & three children, one of them upon the breast: they had not gone far before they were striped naked by the Irish, who to admiration spared their lives (it is like, thinking that the cold and hunger would kill them.) Afterwards going on, at the foot of a river which runs into *Lochbeach*, others met them, and would have them cast into the river. But this godly woman not dismayed, asked a little liberty to pray; and as she lay naked on the frozen ground, got resolution, not to go on her own feet to such an unjust death: upon which having called her, and she refusing, was dragged by the heels along that rugged way to be cast in, with the rest of her company. But she then turned, and on her knees says, *You should (I am sure) be Christians, and Men I see you are! In taking away our miserable lives, you do us a pleasure: but know, that as we never wrong'd you, nor yours, you must remember to dye also yourselves, and one day give an account of this cruelty, to the Judge of heaven and earth.* On which an Irish priest then

then present, said, Let us not take their lives; but we will put them into this Island of the lake. A boat being at the river, all the eight naked and without meat are turned into that Island: where after four days staying, some of the company died for hunger and cold; but not this woman or any of her children, for she lived by faith, upon the word of God and not by bread only. A day after, the two boys having crept aside, found the *hide* of a beast, which had been killed, at the root of a tree; which the mother and they endeavoured to get cast over them, then lying upon the snow. The next day a little boat goes by, unto whom she calls, for God's sake to take her in: but they being Irish, would not. She desired a little bread: they said, they had none. Then she begs a coal of fire, which she obtained; for she had seen smoak in the boat. And thus with some fallen chips made a little fire: and the boys taking a piece of the *hide*, laid it on the coals; and began to gnaw the leather: but without an extraordinary divine support, what could this do? Thus they lived ten days without any visible means of help: & that good woman professed, it was by *faith and joy in God*, that she did live; nor had she any bread, but ice or snow; nor drink, except water: but she thought, God put more substance into it, and found it as it were clammy. The next day a boat carried her out, to the side of the Band water; where she had yet been lost, but that she could not bear to see her children die in her sight: and though the two boys were young, and so starved, that they had no strength, she pressed them to go out of her sight, under pretence of their seeking some fire, and bid them bend their face to such a quarter, where in that desolate country she knew they could have no fire; yet in such an extreme left room for God to work their safety. The poor children were not able, and had not gone far before they saw two or three

three great *dogs*, eating a man who had been killed ; the children were afraid at the sight of the dogs (who needed not fear any thing, but to live in such a condition) and one of them came running and leaped upon one of the children without doing him the least hurt, but fawned on them, and would run a little before, and then tarry 'till the children came up, and so led them on to a *house* where *smoak* appeared, which was an irish man's protected by the English in *Antrum*, by whose means they were marvellously preserved, and the mother sent for and succoured by a party from *Antrum*. I would shut this passage up with something truly observable about this gentlewoman's *husband* : who was a sweet-humoured Gentleman, and *godly*, and one who used to frequent that famous Friday's meeting at *Antrum* before that rebellion brake out ; but being infared by some *Arminians* then in the bounds, the worthy Ministers in that place, after some pains taken on him, could not prevail. Mr. *Blair* being there, had this word to a friend, who told it to a godly Minister in that place, from whom I had this passage, *I am of opinion, that this Gentleman shall either turn penitent, or mad, before many days.* Which fell out, for he fell so furiously mad, that they were driven to the necessity of binding him ; and thus for a year continued, though with some more *sober* intervals, and then would *bewail* his case. At the end of the year, being very furious, he was taught of the *devil*, [but by an *over-reaching* providence of God] to feign himself sober, and intreated his wife to be rid of the manacles which was done ; and at the break of day rising, he took the coverlet of the bed about him, and went with resolution to *drown* himself in the river ; but when he was at the brink thereof, had this suggested to him, He was a fool to *drown* the *covering*, for it might be useful, which made him go a little back, and lay it down at the root of a tree, and then with full resolution

resolution went to throw himself in : but this was suggested to him again at the very brink, Were it not best to pray, before I die ? On which he turned a little, and falls down to prayer ; but ere he had done, his wit and judgment was returned, with peace of conscience, and assurance of pardon, in as large measure as ever he enjoyed these in his life ; and thus he returned in a sober frame to the astonishment of his wife.

IX. There is a strange passage of *Judgment*, that amongst the memorable things of the providence of God I think worthy of inserting ; it concerns a *Noble-man* in our own country (whose name, with respect to his house, I forbear to mention) who for many years by blood and cruelty and oppression made himself a *terror* in that place of the country where he lived. One day his second son, who after succeeded to that house, by the death of his brother, found a letter sealed and directed to his father, bearing the stile of his house, and without any suspicion whence it came, carried it up to his chamber : which that Lord breaking open, found it of a strange stile ; for it had these words, *I summon you ----- to appear before the tribunal of God, and there answer for your murders, oppressions, &c. Subscribitur DIABOLUS.* Upon which, he being enraged, drew his sword, to have run his son thorow, supposing it a contrived business by him ; but he escaped, and was forced for many months to withdraw from the house. However upon the intercession of friends, his father did condescend to admit him again ; but that very day, whilst they were met on this account, that Noble-man washing his hands in his bed-chamber (and one of his servants by) a letter from the roof of that chamber drops down upon his hands, sealed and directed as before, which being opened, had the very same words of the former letter, with that dreadful subscription, *DIABOLUS.* After which, by immediate stroke of the Lord's hand,

hand, he was struck with a remarkable insatiation, and such an horror and fear upon his conscience, that upon the appearance of the leaſt boy he would have fled, and with howling ſought to have ſheltered himſelf under a bed, and in this caſe ſhortly died; having been made a *terror to himſelf*, and the mean-eſt perſon able to quaſh him, who made it his work to be terrible to *others* in his life. This (far from reflecting upon the houſe or family) with reſpect to the holding forth the holy and righteous Judgment of the Lord, I could not omit to infer the ſame, after ſome ſafe warrant, as to the certainty thereof, from thoſe I had ground to believe. (9)

SEVENTH Witneſs to this truth, that the Lord hath in ſo ſolemn and extraordinary a way appeared for his Church in theſe laſt times, is this; *Thoſe great & marvellous providences (which we may call Magnalia Dei) by which he hath witneſſed his truth, and confirmed the ſame, ſince the breaking out of the Goſpel in this late raiſing of the Church from Antichriſt.* For we may truly ſay, there hath not wanted a viſible attestation from Heaven, and a convincing testimony by ſome great works of the Lord, to his truth, as well as in the primitive times of the Church.

We do here underſtand by ſuch providences, thoſe wherein man cannot but ſee ſomething *above nature* and natural cauſes, yea, above the *ordinary way* of the *Lord's working*, which do evidently witneſs his great and immediate hand: ſome whereof have been ſo wonderful, which can be inſtanced in theſe late times, as might truly be called miracles. It is true, this is not the Lord's uſual way, neither maketh he uſe of ſuch a ſolemn testimony, but on ſpecial and weighty grounds; when the neceſſity of the Church calleth for it; whilſt he is about ſome extraordinary piece of work; or when the Goſpel cometh firſt to a
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land that hath been long overſpread with darkneſs; when ordinary means of conviction are wanting; or in times of great oppoſition, when the commiſſion of his Servants needeth ſome extraordinary ſeal; in ſuch a time as that of *Ahab's*, when the People are made to halt betwixt truth, and a falſe way. Thus we find, the Lord did confirm the *firſt* breaking out of the Goſpel, and make uſe of ſuch a mean to ſpread the Chriſtian Church through the World: and ſhould this ſeem ſtrange, that in ſo great a change of the Church's caſe now in the *latter* days, when he was to raiſe her up, after ſo long a ruin and deſolation, whilſt Antichriſtianism ſo many ages had overſpread the face of the World, that he ſhould thus appear, and give ſome ſignal demonſtration of his power in behalf of his People, ſuch as we have ſeen with our eyes, and our Fathers did tell us!

It is not miracles, or any extraordinary providence, on which men ſhould reſolve their *faith*: nor do we here mention theſe, for laying ſtreſs thereon in believing the truth. No, the *Proteſtant doctrine* and cauſe doth lean on a ſtronger ground: it can with confidence appeal the adverſary, to the *Scripture*, thoſe divine records, which they do not pretend to deny. This, even this is the *reaſon of our hope*, which we offer to all that aſk for the ſame: and there let the God of truth, who hath revealed his will and answers men by the written word, be judge; & we ſhall demand no greater advantage or juſtice at the hand of our enemies. We know, miracles cannot authorize a lie, or be a ſeal to any thing repugnant to the *Scripture*. And truly thoſe *lying wonders*, which have been ſo frequent in the World, which the Apoſtle doth foretell, that ſuch an engine the Devil will make uſe of, to turn men aſide from the truth, beſides other marks of their falſhood, they have this one moſt discernable, that they are the ſupport and warrant of
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that which cannot stand with the Word : and thence are the *Popish miracles* made use of, to confirm such tenets, which of all their doctrine do most directly contradict the *Scripture*, as the merit of works, purgatory, praying for the dead, &c. But as we will not boast of such, as the authority or proof of our doctrine : so we judge it a grave and concerning duty, to observe the wondrous works of the Lord in our times ; yea, to make a diligent search therein, that we may tell posterity some of these great acts of our God, for his Church, in bringing her again from *Babel*.

I would desire to be very tender and cautious upon such a subject : for I judge it horrid divinity, to make a *lye for God*. It is not the truth, but a false way which requireth such a help. And truly as to these following instances (which are but a few of many that might be brought, if there were more serious enquiry) I dare attest the Lord, the great witness, that I have not knowingly set down here any thing false ; yea, not without some diligent search, and satisfying grounds about the certainty thereof. I judge it not necessary, to repeat those which are so known already to the World from publick records : and therefore shall but briefly point at some of these, and add a few more particular instances of this kind, which I may with some confidence bring to the light, from clear evidences of the truth thereof.

I shall first mention that solemn testimony of Mr. *Baynam* in *Queen Mary's* time, who in the midst of the fire, whilst his body was all in a flame, his arms and legs half burnt, cried out to bystanders, *O Papists ye look after miracles : lo ! here is one. I am now burning in this fire, but feel no more pain, than if I were in a bed of roses.* O must not this be called a miracle, and an extraordinary seal from the Lord to his truth ?
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wherein the World should consider, this was the testimony of one, who was upon the borders of eternity what he did declare before a great multitude ; attested by Mr. *Fox*, that holy servant of Christ, who in things of that kind so extraordinary was most cautious, and did much search out the truth and certainty of what he sets down, and by him was published, whilst many of that time who might have been present, were alive yea, it is the more remarkable, the sharp combat that this Martyr had through the terror of the fire a little before his death, fearing he should never be able to endure the same.

What a remarkable providence was that at a town in the *Low-Countrys*, whilst some of the Saints were put to death by the *Popish party*, and among these one *Michael Bomboutius*, a Deacon of the reformed Church ? Whilst they were going to suffer, about mid-day, the Heavens being most clear, there came suddenly so great a darkness, and so horrible and unusual a tempest, which was only in that place and above that city discerned, that men were generally shaken with fear, thinking there should be a present dissolution of the World. Famous *Voetius*, in that piece *de signis*, doth witness, that from divers there present, even some of them *popish*, he had this related to himself : and as he sayeth, such a thing *Papists* would have with greatest observation published, as the very finger of God, if they had the same occasion.

At a town *Alsa* in *Wellslanders*, whilst a godly man whom the Inquisition there had pursued, was leading to the stake, and was by the way singing *Psalms*, the Captain of those who guarded him, was so enraged that he caused presently his tongue be plucked out by the roots, but lo ! a few months after, this wretched man hath a Child born with his tongue hanging out a great way, which by no means could be kept within his mouth ! This, Doctor *Hall* being himself afterwards

terwards in that town, had shewed him from some who were most considerable there, as he sets down in his Epistles.

Charles the IX. of *France*, who was author of that horrid Massacre, where the blood of many thousand Protestants at *Paris* and other parts was shed, did a very little after die in the strength of his years, by an extraordinary effusion of blood from all passages of his body, that as *Du Serres* and other french writers of that time do shew, he was made to wallow in his own blood before his death. O was not this the very finger of *God*, a most convincing stupendious piece of his judgment?

What an extraordinary providence was that, which is attested by divers witnesses thereto, in the late bloody Massacre of *Ireland*; a young woman, who by the Irish was stript almost naked, and after by one of them threatned, that except she would give him her money, he would forthwith run her thro'; to which she gravely answered, *I know you cannot kill me, except God give you leave.* Whereupon he did three times with his sword run at her naked body, but could not once pierce her skin; which did so confound this wretched man, that with a kind of horror he went away, and ceased to trouble her further.

Did not *God* wonderfully appear in the raising of the late King of *Sweden*, with that astonishing success, which did attend him in breaking the power of the house of *Austria*, whilst they were at so great an height, and had their hands hot reeking in the blood of the Protestants thro' *Bohemia*, and other places of *Germany*! O but the Lord's hand might be clearly seen in acting forth and fitting that party of the *Swedes*, for such a piece of his service, even in a more than ordinary way; who like that *He-Goat*, mentioned in *Daniel*, did come so swiftly, that they touched

ched not the ground, as it were; but like a mighty Torrent bare down all before them.

The breaking of that great *Spanish Armado* in the Year 88. which had been 3 Years in contriving, did convincingly witness a divine hand opposing the same. And how remarkable was that issue of all the Counsels, expence, and cruelty, which *Philip* the second had made use of to bear down the rising of the Gospel in the *Netherlands*! For it is notorious, that after many essays the loss of an 100 Millions of gold, with near 400000 Lives, the reckoning of all his gain and purchase was only the loss of a considerable part of these countries, and helping forward the establishment of the united Provinces. And truly we must say the Lord did by his great and outstretched hand wonderfully appear in raising that Common-wealth, so that they may date their flourishing in outward interest from their owning of the interest of *God*. Religion did raise them, and no People this day hath more cause, and are under greater engagements, to be zealous for the truth, and defence of the Protestant Cause.

The breaking of that formidable league of the Catholics in *France*, for rooting out the Protestant Religion there, was very wonderful, how all their Counsels and designs should resolve in their own ruin; so that the most ordinary lookers on could not but see a divine hand counteracting the same. *Davila*, tho' an adversary, in setting down that history, giveth a large account of this.

What a great appearance of the Lord's hand, yea, of an extraordinary providence, was there in the throwing down of the *Papish images* and altars, almost in one night, thro' much of the *Netherlands*, which for so many 100 years had been made use of for Idolatry? O did not Satan thus fall as Lightning from Heaven! it being very evident, how strange an impulse

impulse did carry out the People in this over all difficulties or fear of hazard, what a wonderful consent and agreement amongst places so remote, about one thing, and almost at one time ; how quickly also was it executed through these Provinces, almost in an instant ! The authors did never appear, nor any noise of their boasting thereabout ; and which was strange, the Magistrates of the cities having both power and will to hinder, yet were so overruled and struck with astonishment, that they could not resist. And as *Famianus Strada*, a great enemy to the truth, doth shew what fell out in *Antwerp*, and other places, considering the greatness of the work, the multitude, and height of those idolatrous monuments, it might have been enough for many days, what was done in one night ; and yet not any in the least prejudiced or hurt thereby, which made him cry out, that sure this was the work of the Devil, and his help eminently therein. But I do not wonder, to hear these in such a manner blaspheme, whilst they are tormented with so clear a discovery of God's hand against them.

