

107 Boston, 1743

THE
FULFILLING
OF THE
SCRIPTURE.

OR,
AN ESSAY,

SHEWING THE EXACT ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE WORD
OF GOD IN HIS WORKS PERFORMED AND
TO BE PERFORMED.

FOR CONFIRMING OF BELIEVERS, AND CONVINCING ATHEISTS OF THE
PRESENT TIME :

*CONTAINING SOME RARE HISTORIES OF THE WORKS AND
THE SERVANTS OF GOD IN THE CHURCH
OF SCOTLAND.*

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BY REV. ROBERT FLEMING,
Pastor of a Church in Rotterdam.

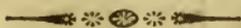
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THIS SCRIPTURE MUST NEEDS HAVE BEEN FULFILLED—ACTS i. 16.
AND THE SCRIPTURE CANNOT BE BROKEN.—JOHN X. 35.

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PREFACE.



THE edition of the following excellent and celebrated work, copied by the present editor, was published in Boston, 1743, with a preface by the Rev. THOMAS FOXCROFT. From this preface it appears, that this work, had at that period passed through numerous editions in various countries, and been revised and enlarged, by the author, and an Appendix added, containing “practical reflections, and proper uses of the whole.” The copy was also corrected, and the diction, in some instances, improved by Mr. Foxcroft, without, however, in any instance, altering the sense. The same liberty has been taken in a few cases, in the present edition.

The following account of this work is from Mr. Foxcroft’s preface. “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 ; though not so much upon the credit of tradition and common fame, as of an express testimony, which the Rev. DANIEL BURGESS has left us of the fact ; who having discovered the author about the year 1693, corresponded with him, then living in Holland, and drew him out of his concealment. In his edition of the treatise, entitled, *The confirming Work of Religion*, he

has, to do honour to the writer, inserted 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 ; Michtam's, golden jewels ; arguments, several, not so much as touched by any pen within her dominions, 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 surprised with joy, and with wonder, that a topic 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. Through 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.

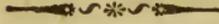
“After so ample and honourable testimonies from such eminent hands, and contemporary with Mr. FLEMING, it were a needless and a vain attempt in me, to offer any thing further in praise of the author of *The Fulfilling of the Scriptures*, or in order to bespeak a welcome reception of this his performance among us. I trust it will be found a word in season.”

The present editor cheerfully adds his testimony to the great merits of this work, his opinion of its peculiar adaptedness to the present times; and his hearty good wishes and prayers, that it may, by the blessing of God, be instrumental of strengthening the faith, enlivening the hopes, and increasing the piety of thousands of its readers.

CHARLESTOWN, *March 25th*, 1806.

THE AUTHOR'S

EPISTLE TO THE 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 and prudent, to *keep silence*, to be *swift to hear*, and *slow to speak*, which seldom hath an after challenge. The author will say little for his apology herein, though 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 had been matter of earnest, yea, hath caused some tossing and exercise upon his spirit, and pressed a more serious inquiry and search, with respect to *his own case*, to be persuaded 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 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 threatening 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, and 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 plucked away, and none to fill their room ; christians' burials now frequent, but the birth and inbringing 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 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 re-
vile it in the power thereof; whilst they do not deny
those truths, and principles, that necessarily oblige to
such a tender practice; who, in the most grave and in-
teresting duties of christianity, think it enough to charge
their brethren with *pharisaical* ostentation, and hypoc-
risy; whilst they must confess these duties to be unques-
tionably binding; and that they can be no competent
judges of such a challenge, which the great witness of
the heart and inward parts of men can only determine.
(2.) It is a sad remark also of the time, that *protestant*
writers, professing the reform of religion, shall state
themselves in *opposition* to the most important grounds
thereof, such as *imputed righteousness*, and *justification*
by faith, which is well called *Articulus stantis et caden-
tis Ecclesiæ*. 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 funda-
mental of *justification*; as if it pressed believing and
resting upon Christ *without respect* to works and holi-
ness. I confess, we put not *inherent* righteousness in
the room of *imputed*; though we assert *each* is *neces-
sary* 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 mediæ*: 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 ac-
quitted by the *cautioner's payment*, is it not by the *im-
putation* 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 denied that 6th ver. of the 4th chap. 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 (whatever they pretend) I must look on as *adversaries* to the *reformed* churches ; and there is nothing more dangerous than a pirate 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 *ambassadors of Christ* given to the church for her *edification*, stand so directly *cross* to the very *end* of their work and ministry ; many, of whom it may be said, that knowingly and deliberately they *oppose* piety ! That such should *persecute*, whose work is to *feed* ; should *wound*, instead 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 *unsanctified 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 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 *queries*, 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 beld 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; though men should threaten, though the earth were overturned, and the foundation shaken! This is a determination, above men, above all the rules of human 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 darkness*; that as the rejection of the *Jews* made way for the *Gentiles* incoming, so their fall may as remarkably precede that solemn return and restoration 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 thoughts 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 or its ac-