Must we not here mention that great deliverance of the town of *Leyden* from the *Spaniards*, with a special remark, whilst it was then manifest, if the enemy had made use of Cannon in battering the walls, they could not have come short of their design ? In what an extraordinary way also were the winds combined to raise the waters, in order to the town's relief, when they were at the utmost extremity ; yea, for driving the waters back again, when the town was once delivered ; and which was very marvellous, that the same night wherein the *Spaniards* were forced to retire, a part of the walls fell down, which if it had fallen out a little before, that city had been utterly lost. O was not this a divine hand, which e-

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ven the greatest Atheists, and such who judge things to fall out by chance, must confess ?

What wonderful providences did attend the actings of that poor handful of protestants in the Valleys of *Piemont*, for their necessary self-defence ! Mr. *Fox*, and other writers, give a clear account in setting down that horrid persecution, which they endured in the year 1555. I shall here only touch some passages mentioned by Mr. *Morland*, in his History ; who upon the account of that bloody Massacre, which was there within these few years, was then near that place, and from sure knowledge and information doth very gravely hold forth the same. And truly they are providences so marvellous and astonishing, that men cannot but see the Lord in an extraordinary way helping that poor People, his acting forth a few to do such exploits, beyond any thing that can be mentioned of those great Heroes, whom the World in former years did admire ; so that we must say, as this was a convincing proof of the great power of God, put forth for his People, when help in an ordinary way failed, it was also a solemn testimony to their cause, and of the Lord's approbation of his People's standing for their own defence, against the cruelty and violence of a persecuting Magistrate. We have there held forth, how after that bloody persecution, by an order from the Duke of *Savoy*, a small number was in a remarkable way raised up, and upon their first essay 7 or 8 under the conduct of that worthy Gentleman *Josua Gianavel* (whom God made use of as a choise instrument, to help that poor scattered remnant) was made to fight 300 souldiers, who were sent to exercise further cruelty in that place, killing many of them, and pursuing the rest for a considerable time. After, a party of 500 being sent by the Marquis of *Pianezza*, who then commanded the Duke of *Savoy's* forces, were opposed by 11 of the Protestants,

tants, and other 6 with slings : and after a short conflict, were forc'd to flee with a considerable slaughter; the terror of the Lord upon the one, and a spirit of courage & resolution in the other being very manifest. After these, there was an other party sent forth of 700 souldiers, to seize on all the passages : upon which about 17 Masters of families, whose hearts God had in signal manner strengthened to the battel, for their poor brethren's preservation, resolved to cast themselves upon the Lord for the success of their undertakings, and with such marvellous boldness faced their adversaries, as put them in amazement, and made them draw off, resolving to take another way ; but were still pursued by this little handful, who killed many without the loss of one man. At an another time the Protestants there joyning in a greater number, being 300 under the conduct of the forementioned Captain *Gianovel*, were assaulted by 2500 of the adversaries : but the Lord so ordered, that this little party getting the advantage of the place, after some conflict did force them to retire, pursuing them into the woods and steep rocks with great slaughter ; and thus with a marvellous courage in a continued fight for eight hours together, did drive the enemy before them. Divers other remarkable passages of this kind are more at length mentioned in that History ; which the Author, after most exact search and enquiry, doth solemnly attest. And truly it might be much cause for wonder (as it is there observed) that through the Lord's eminent appearance, and his blessing on his poor people's endeavours, for the interest of Religion, and their own preservation, they did in a short time dispute the matter with such a prosperous success, against all the forces, which the Duke of *Savoy* sent, that their enemies at last began to fear what effect it might produce : and therefore having no better game to play, were glad by a treaty

treaty of peace, to get the sword out of their hands ; however they pretended it as a complement, put on neighbouring Princes, who did interceed for the same.

Have we not also to reckon among the great works of the Lord in these last times, *Henry* the VIII. of *England*, most violent in opposition to the truth, who by the Pope was stiled *Defender of the Faith*, upon that account, and for his writing against *Luther* : and yet the same man shall be the instrument made use of by the Lord, to throw down the Pope, and his power in his Dominions, and give some beginning to a great Reformation of the Church there.

Vergerius, the Pope's Nuncio, for many years in *Germany*, whilst he is writing against this truth, is even then converted, and forced to yield to the power of the same, turns Protestant, and a zealous Preacher of the Gospel to his death.

Galeaceus Carracciolus, an Italian Marquise, of great place and estate in the World, was so taken by the heart with one word, hearing *Peter Martyr*, as made him quit not only all his hopes of preferment, a most pleasant place as was in the earth, and a great inheritance ; but to withstand the most pressing intreaties and insinuations of his friends, the weeping cries of his Lady and Children, and go to a strange place quitting all, that he might preserve his conscience, and enjoy fellowship with the Church. O what a solemn witness was this to the truth, and of the conquering power of Christ !

And in a word, what a marvellous thing was it, that poor *Luther*, against whom so much of the World was aloft with greatest rage and violence, should yet live to an *old age*, and go to the grave in peace ! And truly the spirit and appearance of this great and
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first witness to the truth, might be a convincing evidence, that the Lord was then about to raise up a people to himself, in whom he would be glorified, by an active testimony, as well as by suffering.

Besides these instances, I would here mention some remarkable providences, worthy indeed to be observed, tho' they are little known to the World: which, we may say, do not only witness the power of God, but are a convincing seal to his truth, and the Church's Reformation in these last times.

It is a remarkable passage, which worthy Mr. Forbes sets down under his hand, whilst he was banished for the truth; whose words are these. In the year 1607. being at *Ruan in France*, and meeting with *Monsieur Figureus*, that ancient and famous divine, and then Pastor of the Reformed Church in that city, he had from him this following relation. After the close of the Council of *Trent* in the time of *Pius the V.* there was a consultation in *Italy*, by the Pope and Cardinals, for an utter extirpation of the Reformed Churches in *Europe*: and to this end every Prince, of the *Romish Religion*, had a certain part assigned where this great project should be put in practice: The death of *Pius the V.* hindred a present prosecuting of this design. And his successor *Gregorius XIII.* did suffer it to lie dead, having no heart that way; and so until that time of *Clemens VIII.* it was not revived; but then this bloody resolution was of new ratified by him and his Cardinals, under their hands and seals. The only difficulty was in this, to find a fit and trusty person, whom they should make use of to the Princes of the *Romish Religion*, for engaging them to subscribe the said ordinance, and set about the execution thereof. At length a Gentleman of good parts, near in blood to the Cardinal *Baronius*, is chosen; which to him was a matter of much grief and sorrow; for, unknown to them, he was of the Reformed Religion.

Religion. But this grief in his countenance and carriage put his friends, who observed the same, to strange thoughts; and so much the more, that he did expressly declare to some of those who asked thereabout, that what to them seemed a cause of rejoicing, was to him a just occasion of grief. Yet at last finding his hazard, upon a bitter challenge from the foresaid Cardinal who had heard thereof, he judged it his wisdom to dissemble: shewing him, his unsuitableness to so great an employment could not but be ground of trouble and fear; and so was someway forced to engage, getting his commissions, the decree of the Conclave, with letters to the foresaid Princes, sealed and subscribed. But lo! whilst this poor Gentleman is on his journey, having found ways to free himself of his servants and other company, his spirit was in great perplexity betwixt these two grievous temptations, either to be instrument of utter ruin to the truth and Churches of Christ, or to forsake his country, inheritance and all he had in the World. Upon which he resolved to retire himself out of the high way to an obscure village, where for three days he gave himself to fasting and prayer for direction and resolution from the Lord: and after this had his heart so strengthened against the care of his worldly estate, that he resolved to forsake all, and to reveal this bloody conspiracy to the Churches of Christ, and cast himself on God's hand for his future state. So that he turned his face from *Spain*, and took journey to *France*, and to *Paris*, where at that time remained the sister of *Henry the IV.* a Religious Princess, afterwards Dutches of *Lorraine*, to whom the foresaid *Monsieur Figureus* was her preacher; and unto him he made his address (tho' after divers refusals of admission upon suspicion) shewing him the whole business, and delivered the sealed decree, with his letters of commission for that effect; and

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did likewise shew him (who was then astonished at such a wonderful providence of God, in fostering some of his own Children in the midst of *Babylon*, and that to so comfortable an use for his Churches safety) that there were many others in *Italy*, yea, in *Rome* it self, of the Reformed Religion, who had their secret meetings, and even *Gregory* the XIII. before his advancement to the Papacy, was throughly clear thereabout in his judgment, whereof he gave him divers evidences. This foresaid relation did so affect Mr. *Forbes*, that he shewed his marvellous desire to see that man who had done so worthy and gracious a work for the glory of God and good of his Church; and by a recommendation from Monsieur *Figureus*, he did afterwards go of set purpose to that place, taking the first opportunity for *Heidelberg*, where this Gentleman was then retired for his further security, and honourably entertain'd by that Prince, where he sheweth that he saw him, and from his own mouth received the assurance of this former narration, to his great satisfaction and comfort. This is the very sum, which I have here set down and truly transcribed off the original; which I had beside me, both written, and subscribed, by Mr. *Forbes* his own hand.

A remarkable providence I shall also here set down which was attended with some very convincing circumstances, at the Parliament 1621. at their bringing in of *Papish Ceremonies* upon the Church, which was then a sad step of the land's defection from the truth, contrary to their engagements; whilst the faithful Ministers of Jesus Christ at that time did with greatest seriousness and freedom obtest and warn those who were in power (alas! that now there is little of such a Spirit appearing) that they would not, to please men, corrupt the Worship of God: but the current being violent, it did at last resolve in a *Law*. At which

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very time, whilst the King's Commissioner did rise from the throne to ratify this woful act, by the touch of the Scepter, even in this moment of that ratification, the God of Heaven sent extraordinary *lightnings*, with very unusual great claps of *thunder*, and these followed with a most strange and extraordinary *darkness*, which both for the suddenness and greatness of the same did astonish and affright all who were present; and after all so violent a downpouring of *rain*, as made the streets to run like a river, imprisoning the Lords within that house for an hour and an half. And truly as we are not hereon to lay stress, or be peremptory in the application of particular providences, yet this was so very convincing, as should not be passed without a special remark; considering (first) how at that time many of the choice *Ministers* of the Land were together near the town, at *fasting* and *prayer*, bewailing before the Lord such an avowed defection from the truth--(2.) That likewise this horrid tempest and darkness appeared to those who were at some distance to be most directly above the town, the darkness overshadowing that part only, and was not so in other places--(3.) That they had, by the instigation of the Prelates, *guarded* the entry to the Parliament that day, lest any Ministers should have entered a protestation in behalf of the Church against these Articles; and thus thought themselves secure from any *opposition* of that kind: but whilst they least suspected, they are met with a more publick and visible witness from *Heaven* against the same.(4.) Which was also most strange, upon the *Munday* following, whilst these acts were proclaimed, the Heavens did in the same manner put on darkness, with a most fearful tempest of thunder, lightning, and rain, which continu'd all the time of their *reading* at the *Cross*. And truly when the Lord thus doubled his

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warnings,

warnings, it might cry aloud for men's observation thereof.

The breaking of that journey to *New-England*, which about the year 1636. was seriously intended by some of the choice Ministers and Christians in *Ireland*; who were then much persecuted by the Prelates, tho' not from any fear of their own sufferings, but with a respect to a further liberty to serve the Lord in the work of the Gospel, when that door was shut upon them in their own country. This was truly a strange and remarkable providence, and their preservation in some kind miraculous: about which these circumstances are worthy to be observed. (1.) That whilst their vessel, amidst a tempestuous sea, and far from any land, was like a riddle with so many lakes; yea, the rudder of the Ship breaking, so that the *Pilots* were turned wholly hopeles; and could not see any ground of safety in an ordinary way, a *poor seaman* by a remarkable providence, whose company they had much shunned, was made the instrument of preserving the whole vessel, with a marvellous dexterity fastening the rudder (which others had given over) as one visibly sent by the Lord for that end.--(2) The strong persuasion that some of these worthy Ministers had of their safety, which with great confidence they declared before the passengers; whilst the Master and others were giving it over as a hopeles business, and seeing a convincing necessity for a *return*, though it was very astonishing and bitter at the first look, yet was afterwards followed with a *clear discovery from the Lord*, as one of them with much freedom did express his assurance to the rest of his brethren, that since the Lord would not accept their service in *America*, they should not want work and service, where he was sending them back by so remarkable a providence: as within a short time was evident, the downfall of the *Prelates* in *Scotland* and

and after in *Ireland*, falling out shortly upon the back thereof. So that it may be said, this was a convincing presage thereof, the Lord by a strong hand bringing back such choice and useful instruments, for that great harvest, which did after follow: So that they could not but say, The Lord did in a very marvellous and immediate way appear in that cross-wind and storm; and thereby, as if with an audible voice, did witness his mind in such a disappointment.--(3) It was also most observable, that none of those, who on the account of their consciences (that they might enjoy the purity of the ordinances) went in that journey, were the worse, but had a safe *return*; only some persons, who upon another account, expecting a fat soil and outward advantage in that place, and had unexpectedly slipped into the vessel, did all die upon the sea, save one, being 5 in number: and it was also wonderful, upon their return, how the Lord as he had *stayed the rage of the sea*, did also *still the tumults of people*; which they found by experience, so that it did evidently give a dash, and became a terror to their adversaries.

I must here also set down a very singular and strange instance, we may say, both of *judgment* and *mercy*, which was in this land not many years ago. A Gentleman, whose style was *Wassraw*, a most bloody man, and otherways notorious for profanity, but most in this, that it was his great work and pleasure, to put difference betwixt men, and as it was at that time very easy to engage them in blood, whilst he had thus stirred up a neighbour-Gentleman to kill another in that place: finding him afterward sore troubled in mind thereabout, he told him, *more of that practice would be the best cure*: for he himself had killed 6, &c that the first time he was much disquieted, but the longer he did continue, it became the more easy. But one day whilst he was on such an ac-

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count riding to a place, where two had appointed to decide a private quarrel by fighting, his horse stumbles on the side of a steep rock, and he falls a great way down, his sword falling out before him, yet without any hurt: and here by such a strange piece of providence did the Lord step in, and break in upon his conscience, so that he quits his journey, turns home with great trouble and remorse; a most kindly change following thereon, and for some years after witnessed much tenderness & repentance by his after-walk, spent much time alone mourning before his death. And that day he died, having no visible appearance thereof to those who looked on, he was heard in his chamber at much wrestling in prayer: and after long continuance, those of the house were forced to break open the door, getting no answer after long knocking; they find him dead in the room, but upon his knees in a prayer posture; and the whole blood of his body, which from every passage thereof had issued out, flowing about him on the floor; it being visible how all these passages were opened for that effect. A most astonishing instance! declaring this to the World, though God *pardon the iniquity of his People*, yet some sins he will not let pass without a visible mark of his anger, but will *take vengeance on their inventions*.

What an observable passage is that also, known to many yet alive, about a notorious robber in the south parts of this land, called *John of the Score*, who for many years having driven that woful trade; did one day rencounter a poor man travelling with two horses, which he according to his custom takes away. The poor countryman falling down on his knees, did earnestly beg, that for *Jesus Christ* sake he would give the one again, for he had no more to maintaint his poor family, but what he could gain by them; but it was in vain. He carrieth them home with him,

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leaving the poor man in that desolate condition: but a little after, he turns dumpish and melancholy, could get no rest or quiet, not knowing the cause but as he professed, that those words which the *poor man* had spoke to him (though he was so great an *Atheist*, that he understood not what he meant when he spake of *Christ*) were lying like a heavy weight upon his spirit; and whilst he was fought after for his robberies, he desired his sons to shift for themselves, for he could not go out of the way, there being a restraint upon him, and something within him that in a sort bound him from going out of the way: and thus staid at his house until he was apprehended, brought in to *Edinburgh*, and there put up in prison. Upon which a godly Minister, *Mr Henry Blyth*, with a Christian Gentleman *William Cuningham*, Tutor of *Bonitoun*, who had sometimes known him, make a visit; holding forth to him his miserable estate, and the hazard of his soul (for he was judged by the Law to die) and amongst other words, shewing him the necessity to flee to *Jesus Christ*, he doth suddenly break out with a cry, *O what word is that! for it hath been my death: That is the word, that hath lien upon my heart, since the poor man spake it to me; so that I had no power from that time to go out of the way.* And after being told what an one *Christ* was, without whom he could not be saved, he crieth; *O will he ever look to me! and shew mercy to one that for his sake would not shew mercy to that poor man, and give him back his horse!* But after further instruction, a most real and gracious change did appear upon him; he gave most convincing evidences of the reality thereof; attained to great assurance, before his death; and upon the scaffold, in the publick streets where he was executed, did speak so wonderfully of the Lord's dealing with him, and with such knowledge and judgment, as left a conviction on all present,

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sent,

& forced them to see a truth & reality in the *grace of God*. Another notable instance of *grace*, with a very remarkable passage in his condition, I shall here mention, one *Patrick Mackelwrath*, who lived in the West of Scotland, whose heart the Lord in a remarkable way touched, & after his conversion (as he shewed to many of his Christian friends) was in such a frame, so affected with anew World wherein he was entred, the *discoveries of God* & of a life to come, that for some months together he did scarce ever sleep, but was still taken up in *wondring*: His life was very remarkable for tenderness; & near converse with God in his walk; & which was worthy to be noticed, one day after a sharp trial, having his only son suddenly taken away by death, he retir'd alone for several hours, & when he came forth, did look so cheerfully, that to those who asked him the Reason thereof, & wondered at the same in such a time, he told them, *He had got that in his retirement with the Lord, that to have it afterwards renewed, he would be content to lose a son every day!* This one remarkable passage I would set down: it had been long his burden, the want of *memory*, that he could retain almost nothing of what he heard from the word, & bitterly complaining thereof to worthy *Mr. James English*, Minister of *Daly*, his counsel to him was, when he heard any *truth* which he desired to *remember*, to hold it up to the *Lord*, and desire him to *keep* it for him, & *give* him it back according to his need; which accordingly this blessed Man did with much seriousness practice: & on his death-bed, to his Minister, & divers Christians that were present, he did solemnly declare, how wonderfully the *Lord* had answered, & condescended to him in that particular. For as they knew how much formerly it had been his burden, the want of memory, now the *Lord* had given him back all those truths that he had put in his keeping: so that what for *many years* before he had heard, was now most clearly bro't to his *remembrance*; which he witnessed by repeating many particular truths, and notes of Sermons which at such and such times he had heard,

Now to shut up this, we have truly cause to say even from *late experience*, since this dark night came upon the Church in these Nations, with so sharp a storm of *persecution*, there have not wanted some very signal and convincing providences, witnessing the *Lord's appearance* for his people and against their enemies, which are worthy of a remark, and may let men see that there is *One higher than the highest, who ruleth in the Kingdoms of the Children of men*. For it is manifest,---

1. How eminently the Lord did appear in *breaking that party*, who had been the great instruments both in Council & Action, to break the government of the Church of Christ in this land, & lay so much of his vineyard waste and desolate, & this in the height of their power & greatness, whilst they seemed most firmly rooted. O how evident was a divine hand there, that this *Cabal*, who made it their work to raise up *Prelacy*, and oppress the poor Church, & like a violent tempest did carry all before 'em, in a moment when they could have least expected, should be made to fall; yea, in so short a time be turned out of their places & offices, who but a little before had turned out so many of the faithful Ministers of Christ! and that *great man*, who put forth his power & authority so much to turn many of the godly of the Land, both Ministers & others, out of their houses & families, tossing them from place to place, should thus be dealt with from the Lord, and recompenced with that measure; being forced to quit his lodging once & again, yea, even to banish himself out of the country, who had been the chief instrument to banish some of the most choice servants of Christ! & this stroke also made to come upon them from that hand whence they could have least expected, whose interest they studied to promote in opposition to God's! I should desire to study sobriety and fear in application of the judgments of God; but when the Lord doth so clearly reveal himself, and shew forth such an evident resemblance betwixt mens sin and their stroke, I think, it crieth aloud for a serious observing thereof.

2. Should we pass without a remark, so solemn a witness from the Lord of *his respect* to his *People's sufferings* in this late time? for it is known, with what marvellous resolution and chearfulness, those have been carried through, who were called forth to *resist unto the blood* in their adherence to the truth; witnessing to the conviction of lookers-on, even their greatest enemies, something above *Roman Gallantry*, yea, something above *nature*, in that stayedness and elevation of their Spirits. And as some of all ranks in the land the Lord would have brought forth to seal and witness his truth, and the work of Reformation: so it hath been also clear, that none wanted a large measure of support & strength for the trial, their suffering still giving a further dash to their adversaries.

3. It is also manifest, and may be truly matter of wonder, by what a marvellous providence so many suffering and desolate *families* have been carried through without any obvious noise of their *straits*, now for these divers years, with such convincing *chearfulness*; yea, the experience of many made to witness, that they never less knew a strait, than since they were put from the ordinary means of their support; and others who have been more sharply tried, could not reckon any such plunging strait and difficulty, but have also found relief by some remarkable providence occurring. I am very sure, amongst other advantages yet of these times, this shall be one, a large *Register of Experience*, and remarkable confirmations of the truth of the word and promise, which the goldly have had under this sharp trial; that will be sweet matter for an after-reckoning, and a greater gain than any loss their former sufferings did occasion. Yea, have we not seen, what in an ordinary way looked as irrecoverable, a *stroke* which a *generation* could not have made up, hath been a mean the Lord hath choosed to promote *his glory*, and thereby declare himself to be God? Hath he not

made us see, how easy it is for him to turn the sharpest storm to the great advantage of his Church, that he can act in desperate cases, above the skill both of Angels and men? And truly, though we should be brought yet more low, even to the *place of Dragons*, this may uphold the shaking hearts of his People, and be solid ground of confidence, that Christ's power and faithfulness is this day engaged for his Church, and truth! *He must increase*, his Kingdom is upon the rising hand, and shall yet have a more glorious appearance in the World, whatever become of instruments; the *reviving of his work* is not in the reverence of men. And since we know, the Lord hath solemnly declared war against *Antichrist*, and all who will oppose the spreading of the Gospel in these last times, yea, hath past his word to the Church for the fall and ruin of that adversary, shall he *must*, though the dust of the earth should rise for that end: and it is sure *Prelacy* must also wither, that hath its life and sap from that accursed root! They have this day a *desperate cause* in hand, who do engage their power to support the throne of the *Beast*, for they run in the way of the wrath and vengeance of the Lord, and shall surely involve themselves in that ruin; though they were the *greatest Princes* of the earth. I shall only add, we have much ground in these times to believe, that the Lord shall yet appear, and make himself known in the earth, by as great and convincing providences, both of Judgment and mercy, as in any former ages, & thus vindicate his glory, and refute the Atheism of this generation, by such an argument, as shall force *iniquity to stop its mouth*.

Now since this is sure, which none can deny, if they will but allow some serious thoughts thereabout, that the *Scripture* falleth not to the ground, for *God's way is perfect, & his word is tried*, Ps. 18. 30. O is it not also sure, and a conclusion well grounded, that *He is a buckler to those who trust in him*. None needs fear to venture his

interests thro' time, on the word; yea, if there could be any thing greater than a Heaven or eternal salvation, the testimony of the *God of truth* might be sufficient security for the same. It is a small matter how *this World* doth reel and stagger, or what be the changes of outward things: That is enough, the *promises* of the Word shall certainly take place, and the *expectation* of the Saints *shall not make them ashamed*.

AN APPENDIX.

IT is sure, the demonstration of divine truth held forth in the *Scripture*, is the greatest discovery, that ever came to the sons of men: which with a more excellent light and greater lustre, doth inlighten those parts of the earth, on which it shines, than the sun, in its noon-day-brightness. This is the *word of life*, even the *hidden wisdom of God in a mystery*; which most of the World, do not understand, but flee from the same, as their plague and torment; but hereby the followers of God know they are *of the truth*, and *do assure their heart before him*. It should be matter of astonishment, if thus the *Scripture* were not confirmed, to see what *rage* the breaking out of this light causeth amongst men; which now in the present time does in a strange manner appear, not against some particular truth only, and the *uppermost boughs*, but by a remarkable assault seems to strike at the *root*, the very being of truth and godliness. It may be said, whilst *superstition* in times of greater ignorance, did overcloud and darken the visible Church, *Atheism* hath taken up its room, to wear this generation out from under the aw of God, and weaken their assent to the truth: for we see men every where making it their work, to lead his way with reproach, and put discredit on his faithfulness,

fulns, who is the *God of truth*. As a witness thereto is this small essay directed, and now again comes forth to the World with an enlargement; Which I may say, was not intended, if there had not been a pressing motive from the uncorrectedness of the first impression; and for this I shall make no further Apology. But if a subject of so great an import, suffer no prejudice from such an unfit pen, the favourable testimony of men, or their censures, I should desire to look on (as they are indeed) at a distance, and far below that solid peace of the soul, which in the acceptance of God is alone to be found. What *access* it may have to many of this generation, I know not, who are taking all advantage to strengthen their prejudice at the truth, and unsettle others therein; it is like, such may pass their judgment thereon at the first look, and throw it aside. But as a Minister of *Jesus Christ*, who believes an appearing before the judge, and would desire mercy to be found faithful in that day, being pressed in some measure, upon the horrid appearance of the *Atheism* and blasphemy of the time, with that avowed indifferency now within the visible Church, in these great interests of Religion and godliness, I lay this witness to the truth at their door: and shall here offer a few thoughts further on this subject, in some clear *Inferences* from that great truth, the verification of the *Scripture*.

Inference I. Which we may see clear, is this, *the great advantage a Christian hath for his establishment*; that his security is indeed greater than his interest, or any thing he hath to adventure thereon: and sure, that is not small; since the matter is of no less earnest (besides his concerns through time) than an eternity, a *Heaven*, or the hazard of *hell* for ever. This must require a solid and sure foundation, yea, we may judge, the furthest degree of certainty, where

where the superstructure is so great : for it is not opinion, or a probable conjecture, can be a suitable basis, to bear up that weight. But here, to answer such an Interest, and give thorough quiet and repose to the soul, we have the truth and testimony of God, with this great Witness thereto, that it assuredly takes place, and not one syllable falls to the ground, without an evident performance. There are *two* things, which, I am sure, men could not with such ordinary thoughts consider, yea, nor think thereon without amazement, if they made it not their choice, to keep at a distance. One is, that such a Thing is in the World this day as the very *Word of God*, that is more sure than an audible voice from Heaven, to declare his whole counsel, and hold forth unto men the true way up towards that country; and does thus marvellously discover itself, (1.) To come so low, down, even his word and testimony who speaks from Heaven, that therewith it hath a solemn appeal to men's *sense* and *feeling* about its certainty. (2.) Which commends it self upon the *nearest approach*, and is found the more invaluable and of the greater price, the more it is *searched* into by an inquiry. (3.) That though clear and plain in it self, yet by a *supernatural* light and evidence can only be known, which no humane sagacity nor reason in its highest elevation, without this, can reach : but riseth far above the greatest capacity and endowments, of which by nature the most excellent spirits of men can boast. In a word, when once it shines in upon the *soul*, does then discernably stamp the very same *image* thereon, and begets such a marvellous likeness betwixt them, as may show the World this is a *living* thing. But there is a *second*, we may also consider with astonishment, how *great* it is, to be a *Christian*, and of what marvellous import that is. I suppose, there were but *one* or *two* such, to be found in the World, who were certainly known

to be *partakers of the divine nature*, to have a real converse with God, and (by experience) with the word ; might not the report thereof give men a strange alarm ? yea, put them upon an impatient search and inquiry, to know if this be sure, and what such a discovery means ? O is it small to be the *son of a King* ! But the hope and claim of a *Christian* riseth higher, and hath another reach ; that such within a short time, whilst now in so mean a garb, shall be assuredly *entred into glory*, in the immediate enjoyment of God, and of the *fulness of joy*, among that triumphant society of the Angels, the Prophets, and Apostles, and all those who are *before the Throne*, *washed*, and *made white in the blood of the Lamb*, and thus continue thro' the ages of eternity ; yea, in that very instant of the soul's quitting the body, must admit so great a change, and enter there, where Heaven only can make us know what Heaven is ! It is surely a *strange sleep* men are in, who in such concerns are not awaked to a further inquiry. It were well, if some would but allow *reason* its true use (whilst they travel betwixt the Poles, and can adventure to the furthest parts of the earth to pursue that which they must so shortly forego) to judge seriously and bring the thoughts of this near, what a greater interest, and at a more easy rate, and of an unexpressibly greater value, than that gold and treasure which ever came from the *Indies*, does offer itself ! I say the profest *Atheism* of some gives not more cause of wonder, than the strange *stupidity* of others, and that common and easy way men have in giving an assent to divine truth : I do not mean, from the want of evidence and perspicuity, but because of the greatness of the things here held forth. This was not so strange, that we find *two of the Disciples* of Christ at a stand, from joy and wondering, to credit his resurrection, even whilst they saw it verified ; so great

great was this in their eyes. Now to this, I must further point at two or three things, which seriously considered, may seem a strange contradiction to reason. (1.) how men can find a pillow to rest on, who certainly know, *their breath* (for these few hours in the night) *is not made sure*; but if by a sudden arrest of death it should be stopt, which is no strange thing in the World, they know not what is next; but every night, sleep at an adventure of being ere the next day in an irrecoverably lost estate! Yea is not here cause of wonder, that whilst we see time make such swift dispatch, dying men can be in that measure estranged from the thoughts of death; who so oft may hear it sound, and the bell ringing for others, yea, by previous assaults discern its approach on themselves, which once come, then man goes off the stage, to return no more, nor shall he for all the ages of eternity ever act that scene of life here over again. (2.) How strange it is, that the *supposal* of the *truth* and certainty of the Scripture, that such a thing *may* be, does not more alarm men, and mar their quiet; or that they can so much as think of an *eternal* estate without trembling, whilst they are at no solid determination in such a matter: yea, when the Scripture of God does not only witness a *Heaven* and Immortality, but shews the World, there is such a thing as the *first fruits* and earnest of it; whereof men here may be fully assured. I would know, if such an Atheism is to be found, that puts the Atheist *beyond fear* and *doubting*, even in his most professed confidence, and scoffing at the truth: or can sufficiently falve that heart-aking and continued hesitation he is under, that such a thing may be true. (3.) I shall add, it is matter of wonder, men should *admit the report* and attestation of *others*, about the truth and reality of godliness, who yet live *strangers to it themselves*; yea,

yea, should be at some toil and pains, and come a length to be *almost Christians*, without pursuing this in greater earnest.