complishment. A *second query*, which is indeed no less important in such a time, may be about *duty* : What do so eminent a *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 inquiries, 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 whatsoever capacity or condition, as he hath his measure and talent, so 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 *threatening 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 posterity ; that the christian par-

ent, or master of a family, did witness more that great resolution, in a time when many are drawing back. *But as for me, I and my house we will serve the Lord!*

(3.) It is found, that the most *eminent* and *honourable service* of the church doth usually *befal* her in a *low* and *suffering* condition. When there hath been but *little strength*, and many outward disadvantages, then both their *call* and *furniture* hath been most observable, to confess the truth, to endure for the gospel of Christ, to *overcome 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. xi. 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, though 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.) Though 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 public *defection*) to keep it *alive*, when it was like to be swal-

lowed 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 *bazard* and *suffering* is more pressingly called for, even *the study of christian prudence* ; a duty convincingly necessary, for *regulating* of duties, 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 church's 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, though overtaken with the violence of some temptation may yet be serviceable to the church ; but espe-

cially this should press us to a watchful regard of any *breach and rent in the church*, and to study a *healing spirit*, so far as is possible, without prejudice to truth.

3. It is also an important piece of christian *prudence*, how to *walk 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 expense of time or labour? It is truly a wonder how we can read and consider the *scripture*, without wondering.

(2.) It is a great concernment, to know that the scripture 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, enlivening influences, to the melting of their heart, have oft met them there in a very dead frame ; and now they know that verily *God beareth 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, and 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 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 and reelings of the earth ; yea, how all things, even those which would seem most contradictory, run within that straight channel of the word, and cannot go without these bounds.

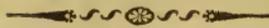
(4.) It is the *principal and most concerning scripture promises*, that are only touched in this following discourse, these which carry along with them a clear continued series of the church's condition through time, and shew the most remarkable changes of her lot. For it is clear, that in *divers* prophecies and in a *different* manner the Spirit doth point at *one* and the *same thing* : and truly it should cause no mistake or prejudice, that we find several of the *scripture prophecies* expressed 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 enigmatical 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, and for the destruction of his enemies, now in these *last times*, shall be *very glorious* ; yea, by some stately and stupendous acts of providence, that he shall accomplish his judgment on *antichrist* : neither must we take a prejudice at *truth*, because of the wild *fancies* of many who would extend it beyond its bounds, or that near *resemblance* which the *error* of some in 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 pas-*

sages 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 inquiry into this great and weighty truth.

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THE
FULFILLING
OF THE
SCRIPTURE.

THERE 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 tie 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 and interesting truth, that calleth for a serious study, the solid persuasion 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 solicitous 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.

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 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 subtle, and piercing eye of unsanctified 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 judgment 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 impress 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 it is 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 is 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 is sad, and a great short coming, that there is not a more serious improvement of it for this end: which is a very interesting 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 fame 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 of times, wherein such particular truths should have their accomplishment. For it is 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. i. 11.* For it is 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 interesting 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. It is 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 through another 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, as we are to look after, in a special way here, which concerns this militant and travailing 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 complete 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 through 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 it is finished and done, what all the promises, prophecies, and threatenings 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, and 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 ; it is 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, in so far as the fulfilling of the scripture is therein concerned, the outmaking of the promises and threatenings ; 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, though it should be at the rate of laying cities and countries desolate. For it is in this the Lord taketh pleasure, and exerciseth his blessed thoughts, 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 marvellous 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 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 fabric 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 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 herself 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 importance, 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 saith, 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, 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 carcasses 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 grave's mouth, this shall not be wanting; when God saith, he will 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 *Zech. vi. 8.* the instruments by him appointed for executing his judgment and the threatenings of the word, it is 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 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 another 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 is 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 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 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 tried it in their most pressing straits, and extremity? for it is 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 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 itself, which men may oft see break forth as the sun out of a dark cloud, that shineth the more brightly, the more it 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 on 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 resound 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 itself through all the veins, as it were, and conduits 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 inquire if there be such a thing, if the promises and threatenings 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 imprison 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 concernments 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 hatched 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 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 indifference which we see among men about religion, and the most interesting truths of scripture, doth show 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 engage so far upon it. It is not that it is hid from them, but they truly choose 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 threatenings of the word shall be sad earnest ; the fulfilling whereof no sharpness of wit, nor subtle 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 re-