Inference II. Which from the Scripture's accomplishment is clear, is this, *that there is a special debt on each Christian*, on whose soul the truth and faithfulness of God is sealed, *to give in his seal thereto, and bear witness, that God is true.* Thus is there a mutual sealing; which is undeniably clear you see (2 Cor. 1. 22.) the *Lord's* putting to his seal, which by all his people is well known: and have you not also (John 3. 33.) the *Christian's* seal and witness most expressly held out and call'd for? This is indeed a duty, in which (we may say) the meanest of the Saints bears his part, who hath that *witness within himself*, whereby he knows the certainty of the words of truth: which is a great thing, that such on solid ground can say, He does not more clearly see the truth, written *in the Bible* before him, than he knows and can read but by an other character and engraving) this written *within him*; though none else can read the same, *but he who hath it.* I know, there is a debt to the least *Scripture-truth*, which those who profess the same, do owe, when a witness and confession is call'd for, and hath thus special access, in a suffering time, to set to his seal by a close adherence thereto. But we must say, this is something else, that concerns the *confirmed Christian*, as a peculiar debt he owes to the truth and faithfulness of his God (which *his soul knows right well*, and hath had oft confirmed) *to give unto him the glory of his faithfulness*: We find David (Psalm 89. 1.) thus speaking, as one pressed upon such a duty. And though some have a more special call and greater advantage to this than others; yet we may say, the confirming and sealing of the truth is like a great and

and publick treasure, wherein the meanest Christian wants not access to cast in his mite. Now for further clearing this, what the *Christian's seal* and *attestation of the truth* means, and what access or advantage he hath for *acquitting* himself of such a *debt*, I would point a little at, in these few particulars, --- (1.) It is clear, that he who *believes*, and *receives the testimony of Jesus Christ*, does thus set to his *seal*, that he is *true*, and subscribes (as it were) the truth and doctrine of the Gospel. *John 3. 33.* --- (2.) It is also clear, the shewing forth of the *power of godliness*, and the *virtues of him who hath called him*, is through the tract of a Christian's life, a living and visible witness thereto. --- (3.) We may judge, the converted man upon that new and marvellous discovery, he hath got of the truth, upon his *first* entering into a *Christian state*, when he hath past that great step, and is as one come into another World, hath *then* a special call, and advantage for such a duty, that if it were asked, *What is the first service such owes to the truth?* Is it not even this, to *commend* by his seal and testimony to *others*, what *God* hath so marvellously *commended to his soul?* And thus needs not want access to let the World know, who may wonder at such a change, that *though once he was blind, he does now see*; and assuredly knows, the truth is the *power of God to salvation*, which he no more believes upon the report and testimony of others, since now he sees it with his own eyes. He then is to answer that call, *Luk. 22. When you are converted, strengthen your brethren.* --- (4.) When a Christian is confirmed, upon some remarkable *faint* and *staggering*, and hath got a *new seal* of the faithfulness of God, is he not under some *new debt*, to restore with advantage what he had taken from the credit of the truth, and give that good report and witness thereto, which may obviate any reflection he might have

have caused by his faint? Sure it is, the Christian's testimony hath then this special advantage, to *confirm others in the way of the Lord*, that his former fears and shakings have been so discernable. Thus we see, *Hezekiah* after such a remarkable plunge and fainting, comes in with his witness, *Isai, 38. 15. What shall I say? He hath both spoken, and himself also hath done it, &c.* And *David, Psalm 31. 22.* How concerned was he in such a duty, *I said I am cast out of thy sight; Yet thou hearest the voice of my supplication.* --- (5.) When we see *Atheism* much abound, and hath a publick appearance, when it is not a particular truth, but the truth and faithfulness of *God* is challenged, we may judge, it *then* calls and calls aloud to the godly man, for his appearance, even by some more obvious *testimony*, than at other times, to so great an interest. Sure it is, when the lot of a Christian is in such a time cast, and amongst a generation of *mockers*, he will not want access and a special call, by a christianly grave and prudent witness, to own the truth, as that which he is obliged to seal, though there were none else; yea, we may think, this should be a call and incitement, where zeal for *Jesus Christ* hath got a command over his soul, as might burst his tongue-strings, which before were tyed, when the *faithfulness of his God*, which he so oft hath proved, is by men brought in question: which to *David* was like a *sword* that thrust him through, and he could not bear it when they said unto him, *Where is your God?* --- (6.) Upon the *close* of some sharp and remarkable *trial*, when the Christian after a storm comes safe to land, such a *new discovery* he hath of the truth and faithfulness of *God*, lays then a *new debt* on him, to bear witness thereto. Is he not thus concerned, not to leave the *cross of Jesus Christ* at a loss, which hath left him at so great

great an advantage ; or part therewith without such a testimony, that may endear the way of the Lord to others ? Thus afflicted *Job*, after a long continued storm, comes in the *close* to pay the truth's rent, by his seal and testimony thereto. *Job*. 42. *I have heard of thee, &c.* I hope, this debt in a large measure shall be yet found on many of *this Generation*, when this storm is over, to press their spirits for bearing such a *testimony*, that they *thirsted not* when he *led them through the deserts* ; But have oft there been *surprised* with his *immediate help*, to astonishment. *Isai*. 48. 21.---(7.) Is not the experience of a Christian and those grave remarks he hath of the faithfulness of God, a special *trust* put into his hand, and a piece of *his talent*, that calls for his seal, as a *rent* which such owe to the truth ; and should have some further reach, than his own personal establishment ? I must say as to this, none of the saints want their peculiar engagements, which they may judge are upon them, even beyond others ; yea, such singular confirmations they have had of the way of the Lord, and oft with those astonishing circumstances, that to smother the same, without some gain and advantage thence paid in to the truth, might be reckoned a stealth from the generation. We may judge, such a thing pressed *David's* soul for a vent, *Psalms* 66. 16. And truly something of this practice, managed with humble prudence, in a grave *intercourse* and *communication* of some special confirmations of the truth, were a choice improvement of *Christian Society* and *fellowship*. I confess, to manage this well, seems one of the most difficult pieces of duty, a Christian owes to *others* ; and I humbly judge, may be mistaken, in its chief end by too much dwelling sometimes on the cases of a Christian, and debating these, to which their light and judgment may give more arise, than a present pres-

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ure and weight of the same ; the multiplying of which I have oft looked on as a darkening the solid and plain way of Godliness, and making it perplexed and thorny, which lies in little bounds, when well understood. But we see what a special improvement of Christian fellowship is held forth, *Mal*. 3. 6. for their mutual joy and establishment in the truth, in a time when it was in question ; what advantage there is to serve the Lord. I should wish so excellent a means were more directed to this end : Nor should this hinder such a duty, but there may be an empty show and counterfeit of that also, and the shallowest brooks sometime make the greatest noise.---(8.) Here is a special call for the Christian's seal and witness to the truth, under some *remarkable exigence* and *strait*, whilst throng'd with manifold *temptations*, then is he concerned by his appearance to shew forth the faithfulness of God, and his testimony thereto ; that may let others know, who in such times will be great observers of his way, that he is satisfied with God, and with the security of his word, to rest on, when he hath no resting place elsewhere ; that he thinks not his burden too great, to roll over on the promise ; but hath this to say, in behalf of the truth, *Persecuted, yet not forsaken ; cast down, yet not destroyed*. You may see the Apostle paying such a debt on this account, *Having nothing, I possess all things*. 2 Cor. 6. 10.--(Lastly) I must say, a call to this duty waits the Christian in a special manner at the *close of his day*. Then, O then, is he concerned to acquit himself of that debt, by commending the way of the Lord, and confirming others therein. Would it not be a choice appendix to the Testament and last Will of a dying Christian, to seal with his last breath the *faithfulness of God* ; and then when his words are of more weight than at other times, to bear this witness, that through the various

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various steps of his life he knows *God is true*, and *hitherto hath helped*. It is sure, the present day has its duty, and each remarkable time of one's life hath some proper work: But this, I must say, seems to fall in, as the last service of a *dying Christian* to his generation, to deliver the truth off his hand, which he had received and oft proved, with his seal and testimony thereto: This were to bequeath a choice legacy to others.

It is not here understood, that *particular rules* can be given for the practice of this duty: but *Christian wisdom is profitable to direct*, as occasion offers, and the present case is circumstanced. But sure it is, each Christian is thus a witness, & as it were judicially sifted in behalf of that Attribute of the *faithfulness of God*, to attest by his seal, as a confirmatory sign thereof, that *God is true*; and as there is an *implicit seal* by believing, there is something more *explicit* then called for, in times which seem to evacuate the promise, when the *reality of godliness* is so expressly impugned by the adversary as *fanaticism*. And these things I shall further add; (1.) That thro' the whole *Scripture*, we see in frequent instances, how much the *saints* have been *thus taken up*, and in those times of the Church, when there was not such access another way, to keep up a remembrance of the *faithfulness of God*, and transmit a testimony thereto, we find a *pillar and stone of witness* erected, *1 Sam. 7. 12.*---(2) Thus hath the Christian access, in the returns of *thankfulness to God*; no mercy being so small, on which his *faithfulness* is not engraven, as we find *David* often, and *Jacob*, *Gen. 32. 10.* And sure it is, the discovery of this to an observing Christian hath sometimes a greater joy and satisfaction therewith, than the mercy in which it appears. I must say, it is a great defect in that excellent duty when some testimony to the *faithfulness of God* is not carried on therewith.--(3) Hath
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not the *Christian* an *occasional call* thereto, whenever this lies in his way, to *speak to its credit*, and bear his witness? We may see, the truth & *faithfulness of God* came never *David's way*, but we find him speak honourably thereof, from the sense of his peculiar engagements.--(4) There is no piece of a *Christian's suffering* stated on a *particular truth*, but a *confession* is therewith called for of the *faithfulness of God*; thus to bear witness before the world, that he is not *offended*, nor is *ashamed of the cross of Christ*, because he *knows whom he hath believed*; whilst others by *chusing sin*, rather than *affliction*, do what in them lieth to make *God a liar*.

Inference III. From the *Scriptures* accomplishment, is this, that *as there is a personal debt on the Christian, there is a publick debt also on the Church, and a special trust reposed on every age thereof, to seal the truth, and deliver that great interest off its hand, to the ages to come, with a witness to the faithfulness of God.* The *Scripture* herein is clear; yea, we have it in an express prophetic held forth (*Psalms 145. 4, 5, 6.*) that *one generation*, in a continued series, should seal the truth to another, and thus carry forward a witness to the same. For each time hath some peculiar rent, which it should pay to the posterity, from a new addition of the great and remarkable works of the *Lord*: and it is sure, the greater things he hath witnessed, by his more eminent appearance for the Church, in one age beyond another, do add to this debt, and put some further engagements upon it, to *record and transmit the works of the Lord* and the *memory of his goodness* to after-times. Now with respect to this weighty truth, I would offer a few particulars (which this day, we may sadly regret, are so much wanting) wherein some thing

thing of this debt, that one age of the Church owes to another, in behalf of the truth, may appear.

1. It may be judged a *debt* on the Church to posterity, to pursue that great interest of the *truth*, by an *adding* further, for confirming of the faith of the saints therein, from that discovery and peculiar advantages the *present time* affords: & thus effectually endeavour to advance the repute and credit of the truth, on solid demonstrative grounds of its certainty. This hath the greater call, when it is so much the work of the time and of not a few labouring therein, to *shake & unsettle* men, as to this great foundation; yea, so much *written*, that hath a visible tendency to this end. One thing particularly should be wished, that the *publick records* of every age, as they concern the *Church*, did carry therewith more clearly some history of the *verification of the truth*, by transmitting those great & conspicuous remarks of the *way of God with the Church*, to posterity; by which the *Scripture* then hath been signally confirmed: thus should one age declare its faithfulness to the next, which were a choice piece of service, being gravely and with caution managed.

2. This *debt* does the Church owe to posterity, with respect to the *truth*, to endeavour its transmitting *purely, and without hurt and prejudice*. For it is to the Church, the *Oracles of God* are committed; & for that great trust, must she in every time be responsible. But as to this, I must say, that *article* of the truth of God, which is more *sharply assaulted*, and hath endured *greatest opposition* from the adverse party, makes this debt the greater, to deliver *that* off her hand, with all *care* and circumspection, yea, with some peculiar testimony thereto. It is true, there want not in every age some to appear upon the truth's interest; yea, it is a duty lies at each Christian's door, when called to give a confession of the same: but as

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no private appearance can answer to a publick record and monument, it is thence clear, that in a time of great incroachment on the truth, when a remarkable breach is like to be made, and the assault not from a private adversary, but a publick formidable *combination* of a party, some more solemn authoritative and united *concurrence* is then called for, in the *Church's testimony*, for her exoneration; that with such an advantage may witness to the ages to come, whereat their fathers left, how they held out, and wrestled to keep their ground, in defence of the gospel. This, we may say, is like the casting up of a *Bank* to guard against a further breach, *when the enemy comes in like a flood*: and it is known, the *confessions of the Church* in every age, with such a publick testimony to the truth, whilst followed with visible hazard and suffering, have been more effectually subservient to the truth's conservation, than all the *disputes* of men. Thus did they *overcome* (Rev. 12.7.) *by the blood of the lamb, and the word of their testimony*.

3. This special *debt* also is upon the Church, with a respect to posterity, *to contend for the truth once delivered to the Saints*, and but once, since it can admit no change or alteration to the second coming of the Lord. O how blessed a debate and strife this is, though in such an interest *resisting unto blood* should be called for! But whilst I mention this duty, it cannot be understood with respect to that great interest of Religion only, or the *weightier matters of the Law*, that are more fundamental, whilst under a professed zeal to these, a *latitude* and indifference in *other* concerns of the truth is sheltered. It is indeed strange; though no strange thing in this time. But let me ask, can a piece of truth held forth in the *Scripture*, be of that low value, to warrant the quitting or yielding up of it if

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brought in debate; when *one line* of this is of more inestimable worth, than the crowns and scepters of all the Monarchs of the earth? Sure it is, *the God of truth* hath prized it at another rate; who declares *Heaven and earth should rather fall, ere one tittle of his word perish*. And can those, in greater things be faithful, who are not thus in a *little*? It is too clearly seen, how small a yielding makes a great breach. Truths comparatively small may be great in their *season*, when they are the *word of his patience*; yea, we may say, the lesser it seems, and of mean value with many, it makes the Christian's adherence thereto a greater testimony. It is clear, what a close *concatenation* there is amongst the truths of God, held forth in the Scripture; that *one part* thereof cannot be struck at, without a special prejudice to the *whole*: yea, it may be said, every corruption of the truth hath an aim at the very *soul* of Religion, by a direct tendency thereto.