port ; 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 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 threatenings of the word : that they will surely take place and be within a little while no compliment, but sad earnest, and that he is every hour standing under that scripture wo against hypocrites ? I am sure it would make his very hair stand upright, his joints 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 persuaded that it must come to pass what he hath promised ? For if they were, they should reckon it their greatest safety to embark their interest on so sure a ground, and with much quietness 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 is 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 persuaded 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 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 itself to men's trial, and exactest search; and yet we put it so little to that touchstone, that we may know it upon another account, than report or hearsay.

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 inquired, 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 persuaded about the truth, and its certain outmaking, 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 it is impossible for him to lie, but that from so 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 ourselves 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 a hope? What manner of persons should those be, that are persuaded, 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 lethargy.

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, and have no dependence upon necessary, and natural causes; and true*

ly, this may be a convincing argument, yea, we may say, of all external testimonies is the greatest ; but it is 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 inquire 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 is 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 itself, 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 show whose it is, and how far it exceeds all human invention ; and thus by a clear manifestation of the truth, doth commend itself 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 whatever 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 critics 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 to the world. And do not men see, how marvellous 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, and 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 backed 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 thoroughly 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, and 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.

1. The accomplishment of the scripture is a very public testimony from heaven to its divinity, whilst the Lord by his works through the earth, which are done in the view of angels and men, doth solemnly avow that this is his word. For we must say, his work within on the hearts of his people, and without about the church, is such, whereat men, yea, all the magicians of the earth, may stand amazed, and confess that 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, it is 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 into the word, and compare the experience and remarks of one time with another, may have a great reach, and 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 stretched forth over the earth, than that the

scripture is stretched 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 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 not a dead letter, but hath power, and life ; and there must be an enlightening quickening 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 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 those 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 cannot bear, they hate it, which (as *Micajah*) doth prophesy always hard things, and carrieth a message of death to them ; a serious view of this truth, to ungodly men, is as the hand writing upon the wall before them, which doth foretell their approaching ruin, and should cause them all to tremble ; the knowledge whereof must increase 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 another 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 looked 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, and that glorious estate which abideth the saints ; he cannot turn his eyes and 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 proved the truth thereof by sure experience, as he knoweth he hath a real being ! Surely the bible is another 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 brought 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 diary 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 findeth 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 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 dunghill, 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 church's 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 handbreadth. 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 promulgation 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 settled and flourishing condition in Canaan, and carrieth her forward 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. xii. 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. xxii. 9. We have that bar taken off, *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. xii. 4. *Many shall run to and 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, 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 incalling 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 after times, when the event shall unveil 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. xv. 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 dazzle the eyes of men, even greatest atheists, alarm the world, yea, very effectually contribute (we have ground so to judge) to that promised increase of the church, and incoming 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 prophetic 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 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 travailing 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, than 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 Dan. xii. 4. that in the last times this will be one of the special exercises of the saints to inquire, and make a diligent search concerning the scripture's accomplishment ? For it is 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 inquiry what of the scripture is fulfilled, whereby we may know on very clear grounds, if the night be far

spent, the day at hand, and that the coming of the Lord to judgment draweth near.

VIII. *This is a great, and interesting 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 inquire, and read the faithfulness of God therein; yea, that so great a truth, which would abide the search of all the critics of the world, a truth wherein our blessedness through time and eternity lieth, should offer itself 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. 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?"