4. It is a great duty the Church owes the posterity, for which this day there seems a more than ordinary call, to study the transmitting of truth and godliness, *not in a naked form only, but in the life and power thereof*. Sure it is now too obvious, which gives ground both for grief and astonishment, that through a large part of the reformed Church, and in those places where sometime the truth hath brightly shined, with much state and warmth; yea, where religion in its purity is yet professedly countenanced, and the worship of God owned, even there we may see the *power* and spirituality of this is a *strange* and unknown thing: that by many within the Church and of some repute therein, it might be questioned, *Is there indeed a Holy Ghost*, and an *inward* teaching of the *Spirit*, which by its working and efficacious influences is known upon the soul? Or, is there such a thing as real *fellowship* and con-

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verse with *God*, in the secret and the more publick duties of a Christian, that is assuredly found? Oh what cause is there to fear, the shadow & form will be quickly gone, when the *power* thereof is so great a mystery! I know, it is a sore challenge, and may seem strange to some. I do here profess, it is not to reflect on any place, or particular Church, more than another. But we may say, this want and decay is too great and universal to be hid; and now the tide seems so far spent and gone back, yea to a small appearance of its return, and the Church of Christ at that pass, that if the *faithfulness of God* were not surety, which stands good for all, we might upon ordinary appearance judge, nothing else is left, but now *To your tents every man!* that each one should shift for himself, and give over the Church. But sure I am (I bless the Lord, without debate in this matter) upon a better warrant than appearance, our safety is this day to keep by the vessel, and not part interests with an afflicted and almost sinking Church; a *publick Spirit* may yet be found the choicest way to secure a *private interest*. Oh what do we see! Is not almost every where *men's hands upon their loins*; and so little inquiry in that extreme exigence, what point of duty can yet be essayed, to get *religion* up again, which now is at so fore a backset! We might hope, a great outcoming should be, where little is expected, even upon a small stirring of duty. Some things, I am sure, are to be *wished*, that would be of singular use to promote this interest: which I shall very briefly point at.

First, It should be wished, this great mean of *Prayer*, yet left to the Church, were with more *singleness* and *fergency* improved, both by the Christian alone, and in converse with others. This is well known, in the most dark and dismal times of her condition, what marvellous help it hath brought at an

extremity, when it hath seem'd in some manner *ultimus conatus ecclesie*, and all other things gone. O a *spirit of prayer*, what advantage hath remarkably followed upon this, to fetch the wind, yea, to get the vessel as it were put on float, when it hath been a low ebb with the Church! To hasten her delivery, and in the mean time keep her wounds bleeding before the Lord! We may say, thus hath the meanest of the Saints access to do a great piece of service, even to the Church universal, and the recovery again of the power of Godliness, that is now so far gone.

2. With respect to this, it is to be wished, that a greater *Correspondence* through the *reformed Church* were more effectually pursued; to know others case, what eminent hazzard appears to the truth, or fore trial and assault that some particular Church may have beyond others; for witnessing mutual sympathy; for communication of counsels; the obviating prejudices and mistakes; a grave incitement and upstirring of others, to the duty of the time; and thus a further concurrence endeavoured, in promoting the great interest of the gospel. Oh sad, that since the reformation brake up, so little of this hath been practised! but now much more gone, that except by ordinary *travellers*, or sometime publick *Gazzets*, the great concerns of the neighbouring Churches, and the more remarkable occurrents of providence therein, are but little known. I should account it a *token for good*, if something of a publick Spirit, with respect to such a mean, did more appear. We know not what advantage might follow this essay.

3. This should be wished, and might be a notable and useful help, yea, of no great difficulty (now whilest there is such plodding in Religion, by airy notions, as if that great interest were the essay of men's wit and invention) to study the translating of some of our choise *English* pieces, in *other languages*, which

which do most nervously hold forth the *truth of godliness*, both in its simplicity, and in the life and power thereof. Such as are most fit to put men on an other scent, for bringing the naked speculation of truth down to that more near feeling, and absolutely necessary soul-converse therewith; yea, such as with greatest clearness might shew the world something of the inestimable advantage of that excellent study, how well godliness suits, and is a singular help in every calling and condition of men, to make their way easy and pleasant, amidst the plunges of their life: but especially, that may hold forth the indispensable necessity thereof. It is sad to think in what a measure excellent holiness is wounded, and darkened by so great a cloud of prejudice, almost through the reformed Church, which is much pretended, upon the extravagance and unsuitable practice of many professing the same, and yet so little care to obviate and prevent this.

4. I must further add what, I am sure, is to be wished, when so small ground seems of hope therein, and calls now for much prayer, to see a *spiritual* and *faithful Ministry*, given to the Church; of whom it might be said; *these are the Ambassadors of Jesus Christ*, with their Master's authority impressed on them; who in earnest do *travel in birth*, to have *Christ formed* in their bearers, and preach with a feeling of that they speak, to themselves, as well as others; such who truly *watch for men's souls*, with an awful impression of that, *lest their blood be required at their hands*. How great a blessing should this be to a decayed Church, and what a ground of hope were it of a recovery! For its seen and clearly witnessed, that connexion which is betwixt the Church's case, and the ministry thereof. Was it not seen at the breaking out of the Gospel, and the marvellous success it had in the beginning of the reformation

formation after that long darkness under Antichrist's reign, how choice and excellent a ministry was then sent forth; yea, what a remarkable constellation of great lights did appear, who did both burn and shine in their time. Oh! These are gone; and but a few (comparatively with that time) of such a spirit now to be found: but this sad remark we cannot shun, that the *greatest plague* the christian world and much of the reformed Church this day is under, is from the *watchmen*; by whom the truth, in its power, hath been more *wounded*, than its most professed adversaries. I know, there wants not such a *horrid party* in this time, who take advantage to reflect on and decry that excellent office and appointment of Jesus Christ for his Church, because of the *abuse* thereof; whom I dare not, from the aw of God, answer in their dialect, which is only *railing*, and is all their strength: but *the Lord rebuke that evil spirit*, now abroad in the world! Whilst I speak to that great advantage, the Church and the power of religion hath by a faithful ministry, I must further add this, as a *debt* the present generation owes to the posterity, to witness a particular *care* and *respect* to such who are looking forth with some aim to this *great calling*; that in so fading a day *these* might be *encouraged* and *stirred up* (I mean where there is some promising appearance) to follow their aim, and not faint, when difficulties seem to grow in their way, and the sickle now taken out of the hand of many faithful labourers; but especially for their taking along with other studies that more excellent study, *sanctification*, which is so indispensably necessary to make *able ministers of the New Testament*. Sure those have now a special advantage to witness their love and respect to Jesus Christ, who keep their face that way forward, when there seems no other incitement, but the service of *such a Master*! They may have a mean appearance, and

and at this day conflict with many difficulties, on whom great service may yet wait for the Church of Christ.

Inference IV. It is a duty of special use, with respect to a right understanding and distinct conception of the fulfilling of the Scripture, to *discern the times and inquire seriously thereabout*: since it is clear, that in particular ages and periods of time the Scripture must take place, and the Prophecies thereof, which relate to each period of time, have their particular and exact accomplishment therein. It is sure, this can be no matter of debate, that such a duty is called for in so dark an hour upon the Church; yea, the greater the darkness grows, it seems to have a more pressing call; when we see the clouds gathering, that they are like to cover the face of the skie; the Church universal so sore benighted, that she hath almost lost her way amidst these mists, and among the multitude of these by-paths: for then it is not only incumbent on the publick watchmen, but we may say, concerns the godly every where, to be on this account *seers*, to *know the times, and what Israel ought to do*. Sure it is, no Christian wants his watch-tower, where he may get up, by a near converse with God in the Scripture, and thence as from a great height consider the present time; yea, have a clear view of the most strange perplexing occurrences thereof, how amidst these *his work* about the Church keeps its way, and moves still forward, without losing of ground, and *his truth* does convincingly take place.

Now with respect to this I shall here offer some thoughts, what in so necessary a duty concerns *the godly*, and calls for their serious enquiry, for a right discovery and *understanding of the time*; and shall shortly touch it in a few particulars.

X 4

First,

First, It is of great import to know from the Scripture, *what of the night* it is, how far it seems to be spent, and now in *what watch* thereof the Church is fallen, as to her present state. For thus we might know to what period of her condition these great and remarkable things, which fall out in the World, do relate. This, I confess, Would be a perplex business, if the appearance of things were our guide, and wanted that blessed conduct of the written word, when the Church's way seems involved in so strange a labyrinth. One thing is sure *that the Lord hath founded Zion*, and is now *building* her up: which marvellous work cannot halt, but in all ages is in a continued progress, wherein the great builder, doth lose no time. And from the Scripture these things seem clear and manifest,---

1. That as the whole *election* must obtain, so now are there a great many of that elect Church already entered into a *triumphant* condition, and are now got safe on shoar. There is this day a great and innumerable company of all Nations, Tongues and Languages, that were of old committed to the Mediator's trust, and to be brought forth under the times of the New-Testament, who are *perfected* and *before the throne*; after whom the Gospel did follow, and made many a long step to bring them in from the furthest corners of the earth.

2. This also is clear, that the Church *militant* hath now *passed* and is *gone through* that long continued and most dismal *trial*, which under the times of the Gospel and until the close of time was to go over her head, even that sore bondage from *Antichrist*, and under his reign. It is true, this adversary does not cease, nor give over the quarrel: for he wants not wrath, when his power is abated; and this day we see him in a great stir, to raise up that accursed interest, and set it in its own place, that hath so remarkably been

been brought down, and begun to fall before the Gospel. But a step further of that *judgment* (which assuredly is *not sleeping*) will end the business. However this is now manifest, that *the Winter is past*, and the *Church's spring* begun, yea, in a large measure advanced; whose growth and tender blossom the cold nor storm cannot blast, but must be subvenient thereto, and hasten the *summer's* approach.

3. Upon this inquiry, *where the Church now is?* and in *what, or what manner of time, her present state seems to fall?* I think there are clear and convincing symptoms, by which some notable *Crisis* in her condition may be discerned: that after many conflicts, and sore wrestling, since her victory begun over *Antichrist*, this time of the Church seems to fall under that more *remarkable assault*, which may be looked for from this adversary before the pouring out of the *fifth vial* on his throne and seat; which, as the prelude of so great a victory, may in some proportion thereto be more dreadful and sharp, for a time, than any we have seen. I humbly judge, the Scripture points clearly at this, which shews the wrestling condition of the Church, and a *war* continued betwixt *Antichrist* and the *Lamb*, even in his falling state, (*Rev. 17. 14.*) until that last decision (which is made sure in the Church's favour) put him off the field; *For the Lamb shall overcome, and they that are on his side, who are called, & chosen and faithful.* And since it is thus, that the Church's interest is advanced, by the renewed assaults of that adversary, should it be strange, that the several steps of her rising have some conflict and opposition proportioned thereto? Must she not be in *pain and labour, as a woman in travel, for her bringing forth?* Yea, do not the sharpest showers both presage and hasten the delivery? For this doth the Scripture witness, which is written for the ages to come, *Micah 4. 13. Be in pain, O*

Daughter of Zion, and go forth unto Babylon, for there shalt thou be delivered. I must judge, so formidable an approach of *Antichrist* this day, and the advantage he seems to have, with these fore strugglings of the Church of Christ, as in an extrem betwixt life and death, do more promise, than threaten; and are a hopeful presage of a further enlargement, and the bringing forth some great and important truth in its season to a performance; yea, have a direct tendency, under the wonderful conduct of the blessed disposer of these things, to help forward such a mercy.

4. This we may know from the Scripture, though now it seem a contradiction both to sense and reason, *that the Church's interest is on a present advance, and at this day on the prevailing hand.* It is true, under all the changes of her condition, and through the whole time of the New-Testament, this truth must be made out (*Job. 3. 30.*) that Jesus Christ in his Kingdom *must increase*, even when choicest instruments wear out, and to appearance are in a most languishing decay; that interest doth then *flourish as the Palm-tree*, the more it is depressed; nor hath the Church bounds set to its continued increase, until it once come to the *perfect day* when *the Kingdom shall be delivered up to the Father*, and all powers subdued and brought under the *Mediator's feet*. But this rise and increase of the Church, which is here understood, *on the falling of Antichrist*, I must say, hath a further reach, and is in a more eminent conspicuous way pointed at in the Scripture, as that which waits on a more solemn and remarkable period of the Church's state. It is true, such hours may fall in, with some sad intervals, in which success and all advantage appears on the adversaries side; for thus we find the Scripture point forth *Antichrist's ruin*, and the progress of his judgment and

and downcasting in the various steps thereof, with a special resemblance to the Lord's way with *Pharaoh*; of whom he appears to have been a type, such judicial strokes of induration on both, a gradual procedure by one plague after another, with the same effect and product, to give the Church a new assault, on any favourable interval; until the great God *make his power known*, as once he did at the *red Sea*. For there we may say, did the Lord first found a national Church, with a special type of the great works and deliverances he would do for her in after-times, and by this represent that marvellous stroke he is to bring on *Antichrist*. It is not strange, to see the truth *brought down to the grave*, yea, as it were buried, when even this thing, by the overruling providence of him who maketh *all things work together for her good*, is turned to her advantage, and tends to her rising with a greater lustre and brightness! Who could in an ordinary way judge the reformed Church then upon an *advance*, in the *French massacre*, the *Catholick League* there, and the *Low-Country* persecution by *Alva*? Yet these were an antecedent preparation to her further rise, which a little time made appear.

5. This further I shall add as to the present time of the Church, which from the Scripture seems clear, *that blessed and much longed for, and glorious day of the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ* (which, as the last period of the full accomplishment of all that is written, will once for all and for ever put a glorious close to the Church's warfare; the souldier's sword and helmet shall then be laid aside, and give place to the victor's harp and crown, never to be laid down again) *hasteth apace*. O let him who writeth, and him who readeth, say, *even so! come, Lord Jesus, quickly*. It is sure, that God who hath appointed man his time, & with whom is the number of his

his months and years, hath set time its glass also, and bounded the duration of this world, that it cannot continue one minute more? And tho' the particular time falls not under our inquiry, which the Majesty of God hath concealed from the Angels: yet is this clear, there are signs given of its near approach, which in their season will be discernable, though little noticed by the world; it being in such a lethargy, and men then so thronged with the cares of this life, that these grave forewarnings will not rouse them up. But it is evident, such signs are not given in vain: for therewith the Church hath a call to discern wisely what appearance there is of the approach of that day; yea, on such an account to lift up their head with a solemn congratulation. O what a marvellous truth is this, the serious thoughts of which might give men new subject for wonder each day, that the time is hastening, when the Redeemer of the Church shall appear in the clouds of heaven, in flaming fire, with an innumerable company of the Angels; & now the dust of the Saints hath not long to sleep, before they be awaked, with that unspeakable sweet and ravishing sound of the last trumpet! Faithful is he who hath promised: yea, for further assurance, we have a solemn oath thereto, by him who live's for ever and ever. It is long since John gave this warning to the Church, Behold, he cometh with clouds! and then did these primitive Christians solace themselves on that ground. Some few evidences of this day's approach with a safe warrant from the Scripture we may discern; which as the blossoming of the spring doth witness the Summer is now near. (1.) If the whole days of the Gospel, since that glorious triumph of the Mediator in his suffering for the Church and his resurrection, be upon the Scripture's reckoning the last times, we must then judge, the night is far spent, and the day at hand.--(2.) If in the days of the seventh trumpets

trumpet the mystery of God shall be finished, is not this clear, that two ages are almost past since it begun to blow, under which the interest of the gospel hath a most remarkable advance? (3.) If the last stroke and utter abolishing of Antichrist shall be by the brightness of Christ's second coming (2 Thes. 2. 8.) is there not solid ground thence to judge, this blessed day hasteth, when his falling is so far advanced? It is sure, we have seen his Kingdom in a great measure darkned, his consuming and mouldring down by the breath of Christ's mouth in the preached gospel: and now wait in hope for that more remarkable step of his judgment, which the Scripture, I think, gives as a near sign of the coming of the Lord; even such as the white skie and morning-brightness is to the watchman, of the days being near. And thus, as we see the ruin and downfall of the man of sin advance, there seems to be a proportional ground of certainty thence to conclude the near approach of the day of Christ's second coming.

Second particular, which in our discerning the time calls for a serious enquiry is this, what the present appearance and signs of the time seem to point at. For these, as the pulse to the body, are of special use to give a clear discovery of its temper and disposition but this is a prognostication, that goeth above the stars and all the rules of Astrology, which the Scripture only can make us know. I confess, this day they seem sad, and every where look with a threatening aspect on the Church. We see not now our signs, and those tokens for good, which sometimes have appeared: but there are presages, if we could gravely look thereon, that might cause us with astonishment to enquire, What can such things portend, and when will be the end of these wonders? Some few I shall briefly point at, which concern this time; that if we be not much asleep, might be very rousing, and make us regard the same with

with an awful and humbling impression; for they truly threaten: Yet I must say, with a reference to the *Scripture*, & upon an inquiry into that unerring record about their meaning? --- *First*, we have a safe warrant from them to conclude, that whatever may befall a particular Church, yet nothing thence can be concluded as demonstrative of a mortal prejudice to the Church universal. For tho' this or that particular Church may be cut off, and spued out of his mouth (as many have and most of the particular Churches may this day meditate terror: *If he spare not the natural Branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee*, should sound an alarm to each Church; those very things with highly aggravating circumstances, being too obvious and easy to be found with them, for which he casts others off) yet he must increase, and his Kingdom must be a coming Kingdom: Yea, when he seems to lose ground in one place of the world, it is made up with advantage by the enlargement of the same in another place; and often out of the very ruins and dissipation of that Church which he casts off, he carries materials to build him an house elsewhere. In which case we are, instead of a querulous saying, *Why is it thus?* to adore and bless the glory of the Lord from his place, to justify his procedure, and be glad, that they to whom he was not spoken of, shall see, and they who had not heard shall understand. --- Secondly, we may also say with the same warrant, that even a particular Church, which hath very death-presaging symptoms, and scarce a token for good, can by him who bealeth backslidings and loveth freely, be recovered. He can make dry bones to flourish as a green herb: for the issues from spiritual death belong to him. He can make them who had fallen from their first love, repent and do the first works; whereby the departing of the glory, and the removing of the candlestick out of his place, shall be prevented. I am so much the more pressed to touch this a little, because

because the very few serious, who are yet left (or delivered from that spiritual sopor and stupidity, which hath seized on others) while they lay to heart the things which concern the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, are, upon the frightful aspect of affairs and on the consideration of what they observe in the temper of men and tendency of things, ready to cast away all confidence, and abandon themselves to a simple despondency: they almost question, whether they ought to entertain any hope, that we shall any more be called by that blessed name, *Jehovah Shammah*, the Lord is there; seeing nothing appears at present in the disposition of men, or dispensation of God, which doth not seem to portend a final departure. Notwithstanding whereof I would desire such, as to beware lest in their heartlessness they limit the holy one of Israel, and circumscribe the sovereignty of grace within its just latitude and limits, so for their establishment against such a despondency and for their excitement to a serious wrestling with him in order to his abode with us, to consider these particulars.

First, We may call this one of the signs and presages of the time, that the Devil is now so much aloft, and in a strange way bestirring himself against the Church; to beget every where a prejudice at the truth, which this day by very remarkable effects of his power may be seen. --- It is sure, he is a bad neighbour; yet we must say, he endangers the Church most, when because he makes no great noise he is least discerned. His being apparently quiet and still hath been found in experience more fatal to the flourishing and real success of the gospel, than his rage; and in his feigned flight more prevalent, than in his more furious assaults. But we have the Scripture to ask concerning this; which makes these clear, [1] That his appearing with great wrath, shews

shews his time to be short, and that it will be no continued or lying storm, *Rev. 12. 12.*-- [2.] We thence know, his being let loose, with a more than usual liberty, to trouble the Church, is previous to some great and remarkable restraint; which you may read, *Rev. 20. 7, 8.* where he is in a more special way let loose, but we find *v. 10.* his being chained up for ever follows.-- [3.] We may clearly see from the Scripture the Devil much aloft, with a more remarkable stir and noise, when some great thing from the Lord is to be brought forth for the Church. When the set time, that solemn and blessed time, was now come of completing by that one sacrifice for ever the work of redemption, so that this hour and power of darkness did introduce an everlasting sun-shine upon the Church: and Satan, by pursuing the Prince of life unto the death, had a most fatal overthrow. For by death he overcame him who had the power of death, that is, the devil: and by being lifted up upon the cross, he spoiled principalities and powers, triumphing openly over them; and thus dying, sung the victory, and said, *It is finished!* whereby a victory over all enemies is eternally ensured to the saints. Yea, is it not clear, what an hot alarm the Church may expect from him, upon the approach of that great victory, and the decision of the last battle betwixt Michael and the dragon? see *Rev. 20. 9, 10.* what an appearance he will then have, and in what a manner will he bestir himself.

2. Is not this a present sign of the time, about which we may with some astonishment inquire, what it doth mean, and if it hath any favourable aspect on the Churches, *That we see almost every where the most united and formidable assault of the adversaries of the truth;* and its special aim at the kingly power and Supremacy of the Mediator, as Head over his Church: at which great truth the opposition of this time seems most

most directly to be levelled; yea, we may say, the Crown of Christ which becomes him alone to wear, and this piece of his glory, is now betwixt Antichrist and the Princes of the Earth divided, each contending for his share. Sure, this is too discernable: and at present the adversary seems to prevail, even to a bearing down and bringing under of that great interest of our blessed Master. But it is as sure there is no ground to fear this (being well understood) which is a most hopeful and promising sign to the Church: for we must thus reason from the Scripture; *if Christ must reign until all his enemies be brought in subjection,* it is then sure, the greater the opposition and assault be, the victory must be the greater. And if that be not only prayed for, but a clear prophecy, *That Jesus Christ will take unto himself his great Power, and reign,* must we not then expect he will take it, yea, in a more eminent and conspicuous manner, when men are seeking, in the height of their rebellion and rage against the Lord and his anointed, to seize on his Scepter, and snatch it from him? And if this also be sure, and in the volumn of that record of the Scripture written concerning him, *that his Crown must flourish on his own Head,* shall not then his enemies be clothed with shame? Yea, hath not this truth a dreadful aspect on the crowns and Scepters of many princes, who would rob the mediator of his?

3. Is it not a strange presage and sign of the time, that we now see most hopeful and promising appearances for the Church's good, remarkably blasted; things, which in an ordinary way look to be grounds of encouragement, made to fail? We see human props almost every where removed, or broken; the truth deserted by great men; yea, the families of such falling off this day from the Lord, whose ancestors for a long time had been zealous for his interest. I confess, this is a threatening appearance, by which many

many now seem to be shaken : but I would humbly reason on Scripture-grounds, that it is *no bad sign*, but hath therewith some comfortable aspect on the Church ; it being clear, (1.) That such a *connection* is no strange thing in the bible, betwixt an *extream exigence* of the Church's case, and the Lord's *eminent appearing* for her relief. See *Isai.* 30. 18. & 63. 5. *Isa.* 51. 20, 21, 22. Yea, I must say, it is hard to find any great mercy and remarkable deliverance of the Church, but hath at some such backset surprized her. (2.) Is not such a disadvantage & forsaken case expressly held forth as one of *grace's opportunities of doing good to his people*? Read *Jer.* 30. 14, 15, &c. and you will see it ; that when *none* is to *plead her cause, no healer*, and *Zion* called an *outcast*, which *no man seeketh after* ; thence does the Lord allow his people to be encouraged, & to take it as a ground of hope, that he will by his own immediate hand appear. (3.) Is it not from the word clear, that a *people* at such a *disadvantage*, & under most visible *weakness* when in God's way, may be *then* made use of for *greatest service*? They were in as sore distress, of whom (*Heb.* 11. 34.) it is written, *Out of weakness they were made strong*, &c.--I shall further add ; Can there be cause, from the withdrawing of humane help and probable means of safety, to fear the Church's ruin, when it falls under his hand, who by things most destructive can serve his interest, and bring salvation at such a time, when none but God could save ! And why are those wonderful providences, that have so oft met the Church in a forsaken case, written before us in the Scripture? Is it not for *after-times*, to witness to posterity, how the Church may be *cast down, but not destroyed* ; and though she fall, she cannot lie still, but must arise? *Hos.* 6. 1, 2, 3. Nor have her adversaries any cause of triumph thence, *Micah* 7. 8, 9, 10.

4. As to the present appearance of the time, is not this

this a *threatning sign*, which hath a very dreadful aspect on the Church, even *that discernable loss and disadvantage the best now seem to be at in their frame*, and that under a *growing trial* of the Church ; & the *great distemper* many of these appear to be in, whilst we may see much of that holy fear and tenderness, that did formerly *shew* it self amongst the godly, gone ; corruption aloft ; prejudice easily taken ; a Spirit of jealousy poured out ; yea, very strange and unusual out-breakings in offence and scandal. And oh ! is there not here cause of fear, that the righteous God be on a further departure from his people, and that his judgment shall yet more hotly pursue such, until he have consumed this generation? On which account if he should make us *a generation of his wrath*, we are called to adore and justify the unspotted way of the Lord. Yet even as to this, I must adventure with respect to sovereignty of *grace* (which is only like itself, and infinitely above our thoughts) to offer some discovery, from the Scripture, of what he hath done in like cases. How marvellously hath the gracious and long suffering God interposed, and at such a sore extremity helped his Church? For it is clear, (1.) That when the Church hath had no argument to make use of, no confidence to plead, but broken and confounded under the sense of horrid guilt, he finds one in himself, *Isai.* 48. 9. *For my name's sake will I defer my anger*, &c. --- (2.) We find the Covenant made use of by the Lord, to sift a judicial procedure against his people. *Psal.* 106. 44. *Nevertheless he regarded their affliction, when he heard their cry ; and remembered for them his covenant.* --- (3.) We find the rage and violence of the adversary, and their taking advantage to blaspheme, made use of as an argument by him to own his people, who had otherwise for-faulted all the former grounds of confidence, *Deut.* 32. 26, --- (4.) We may read how sovereign Grace hath

hath thus marvellously stepped in, when the rod did not humble, and smiting would not do the turn. *I smote them, and they went on frowardly in the way of their heart, Isai. 57. 17.* Yet, says the Lord, I will not thus quit them, there is one cure for all, *I have seen their ways, and will heal them.* Such a discovery also have we thereof, when a people's ruin is of themselves, and iniquity hath brought them low. *Hof. 13. 9. O Israël, thou hast destroyed thy self; but in me is thy help.* Yea, hath not grace rescued those on whom their mercy must be forced, and while on a hot chafe in departing from God! *Hof. 2. 7, 9. --(5.)* Have we not this choice discovery of the Lord's way with his people held forth in the Scripture, that whilst he works all their works for them, *He will work these in them also, Isai. 26. 12.* I shall add, thus hath the freedom of grace (O marvellous grace!) shined forth in former ages of the Church. But they sadly mistake its meaning, who are thus made secure, and not thereby led unto repentance.

5. This looks like one of the *signs* of our time, that there is a great ceasing *of the godly*, yea the choice thereof, even by a more than usual *dispatch*: & is not this a sad Scripture-*presage* of evil coming, when such are (as it were) hastned away, that they may be *hid* in the grave, from a further storm? Yet these things seem clear also, (1.) What a remarkable consumption did almost wear out the Church in the wilderness, whilst even then there was a hastening of her after-enlargement; and though a sore judgment yet the Church's mercy, in a greater repair of that loss, was helped forward; yea, we find *Moses* and *Aaron*, with many of those who had been most eminent instruments in *Israël's* coming forth out of *Egypt*, taken away on a near approach of their entrie into *Canaan*. --(2.) It is sure, some of the greatest promises of the Scripture, waits on the Church, when brought

brought to a very small remnant, *Ezek. 6. 8, 9. Isai. 37. 31. --(3.)* Hath not the Lord said in such a case, *The consumption determined shall overflow with righteousness?* *Isai. 10. 20.* That the next tide can bring in as many, with a marvellous increase, as these former consuming strokes had taken away; yea is it not seen, with a wearing out of the godly, and a declining of religion, in one part of the World, or of a country, where many have been called, that it doth break out remarkably in an other? And thus the Gospel recovers that interest, which it seemed to have lost.