5. This doth lay the christian in the way of that promise. *Psal. cvii. 43.* 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, *Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.*

5. Thus should christians, with much advantage, be helped to convince gainsayers. For it is sure, atheism could not make so bold and public an appearance, if men did not so much take their religion on trust. O, the serious experienced man can with another 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, otherwise, 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 join 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 authentic 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 impression 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 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 dunghill, scraping his sores, than such who are clothed 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 ourselves 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 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 public acknowledgment 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 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 godly 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 persuad-

ed 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; where the difference is not in the degree, but in the kind. Yet, though 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 christian's 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 judgment.

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 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 the truth also of the threatenings ; 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. v. 17. Rom. vii. 19, 21, 23.* This is a piece of the word which holds forth man's nature in its true shape and form, whither their bias 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 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 soldier 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 whatever advantage some of the saints 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 oppositely 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 is 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 scratched 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 when once this doth swell, and wax fat ; they may upon another interest cry, *Wo is us, our leanness !* For, like the scales of the balance, 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 pressed 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. xvii. 9, iv. 14. Prov. iv. 23.) *is a scripture truth, whereto the christian's experience doth answer, as the face answereth to itself 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 sound this great deep of the heart, and draw so lively a portrait 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 attained, the more clear discovery there will be of this. O what sad hours, what bitter complaints, hath it caused? This oft doth mar 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 joint testimony to this truth. We should find that *Enoch* who walked with GOD, *Moses* with whom he spake face to face, that beloved disciple who leaned on Christ's bosom, and 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 heart, than 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 overreach their quickest reflection, 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; not the best case, the greatest establishment in grace, nor the evening of the day, though they were within some minutes of the crown and complete victory, doth privilege 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 pres-

ent (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 recal 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 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 lifted 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 terror 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 obtained mercy to know themselves, can tell that it is 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 mar; 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. vi. 12*, *I. Pet. v. 8*, *Job. viii. 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 which the word doth clearly teach. Yea, it is true none of the saints were ever privileged 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 began 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 subtile 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 ply 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 suit 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 them with most horrid atheistical thoughts, 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 spoil of their adversary, and at such a time have been made to wonder, how that which hath oft foiled them, should have been their temptation.

12. 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 devices 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, 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 is easy to read the cause within ourselves, 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 saint's 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 inquire at a living man, whether he seeth and feeleth, 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 somethings, to clear what we understand here, by the saints *experience* of the *truth* of the promises, in these following considerations.

1. We would consider, though the scripture hath here its 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 than 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. Whatever 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, *be*

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 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 ;* and 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 tried 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 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 ten *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 Chr. xx. 20. Psal. cxii. 7, 8. Job. i. 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 so.

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 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 soever they thought it deferred, yet came always in season, was never too late and out of time.

8. That this did never occasion bitter reflections, 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 carried 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 beareth 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 most express. *Phil. iv. 6. Psalm xxxii. 6. lxxv. 2. xci. 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 enabled 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 *prepar-eth the heart*, he doth *cause his ear to hear*.

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 suit off their hand, even while the matter was still in dependence before him ; yea, that they have oft had such a satisfying impression of GOD's mind, and persuasion 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 abate-

ment 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 suit 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 overcaring 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 sore 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 day 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 concernments to him; having so oft tried, and found that seriousness and sincerity in address to GOD was never in vain, but whatever 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, *Isa.* lix. 21. *Job.* xiv. 16. *Luke* xxiv. 49. *Rom.* viii. 16, 26.

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 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 entered 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 another time, but common things to them ! the object is the same, but O ! what different 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 sore bondage and fear ; which raiseth them often so far above

their ordinary frame, as they are not only quickened and refreshed themselves, but do observably *warm others*. O how piercing, and savoury 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 bystanders, 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 wished 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 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 persuasive 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 discernible and sensibly felt at the *present* time, that Christ's return to the soul, and the effu-

sion 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; and maketh it like night to the soul, when the sun is gone down: and sad experience hath oft shewed 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. Psalm xxxvii. 5. xxv. 9, 14. lxxiv. 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 oft so dark; but when they subjected themselves to God's 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 inquire 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 discernible 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 *overpowering 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, 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 name's 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. vii. 18, Jer. xxxi. 34, Isa. xliii. 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 *connection* 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 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 music 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 *cannot command*; no more than the sun to shine when overclouded, or the wind to blow but when it listeth: which the most persuading 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 rejoice therein, when it shineth upon the same.

4. It must be no delusion, which causeth so marvellous 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 inquire with wonder, whence they are so cheerful today, who yesterday 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: that when they knew not how to adventure, and at what end of their ravelled condition to begin, accounts having run long over; yet on their very first address, have got a sweet disappointment to their fears, been helped to their feet, yea, sometimes 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 sore 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 *hell* 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. xci. 15, Isa. xliii. 2, Cap. xli. 17, and xlix. 14, Psal. ix. 9, Isa. li. 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 fame and sweet savour 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 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 public 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 *trials* ; that a sanctified exercising affliction, they have found one of the best *interpreters* of the bible, and the word *then* to be another 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 shaped 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 shutteth one door, he hath set another open ; that when the storm without hath been very sharp, they have found a sweet calm and sunshine within, to make it easy ; and that when he layeth on one sore trial, he will take another off.

6. They can tell what a sweet and 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 time 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 recompensed at their landing, with a rich lading of experience ; another kind of discovery of GOD, his way, and the certainty 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 another 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 and 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. Psal. xviii. 25, Psal. cxii. 4, Rev. iii. 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, however 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 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 could not have expected ; yea, the Lord's shutting all other doors upon them hath been, that he might open one himself, like *Hagar's* well springing up in the wilderness.

9. That in making their aim, when they had a large heart for GOD, they have not then wanted an *opportunity* for *evidencing* the same ; their encouragement hath abounded with their duty ; and they have got much *in*, in giving much *out* for Christ ; that there was no such *jeast* in the world, as they have sensibly found in the testimony of a *good conscience*.

EIGHTH instance, is that promise, which is held forth to the christian in the word, *of strength and assistance to go about duties*. *Is.* xl. 29, 30, 31. *Ps.* xviii, 6, 14. lxxxiv. 5. lxviii. 28.

To clear this, that it hath an unquestionable performance, I attest the experience of *the generation of the righteous*. Who ever knew what it was to *serve the Lord in the spirit* ; and by many sensible confirmations, have not proved the certainty of these things ?

First, that when they have gone about duty under much *deadness* and straitness of spirit, they have found a very sensible *enlargement*, and got their bonds *loosed* : which surely they could no more command, without the concurrence of divine help, and something above nature, than those who spread out the sail, can command a fair wind, when it is cross.

2. That GOD's help and concurrence was never more discernibly carrying them through, and making them strong, than in the day, that (to their own sense) they were most *weak*, when they have gone about duty under greatest fears, and fainting in spirit.

3. That when they had most *confidence in themselves*, and judged they were at greatest advantage in their going about some duty, they have usually had the saddest retreat ; and found that a sure truth, *the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong*.

4. They know well what an influence divine concurrence hath, not only upon their inward frame, but also upon the exercise of their gifts, yea, upon the most common abilities of judgment, and memory; and that there is a most remarkable difference, betwixt themselves at one time, and another, according to the blowing of this wind.

5. They must also witness this as their experience, they found *duty* never more *easy* to them, than when they have had *most to do*, and were kept most thronged and pressed therein; yea, when much work was laid to their hand, they then wanted not an *enlarged* allowance for the same.

6. That their spirits have been *fitted* for duty, and *carried through* difficulties, where at some other time and in another frame they would have *fainted*: and thereby have seen, that none needs to start at any piece of duty, when God calleth them to it; for while difficulties have appeared greatest at first, the less they have found them afterward, yea, the hardest piece of service oft made most easy.

7. They find God doth raise the spirit of his followers, with a suitable elevation for their work, and can *fit* them for the service of that time, and other trials thereof, even beyond their *ordinary reach*.

8. That there is an *open door*, and sensible assistance, when there hath been *work* for the gospel in such a place; while on the other hand, they have found an inhibition sensibly served on them, the *door* as it were *shut*, when the tide was gowing back, and the work of the gospel *at a stand* in such a part.

9. That it is not greatest *abilities*, which make undertakings *successful*; it being *in vain*, to rise up early, without the *Lord*.

10. It hath oft been their experience, that in *following* the way of God, his candle did then *shine upon their paths*, the *Spirit* of the Lord was with them, and sensibly poured out: the *withdrawing* whereof hath been no less discernible, while they *turned aside* from him; that they have then been put to bear the burden alone, and found difficulty and despondency of spirit at once growing upon their hand.