6. Does not the *present appearance* of the time, *threaten*, by very unusual signs and presages, some *sharp storm* to come now upon the World? which in many instances we may discern, that there is some remarkable work of *judgment* to be brought forth, and a great break amongst the nations near. (Though *the earth* seems this day in a strange measure *quiet*, yea so extraordinary a *calm* as is now through the World, may it not be a presage of some great *storm*, which as too clear and hot a sunshine foretels a break of the weather.) Sure it is, there is a *sound of great wrath* and judgment, in the ears of many, who know what is to *discern the times*. It is well, the *Scripture* is near; a prognostication that can answer all the ages of the Church: and it is *there* we should enquire, what such a *sign* does portend? We may not *wish the evil day*; but on such an appearance of the time, that awful impression (*Hab. 3. 16.*) is called for, to be in a *trembling frame*, when God threatens and does thus *utter his voice*: yet is it clear, that from these threatening signs there is a comfortable sound of *much good to the Church*. For, (1.) We find *days of vengeance* on the *World*, held forth as necessary for the accomplishing of the Scripture, *Luk. 21. 22.* and made subservient to the bringing forth some special truth thereof

thereof unto a performance.--- 2. We find in times of greatest judgment, the Church's interest then set apart and secured, with a large warrant to the godly, not to fear; even whilst his garments are dyed with blood. *Isa. 63. 1. Ezek. 9. 4. Rev. 3. 10.*---(3) May we not see also the Church's enlargement, and some of her greatest mercies, thus ushered in? which is clear, *Isa. 63. 4. Zeph. 3. 8.* And O what a strange connexion is there? That the putting the earth in a flame, and overturning the nations, when the Lord, as a lion does rouse himself up to the prey, should be the very rise to an accomplishing of some great promises for the Church's advantage, yea, and as a prelude to the same! Yet nothing more evident to such who understand the Scripture; and by such a sign does the Lord speak comfortably to his people. We find a dreadful *Winter-storm* on the World, pointed out as a *spring-time* to the Church, and the trees putting forth their blossom, as *Luk. 21. 25.* It is clear, her deliverance may be begun, and the storm then breaking, which may for a time put the Church under greater difficulties than before; yea, cause the godly to mistake, and tremble at the sight of their mercy, because of those things by which it is ushered in, even when it is before their eyes. I shall add no more but this, It is our great concernment, to fear him who guides all things, to whom alone the determination of events doth belong; and this is the wisdom of his people, *not to faint* at the strange appearance of the time or the signs thereof, but to know what is called for, and thence read personal duties, from the sad presages of publick judgments, and to pursue more nearness with God, and ensure a retreat under his shadow until the indignation pass over. For behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to visit the inhabitants of the earth, and the earth shall disclose her blood, and no more cover her slain. *Isai, 26, 21.*

A third

A third particular, which concerns the godly with much circumspection to notice and understand, in their discerning the time, is the peculiar snares and hazards thereof. This is the Scripture character of the wise man, to discern time and judgment, it being so oft verified (*Eccles. 9. 12.*) that in an evil time the children of men are ensnared, when it falls suddenly upon them. Sure it is, there are searching times, when the Christian's way is more difficult and narrow (though each day hath its snares, which in a special way waits thereon) and then is it the wisdom of the prudent, to understand his way, and know his ground, which the adversary by subtil and indiscernable approaches will seek to draw him off; then is a quick sagacious discerning in the fear of the Lord called for, to have their eyes in their head, and be in a watching posture, when the net is closely spread under their feet. It is a sad remark, too clearly verified oft times on a people professing the truth, which is said of Ephraim, *Strangers have devoured their strength, and they knew it not*; Yea, their not discerning of the same proves a special cause of their further ruin. And is it not written for the ages to come, in what a secure and sleeping posture *Sampson* had his hair cut! He first lost his discerning of such a snare, ere he lost his eyes. We find *David* (through many of the Psalms) in his wrestlings with God, more solicitous for the preventing the snares of wicked men, and a delivery thence, than from their rage and violence. There is a feeling the pulse of the times, by which the present distemper and hazard of the Church may be known, as well as of the body of man: and I must say, this day in a special manner calls us to this grave study. I intend no further application, but a very short touch at some things in general, which rightly pursued in the godly man's serious study, may help to discern something of the publick snares of the time,

time, and how they get advantage in their approach, for these closely wait their season, *for in vain is the net spread in the sight of the bird.*

First, It is clear, *each time hath its peculiar distemper and evils*, that have then a special power and prevalency therewith, the *observing* of which concerns the godly, for their more watchful adverting to the *snare*s of that time. For then the temptation of the time goes therewith, as the present distemper discovers itself, whither in a hot boiling fever, or in a dead lethargy; and follows those evils, which are in that time most contagious, where the current of the multitude runs, which is giving the godly the greatest assault, and seem to be warmed under the favourable aspect and countenance of great men: yea, those evils, which promise some outward advantage and security from trouble, when the question is stated betwixt sin and suffering, it is there the present snare does haunt, and there lies a special piece of the godly man's work, to hold off and keep a distance from the least accession thereto; yea, I may say next to the salvation of their soul, to be solicitous all along their way, to have their garments kept from the smallest stain and spot thereof. A touch, a small defilement from a *publick* prevailing evil, being found to draw more deep on the conscience, and with more difficulty do men recover and escape thence, than from many other *personal* infirmities.

2. It is also clear, there is some piece of the *truth of God*, in each time of the Church, that is more *questioned* and brought in *debate*, by which with greater advantage and clearness we may know where a *publick snare* doth lie. For here is its aim directed, to entangle and assault the godly man, where in a special way he is called to his post, to contend for such an interest: and thus it may be said, if one keep sight well

well of present duty, he will with more facility find out the scent, on which the snare of the time is, how it directs its motion to darken or cast an obstruction in the way of that duty.

3. We may thus discern a *prevailing snare*, and its getting ground, by that tendency there is in a day of trial, to *question* and make new inquiry about *duties* which were *once clear and unquestionable*, when their judgment was *not byassed* from any outward incitements. For this speaks men's finding a sad invention, to be rid of their *conscience*, by *extenuating* present controverfies: a design, which (in the righteous judgment of the Lord) is seldom set on foot by any, but they too visibly thrive therein, for their further ruin, and get an answer according to the idol of their heart. Thus *Balaam*, we have in divine record as a dreadful instance, who tried that way, and therein was successful. And is it not a known remark, that a hesitation and *faint upon the heart*, from want of resolution to suffer for the truth, will not long want a *scruple in the head*, to cause a debate thereabout; and then is it easy for a snare to enter. O with what fear and tenderness should light be guarded; which, as the apple of the eye, may by the least thing be hurt, but is not easily healed! Thus is it, men do insensibly wear out from under those former Impressions they had upon them of duty; and ere they are aware have their judgment by a judicial stroke determined in that, which was before their desire. They know little that *depth of a man's heart*, who are not jealous over a change on their judgment in an hour of trial, when its tendency is, to *spare themselves*.

4. We may discern a *publick snare* in it's approach, by that *advantage the adversary gets* thereby to *divide the godly*, and those who appear for the truth, *amongst themselves*. For then it is easy to enter by such a breach, and throw in the bait in so muddy a

water : it being too obvious, what an advantage a snare hath, where jealousy, with these bitter effects of private strife and quarreling, turns mens eyes off the publick hazard, and blunts that edge of contending for the truth, in smiting one another. I do not mean but there may be a necessity oft on the godly, to *withstand* their friends to their face, yea, the eminentest in the Church, were it a *Peter*, (Gal. 2. 11.) when the truth is concerned ; but this should be with greatest caution and tenderness, to obviate a breach, or quarrel which is like the breaking in of waters, whilst the watching adversary waits his advantage in such a day of the halting. And it is too sadly known, how small a wedge, that is driven with a tendency to that end, makes way for the entry of a further snare ; see I Cor. 11. 16. what a sad connexion there is betwixt a dividing time of the Church, and a further departing from the truth. But we must always take heed, that we so pursue union amongst our selves, as that Christ and his cause be not left alone.

5. A present snare may be seen by the sudden change of known adversaries, and the friendly insinuations of those who were wont to ibreaten. That in such an appearance there lies an ambush, and is but a change of weapons for a seen advantage, sure this should be ground of fear, and a cautious advertence to be much alone with God, that men may know the voice of the shepherd, lest they follow after a stranger ; it being more usual, to be stolen off their feet in a calm, than blown down by a storm ; it is hard to stand before the blandishments of men, where that more endearing and sweet relish of peace with God is not kept on the soul, which is a choice mean to make the ear deaf to the most charming voice of the enchanter : oft hath it been seen, that adder's poison is under their lips, whilst wrath is boiling in their heart (Psal 140.) yea, that the cruel man can change his countenance

tenance, when it is fit to lay a snare, and with *Joab* embrace them in their arms, whom they intend to smite under the fifth rib.

6. May not thus a snare be seen in its approach, by that prevalence the fear of man hath over the time, and that unusual command it seems to have some times over the spirits of men, even those whose former zeal and resolution for the truth hath in other trials with much advantage appeared ? Here is indeed cause to watch ; for in the fear of man there is a snare (Prov. 29. 25.) which then will take advantage to pursue, when it finds men in a flying posture, and shrunk so far below their former appearance. We find the godly man hath his breast-plate : but he hath no piece of armour for his back, when he turns his face from resisting. It's sad, when the adversary is taught to follow, by our fainting : and that spirit which is in the World, seems to be upon the ascendent, with a prevalence even over the spirits of the godly ; yea, those debased and made contemptible in their eyes, in whom the appearance of God and his authority upon them at another time would have made the hearts of their enemies to tremble. This is too obvious, in a humbling and judicial time of the Church, until once that hour of her trial go over.

7. A publick snare is then to be feared, and calls for a watching eye, by that success which waits on a sinful course ; especially when such a shine is of any continuance. For then new queries will be started, strange reports spread, with much subtil reflexion on the way of the Lord, to make the godly question the same. The Psalmist found it not easy to stand before this ; which put him to bring under debate his principles, and the advantage of his cause Ps. 73. 13. And in such a trial doth the adversary, by some continued observation, know how to assault the followers of the truth, and attack them at their weakest : then is it the scandal of the cross

cross causeth many to offend; then it is sore for such to suffer, who know not the fellowship of the *cross of Christ*, which is a piece of the greatest and most near fellowship with him upon the earth: Yea, then the Church may run more hazard from some of her friends, then from the professed adversary. For thus oft is a prevailing snare helped forward: it cannot but be a searching and hazardous time, when many are turning aside, and some of understanding suffered to fall, who are ready to press their sin, as duty, on others; for seldom do such fall off, but are found more stirring and active in such a way to engage others, than they were while holding their former integrity to pursue the truth's interest: thus we have seen it, so it is, let us hear it and know it for our good

8. Thus a snare of the time may be discerned, by the tendency thereof to corruption in the Church, and a producing still the same effects, what ever be pretended, when by the hands of *Esau*, it discovers itself, though it have the voice of *Jacob*. And doth not the ruin of many, who have dashed on such a rock, and have been thus taken, put a sad mark thereon? For it may be said, no snare or subtil contrivance of the adversary awaits the godly in the present time, but if men do not consent to shut their eyes, they may from the Scripture and observation of the Church, see at others cost some discernable beacon set thereon; what a sad tendency such a thing hath still had, to a making shipwreck of faith and a good conscience; how hard it is to dance about the fire and not be burned, or stand in the way and counsels of ungodly men and not be ensnared.

9. It seems to threaten a snare, when enquiry about the duty of the time is pursued without respect to the present case and circumstances thereof. For thus a snare may wait in a thing at other times indifferent, the neglect whereof under some special circumstances

may be a quitting their duty; and the doing also, or yielding to something in another case warrantable, at sometimes may fall under a moral prohibition. As this, when a thing in its self indifferent, *Circa sacra et cultum Dei*, is pressed by the Magistrate, as necessary by vertue of his sole command, and to the subjecting the godly in things wherein they are not subject, and to the prejudice of an other jurisdiction; can there be an enquiry about this in the general, without a particular application to the complex case? It may be said a snare is then on the entry, when that consideration of the Prophet is not much regarded in the present question, *Is this a time for such a thing?* For the disciples to refresh themselves with sleep, was a piece of innocent duty; but that they could not watch this one hour with their Master in his sufferings, must needs vary the case; for it was in so far a deserting him.

10. I shall further add, is not this a sad appearance of some publick snare getting advantage, which is witnessed by a previous disposition, and that prevalence private engagements to an outward interest hath upon men's spirits? For a snare enters not without a call, and finds within, its greatest strength and advantage; yea a conformity to the World, with an insensible wearing out of soul-tenderness, is too oft known to have a tendency for conforming to an evil course. For the motion is then down the hill; and there is cause to fear, the snare will follow in there, and lie about that interest, which otherwise hath got the mastery over them. How many in embracing the World, have at the next step fallen off from the truth? No weapon hath been more made use of against the Church, and hath ruined more: so that it may be said, where other snares have killed their thousands, this its ten thousands. I must say, such an appearance in a time of the Church's trial is like the

breaking forth of her gray hairs; nor is it easy for those to stand, or resist, who are so far gone backward, or keep their feet before a snare, where the truth ceaseth to get a command over their heart.

A fourth particular, which calls for a serious inquiry, from those who *know the time*, and are wise to discern the same, is this, *What can the righteous do?* when there is a *growing darkness* on the Church, and the very *foundation* like to be shaken; yea, the hearts of many to far down, that they are like to lose their *hand* therewith, in the matter of duty, and give over, as men astonished, *seeing this evil is from the Lord*. It is no small thing, to manage well such a time of the Church's trial, and in so sharp a storm there is need of much ballast: but we know, the Scripture of God is near, which stands good for his people's conduct, to let them know how to steer their course in the darkest night, and from that blessed record there is one thing clearly held forth to answer such a time, which is a great duty; *Let the righteous hold on his way, and he who hath clean hands wax stronger, and stronger, Job 17. 9.* For it is sure, they have cause and solid ground for this, though the earth should in a more strange manner reel, and the pillars thereof seem to be dissolved: since it is certain and true,---

(1.) *That all is well*, and nothing can fall wrong whilst the *foundation of God*, which is his eternal counsel held forth in the Scripture, abides sure. The other foundations be shaken, the godly man doeth then ly at a safe anchor, which will not drive in a stormy day: his great interest is beyond hazard, though more than an immortal soul were in that adventure. his heaven is sure, whereof he cannot be beguiled whilst things upon the earth seem most uncertain: and must it not then be *well* with the Church, were it e

ven sinking in to the grave, since the Mediator will bring it up again? Men's evil eye cannot burr, nor their cursing blast that interest, which God hath blessed. For it is then sure, *there is no enchantment against Jacob, nor divination against Israel.*

(2.) Is not the *truth*, and the great interest of *godliness*, that to a *Christian*, & in such a manner known to him, that it needs no testimony from men, or incitement from example of others? For to these it commends itself, and does witness its reality, though by all the generation amongst whom they live, it should be cried down. It's sure, to be a Christian indeed, requires this, to *know the truth*, and be founded on such a ground, that can support and quiet the soul in the greatest falling off of others, though none else were to walk in that way; that if it were supposed, *one serious Christian* in such an age were in the whole World, and thus *left alone*, there is so great a discovery and certainly of the truth to be known upon the soul, as should oblige him to such a declaration with *Joshua*, *But as for me I will serve the Lord*. O to see a generation of men of such mental, who with resolute peremptoriness would *forsake all men*, and *follow the Lord*, and serve him without company, if better might not be; we might by the hand of such expect to be led through *Jordan*, after our *Moses's* are dead, by whom we were led thorow the *red-sea*: but alas, where are they!

(3.) Have not those ground in the *darkest* time to be *confirmed*, who may see cause to *improve the most shaking things*, which fall out in their day, for their *further establishment*; and strengthen their hand in the way of the Lord, by those dispensations at which many stumble? It is strange, to observe what a challenge and upcast some have in their reflecting on the truth, on those grounds which in their conscience

they must admit to be a convincing witness thereto. But having at some length elsewhere touched this, I shall but add these few things more, which as evident grounds of establishment in the way of the Lord, and for our further strengthening therein, should be improved, which yet are an usual challenge by many against the same.

First, That the number seems so small, who follow the truth, and are found serious in the study of Godliness, can be no ground to question this, without a strange mistake; since men must either quit the Scripture, or admit, *the way to life is strait, and few enter therein*: Yea, that the small convoy the truth hath in the World is an express verification of it. Is there the least warrant, to make the suffrage of the multitude a test of the way of the Lord? But it is sure, we can shew them the contrary, that his followers are a select number, chosen out of the World, the great bulk whereof is outlawed, and put out of the intercession of the Mediator; else the Scripture could not be fulfilled. And is not the falling of many from the truth a great seal thereto, no less than the incoming of others? and that excellent way of holiness, the more discernably known by such a character, that it is every where spoken against?

2. That so great contempt and reproach does this day attend the truth and practice of Godliness, should prejudice none thereat: but be a further ground of strengthening, to help the Christian to hold on his way; since it is nothing else but what is foretold, and what the most excellent of the earth in their time have met with, to be accounted the filth and off-scouring of the World. In no age hath the truth wanted such an assault, and in no age hath it wanted a triumph over the same: Yea, hath not the greatest reproacher sometime been forced to give in his retraction, and make

make earnest of that which before he scoffed at? When God comes near by a stroke of his judgment, then do the proud change their stile; and speak in another language, upon the awful appearance of death. But this also doth witness, what a marvellous thing Religion is, which with those who know it, loseth no weight, when under the greatest cloud of detraction and contempt: For then is *Christ* still precious, and his way desirable, unto those who believe.

3. That sentence is not speedily executed against an evil course, we see what improvement the World makes thereof, to be more desperately wicked: but is not this also a seal and confirmation of the truth? and a ground for establishment in the way of the Lord, which verifies the Scripture, *Eccles. 8. 11.* And it is there men may see, a short reprieve from punishment is no pardon, or acquittance, whilst sin runs on to an after-account; that judgment deferred, when therewith a further hardening appears, doth threaten more, than a quick and present dispatch; & shews, the stroke will be the greater, when it comes. Surely if this fell not out, whereof the World takes such advantage, it might in so far put us to question the truth, of which one syllable must not fall to the ground.

4. So great an abounding of prophanity and ungodliness within the Church, is it not an undeniable seal to the verity of the Scriptures which thus takes place, and should help the godly man to hold on his way; it being unanswerably clear, there could be no darkness, if there were not such a thing as light; or folly, if there were no wisdom: and is not excellent holiness thus evidently made known in its opposite, to which there could be no contrariety, if it self were not most real.

5. That the truth seems so much entangled in a confusion of contrary doctrines, and we see it without

ceasing pursued by error, and the assault of those adversaries, who in every age are seeking to darken the same, can be no ground of prejudice and shaking, without a strange mistake: but should strengthen the godly in their way, and help them to wax stronger, who have the Scripture thus so expressly fulfilled before their eyes. It is sure, the Lord hath *made his way plain*, nor does that blessed record give any ground to *turn aside unto crooked paths*: for those are clouds of men's own creating, which have such a tendency to darken the same. But we see truth in all ages waited on by error, which (with any brighter discovery thereof) breaks out like a thick fog; though these can never unite, no more than gold and clay can join together: and it is clear, the notion of error were unconceivable, if the truth had not a certainty and real being; nor doth it conflict with such an adversary, but for its further triumph. Oh if the solid *persuasion* of the Scripture were in earnest pursued, and men's souls once brought under the power and authority of the truth, as that which is the word and testimony of the *living God*, it would prove a more effectual cure to so dreadful a distemper of the Church, than all the disputes of the time; which are of special *use* also. May not *Atheism* be found, upon a serious inquiry, the great rise of error, and of men's bold adventuring to make the Scripture of God a sport of their invention, to make it subservient to their interest, and run after such a by ass? And should it not be for a lamentation, that a humble serious *inquiry* after the *truth*, under an awful impression of that God whose word it is, is this day so *rare* a thing in the World?

Now this being so sharp a trial of the Church, and one of those things whereat many pretend to be most shaken, though I have in an other part touched it a little, I would add further some few remarks,

how

how clear and express a confirmation of the word even this is, which should more fix and establish those who love the truth. (1.) It is manifest, that no error or corrupt doctrine assaults the Church, but is in such a manner pointed forth, yea, by so express an opposition thereto, in the Scripture, that we may see a *prophetical forewarning* thereof, and of men's endeavour to corrupt & darken such a piece of the truth. It is sure, the word is written and in a special way directed to every time of the Church, and to all her after-trials and assaults is peculiarly suited, by him who knew & did foresee what opposition his truth in after-ages should meet with: and in this marvellous record men may clearly see (if there were such a serious inquiry) that there is no poison or corruption in doctrine, which infects the Church, but hath its proper antidote there provided. I must here as to one particular instance say, if I were not persuaded of a *determined species of government for the Church* under the new Testament (which is clear in the Scripture holding forth its constitution to be *Aristocratick*, with a parity amongst the officers of Jesus Christ in the administration of their power, and a subordination of the lesser parts to the greater) I could not shun so clear a remark, of that express *prohibition* of any *disparity* and *Lordly prelacy* in his house; yea, how manifestly the all-seeing God, when he was about to found the Christian Church, doth point in such plain terms at this, that we may there read a very direct prediction of that ruin and prejudice, it would on this account sustain in after-times. I speak this on no particular interest, or from bitterness and prejudice at the persons of any, but have confidence to say, it is from the awe and persuasion of the truth. Sure, on politick grounds and with respect to an outward interest, it is easy to judge, that way wants not a *persuading bait*; if something greater were not to *ponderae*,

ponderate, and a destroying hook did not wait thereon, which should make the purchase too dear, at the rate of *denying Jesus Christ* in a piece of his truth, when a *confession* thereof is called for *before men*. --- (2.) Do we not see even in those things, which in that marvellous *depth of error and delusion* on men's souls seem most strange, the Scripture thence most exactly confirmed, and in that *power and energy* which attends it, and is to many matter of astonishment, may discern how these *clouds are carried about with a tempest* (2. Pet. 2. 17.) and driven on by a judicial stroke. And though it is amazing to see at what a rate many are this way turned mad, with a discernable bewitching of their judgment, and a besotting into most strange and absurd extravagancies; yea, how tenacious and violent in their way, when silenced with the clearest discoveries of the truth: yet is not this also witnessed, *there is a righteous God giving up to strong delusion*, in which *Satan is let loose* with a remarkable power to *deceive*. 2. Thef. 2. 12. O how dreadful is that stroke which is inflicted on the judgment and reason, which in some respect we may say is greater than that which is on the affections! --- (3.) Find we not the Scripture by a clear prophetic discovery points at that influence *humane authority*, and the patrociny of such, who have a name and repute in the Church, should have on the *corrupting the doctrine* thereof? And therefore does the Holy Ghost so particularly guard against the same, and oppose the authority of the *written word* to the highest pretences of any party; that here an *Apostle* must not be admitted, or have credit, to the truth's prejudice; not an *Angel*, yea, not a *voice from heaven*, may oppose it self to this *more sure testimony* of God in his word. --- (4.) Is it not here even in that great depth of error we see this truth take place, *deceiving and being deceived*; how strangely these meet, and by a marvellous stroke

stroke men's judgment made captive to their will, and their deliberate acting to *deceive others* have the same effect on *themselves*. --- (5.) Thus also is the Scripture made out, where we see how *hard* it is for men to *fix*, in such a way; or find land, when they are once carried off the truth, and do lanch out in that horrid gulf of error: but *seducers wax worse and worse*.

*Inference. V. The truth of God revealed in the Scripture is in its import not more marvellous and great, than we may say is clear and obvious in the evidence of its verification: which hath every where such a witness, that there can be no escape from this discovery; but if men will not receive its testimony, they must have it forced on them as their torment. For it is here invention doth fail, and politicks are found too weak, to ward off some impression of that, which with an awful appearance and authority does justify it self to the conscience, without their consent; nor can this secure them from that lash of inward terror, which will make these tremble alone, when they seem to have confidence before others; but this advantage the truth hath of her adversaries, that even Atheism must bear a witness thereto, and against it self; which if men would but weigh in the ballance of sober reason, it should appear a sufficient antidote against its own poison, and a great seal to the Scripture, which would want a special confirmation, if it wanted such an adversary. Now to clear it a little more, and thus shut up what hath been on this subject held forth, I must in behalf of the glorious truth of God (which in all ages of the Church did never want some discovery of its accomplishment) attest the *reproachers* of this time, who are so much at work to challenge his unspotted way, and call in question his faithfulness, to the weakning of the assent of many thereto,*

thereto, and do appeal them to that *tribunal* which the great God hath placed in the *conscience*, if they can without doing violence thereto, and putting out the eye of reason, withstand the clear evidences of divine truth, and the certainty of its performance. About which these few things I shall here add.

(1.) If it be the great *prerogative of God*, and to him alone belongs to *declare things from the beginning to the end*, and hold forth the various and most remarkable events, which should fall out with in time, with their proper circumstances, yea, to discover the great revolutions of the world through all the ages thereof, when second causes in their remotest tendency thereto could not be discerned; *is not this* then clear and undeniably true of the Scripture? --- (2.) As to sure and exact *performance* of the same, I must make that challenge and attestation, which that great servant of the Lord *Jehova* did in such a case (*Jos. 23. 14.*) *if any thing hath hitherto failed, of all which the Lord hath spoken in the Scripture!* or if men can instance, what special *prediction* or *promise* (which to this day should have taken place in the season thereof) hath miscarried, or turned abortive; what *truth* wants its seal and confirmation; yea, what *step of providence* can you point at, which does not quadrate and marvellously *accord* with the word? I challenge an instance. But this, I am sure, men must see, there are such things fall out in the event, that are particularly foretold in the Scripture; so strange and marvellous, that in an ordinary way none could have believed, which they now see with their own eyes. --- (3.) Do you not see the *written word* as a bright *lantern* attend the *Church*, from the very porch and entry of time, in all her journey; and evidently point at the *remarkable times* and *revolutions* of her case, which have now in a great part gone over her head?

head? Yea, is it not demonstratively clear, that the sun doth not more truly shine on this terrestrial globe, than the *Scripture* shineth, and doth illuminate the whole frame and structure of *Providence*; and in all those strange parts which are acted in the world, most certainly takes place; that there is none can walk at random, or by his own counsel direct and steer his course! But though it is marvellous, it is sure also, that the innumerable millions of men, who are this day upon earth, in all their various motions, are at present fulfilling the *determined counsel of God*; and their actings (what ever they design therein) must be concentrick with his great end, and out of that bounds can they possibly move. --- (4.) I must attest the world, if they do not see, *this way of godliness*, which seemeth to day to be *every where spoken against*, to be that *good and old way*, in which are the *footsteps of the Saints* to be found since the beginning; and that it is no *new light* now broke out in the world: but it is clear, through all ages past there hath not wanted a continued succession of these, who in *this reproached way* did serve the *God of their fathers*; and have sealed the truth, which now, from one time to another, we find still delivered off their hands, to the present generation. And I here challenge the greatest *Atheists*, to which of the *Saints* can they turn, or whom can they instance of that blessed company, since there was a *Church* in the earth, who could never contradict this, or bear an other witness! --- (5.) Must you not confess, there is *no such deep in the heart of man*, or so close and subtil a convoy of wickedness there, which is not found out in the *Scripture*, and there pointed at; and that none can get themselves hid, or get beyond the reach of *this*, in those things which they are sure the observing world could never know; but the most secret haunts of their soul are unvailed, which from their dearest friend they have concealed. --- (6.)

led,---(6.) Can this demonstration of the Scripture, and so manifest a witness thereto be denied, that whilst man is a *free agent* in his actions, and doth therein act spontaneously, he hath notwithstanding of this in his own breast both a *judge*, and *accuser*; which, though within him, doth without his consent exercise a power over him, and such an authority which he would, yet cannot decline?---(7.) I dare attest the conscience of men, who are themselves *strangers* to the way of God, if they can so far shut their eyes, but they must see that *serious godliness* is a *marvellous* thing, and that there is something here *above nature*, which by its effects on others may shew a *divine Spirit* and power; that, wherever it comes, makes so great a *change*, and one to exceed another most discernably, though of the same parts; that *suits* and does accommodate it self to the *various* conditions and employments of men; it puts a special honour on the greatest Prince, and does instruct the wise and prudent, yet will it lodge with the poorest artificer in his shop, or labouring man in the field! And does it not also appear, that here must be a native motion unconstrained and from *inward principles*, when on outward grounds there is not the least incitement; which shews it is a *living* thing, that hath its discernable languishing and wearing out, and its more vigorous actings, as well as any living man! It is strange, the report of this is not matter of *astonishment*; to bring men once to question, if such an account as others give of this marvellous thing (*Religion*) can be true; how it is here, the Christian's joy is sown by *weeping*, and his tears the seed whence gladness of heart breaks forth; how sweet that *rest* is, which is found in his *work* and labour; and with his *sowing to the spirit*, the harvest then begins, in a present *reaping*; and his laying forth himself, with a giving of the heart unto God, does enrich the giver by such a gift: yea, that here men should

should differ so much when alone with God and brought near him, from what they are at other times; and in those retirements of their soul, have that discovery and conception of the truth, which is not to be found in turning over the voluminous tractates of the greatest writers.---(8.) If men have any serious reflection, and do not shut up the bible, can they shun this remark thereof? How well it answers the various *successions of time*, and so marvellous a *variety of things*, that are so many ages distant from other; yea, that all along there is a *gradual* discovery, and breaking out of the gospel in the several times of the Church; where it is easy to discern the *antiquity* of this excellent record, and so great a *distance of time* betwixt the *penmen* thereof, yet in its composition is *one entire piece*, so connex and closely knit together, that men may see the *same spirit* in the whole, and in each part thereof, moving and carrying forward one great design!---(9.) I shall but further add, if *Religion* hath a *being* and *reality*, which men cannot lose the sense of, and deny, without falling so far below reason, into the condition of the beasts, must there not be a *rule* also? For it is easy to judge, in what a strange and monstrous shape this would appear, were it left to the *choice* and *arbitrement of men*. Now let the most professed *Atheists* turn their eyes through the whole earth, and in a calm and sober composition of spirit but judge, if there be any thing more *absurd*, and to *astonishment* irrational, than *that face* and *appearance*, which religion hath amongst those where this excellent rule of the *Scripture* is not owned. Yea, could these subject themselves to such extravagancies, and therein turn so mad, without a *divine stroke* on their *judgment* and *reason*, which the righteous God, in verification of his *word*, inflicts on such as do even shut their ears from the report of the truth, *the sound whereof goes forth through the*

the earth! And here I challenge men, tho' strangers themselves to serious religion, if at a distance it doth not appear, how great a *difference* there is betwixt those parts of the world, where the *gospel* shines in its *power*, and the rest of the nations.

B I N I S.