11. I may add, what those who are serious in religion have oft tried, that there is no such *help* and *furniture* for going about duties, as a *spiritual frame*, and *nearness* with God: for then light, and counsel, inward freedom, and sweet composure of spirit, have brought most sensible advantage to them: in their greatest, yea, and in their most common undertakings, this hath been very evident.

NINTH instance, is that great promise, we have, Rom. viii. 28. That all things shall work together for good to them

who love God. And Psal. xxv. 10. *All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth, to such as keep his covenant.* I confess, it is not easy sometimes to reconcile GOD's way and this piece of his word together : those who take only an ordinary passing view of providence, cannot well judge, how such things, wherewith oft the godly in their life are exercised, should contribute to their good and advantage ; while nothing would seem more directly cross to the same. But the christian and wise observer can give another account : they know what a sure truth this is, that there is no real jar betwixt the promise and providence of GOD in this matter ; and whatever be the present thoughts, patient waiting hath had cause to say this.

1. When *his way* and *their thoughts* have most differed, in the accomplishment of his word and bringing about their mercy, they have found it was to their *advantage* ; that his choice was always better than theirs ; yea, they have been oft made to confess, that their saddest disappointments therein have tended to their further benefit.

2. That the Lord's *denying* them some outward thing, which they have most desired, they have found (as afterwards hath appeared) was to *grant* them more than their desire ; he hath refused them as it were in an *Ismael*, that he might give them an *Isaac*.

3. They can oft say, they had been *undone*, if they had *not* been undone ; that it was their mercy, the Lord took such a way to cast them in a *fever*, to prevent a *lethargy* ; and by some sharp cross gave them a wound in the *flesh*, to cure and let out some gross impostume in their *soul*, which would have made their case worse.

4. How *greatest shakings* have helped their *further establishment* ; so as they were never more confirmed, than in that about which they have been most perplexed. Yea, they have also found this the Lord's way, to cure their forwardness and misbelief by some further *addition* to their cross : that when they would not believe, he hath caused them to come in upon a greater disadvantage ; while as a small affliction hath made them impatient, a more heavy and pressing trouble hath been their cure, and helped them to keep silence under GOD's hand.

5. That the *growing* of difficulties in their way, and some *further* pressure in the trial, they have found was from the Lord in order to its *removal*, and to the bringing forth of some *greater* good : and that all visible grounds of confidence have been oft broken, but with this advantage in the upshot, that their mercy, they had it more *immediately*

out of GOD's own hand ; yea, that the less *moderation* there was whilst their trial hath come to an extremity, they have found it then upon the turn, and their hope and encouragement oft made to spring up therewith.

6. How the Lord's *deferring* their mercy, which they had oft sought, hath been *indeed* their mercy and advantage, which did always meet them in the season ; yea, they must say, his way is always nearest, and waiting on GOD without making haste, doth truly make the quickest dispatch.

7. Their experience can also witness, how *men's reproach*, and venting their malice that way to ruin their reputation, hath oft been the occasion, ordered by the Lord, to bring forth their further *clearing*, and vindication even by that very mean.

8. How by some sad cross he doth oft *prevent* a *sadder* ; which though strange at first, they have been forced upon after discovery to confess ; the man, who riding in haste to the seaport, to have passage over seas with a ship going then off, fell and broke his leg by the way, which was the saving of his life ; for the ship, and all its passengers, perished in that voyage ; yet this was a bitter astonishing providence to him for the present.

9. How their *loss*, even by some sad slip and failing, in their *spiritual* condition, hath really tended to their further humbling and advantage ; yea, that which brought them under some visible decay, as to the wonted lustre of their christian profession hath helped them to grow more under ground, in the root and substantial of christianity.

10. They can tell how those *steps* of the providence of GOD, which seemed most *cross* to that design he was carrying on, yea, looked like the very crushing of their *hope*, have oft been the very mean which hath wrought most *effectually* to bring about their mercy.

11. I shall add but this, as the christian's witness to the truth of this promise ; that the sharpest *reproofs* have seemed the *wounds of a friend*, and most pressing *straits* made the mean for their further *enlargement* ; how the Lord hath brought them into some dark and plunging trial, which then looked like a fearful pit, that he might bring them out with advantage, *set their feet on a rock*, and *establish their goings* ; yea, that in the hottest furnace, they lost nothing but what they might well spare, even some of their cross.

TENTH instance, is that general promise made to *godliness* and those who make it their serious study, that it shall

be great gain; that verily it shall be well with the righteous, for they shall eat the fruit of their labour, and in keeping of the command there is a great reward. I. Tim. vi. 6. I. Pet. iii. 12, 13. Psal. xix. 11.

This is indeed a great concerning truth; but a truth, which, I am sure, none who did ever make earnest of religion, will call in question. Many convincing experiments hath the christian had thereof through his life: such want not some diary and record, wherein they can cast up the advantage, they have reaped in close following of God and their duty; yea, from most remarkable providences they may oft say, *This I had, because I kept thy precepts*. Now, that this promise hath a large witness, I shall here touch some things, which I may with some confidence say, both in the present and in former times have been proved, and sealed by the saints in their experience.

1. That they never more effectually consulted their good and advantage, than when they did with greatest singleness consult their duty, and least with *flesh and blood*: they did never more truly *seek themselves*, than in the practice of self denial; yea, in what they intended God most, and least their own private interest, they have therein found a very sensible advantage.

2. That a serious endeavour to *walk before God* acceptably, they have found still the *best policy*, even in the *worst of times*; and have found his way then very satisfying, while it was most their study how to please him: yea, they have been obliged to confess, that when the Lord's way was their *choice*, they have found it also their *reward*.

3. They have found more real joy and peace in *withstanding* temptations, than in any thing the temptation *offered*; and in laying their interest *at God's feet*, and their will underneath *his*, more than in all their *carnal enjoyments*. O the taste, and testimony of God's approbation! how sweet a smile is his, in whose countenance heaven lieth!

4. That inward peace and tranquillity of mind, a sweet calm and composure of spirit, doth as really attend a *spiritual frame* and *walk*, as the shadow the body; and their best and most comfortable days, wherein they have truly walked at liberty, have been when their heart was most *subject to the law*, with a single respect to the same.

5. That religion and a spiritual walk is the best friend, even as to a contented and comfortable life here in the

world ; and that they have then most freedom to enjoy *themselves* and their lot with satisfaction, when they most enjoy *God* : yea, that nearness and communion with him tendeth to the sublimating and refining of their natural spirit, and hath been an observable help to their very common abilities and parts.

6. That there is truly a reality in the blessing, which maketh a *small* thing signify *much*, and yield more than greater abundance.

7. That when they give *God* their heart, it is then sweet and matter of satisfaction, to observe his ways ; and the observation is very refreshing, how far the Lord condescends to their *desires*, when they sum them all up in himself, and make him their delight.

8. That the *pleasure* of religion is in the *practice* thereof ; and the way to have religion easy, is to be thoroughly religious. Duty is then sweet, when men do it from an inward principle ; and holiness would be a more pleasant work, yea, a reward to itself, if there were less mixture of hypocrisy.

9. That real *humility*, and walking low in their own eyes, and before *God*, did never lose to them respect and credit from men ; but self abasement doth observably go before lifting up, and true honour followeth such, who least hunt after vain applause from the world.

10. That when they were most faithful to observe and improve a *little*, then for their encouragement *more* hath been added ; and they never wanted matter and motive to be thankful, when opportunities were improved and taken hold of for that end : yea, they have found there is a mercy within a mercy, and some peculiar mercy in every cross, which is only found and brought forth by the exercised serious *improver* of the same.

11. That much sincerity hath also much sense following the same ; secret honesty before *God* hath met them openly before men, and faithfulness in christian freedom purchased them more favour and respect, even from the worst, than when they studied most to please them in a sinful way.

12. That they never saw so clearly the gain and real advantage of godliness, and what a difference there is betwixt those that serve *God*, and those that serve him not, as in a time of *trouble* and strait ; how then tenderness in their former walk, and that which they entertained in the morning, doth now meet them at night, and pay them home with advantage in an hour of temptation.

13. They have been forced to observe, that there is an invisible *guard* about his people in their duty; that the ministry of the angels towards such is no delusion, and have oft been made to wonder how hazard within an hair breadth hath been prevented; relief, and help come as betwixt the bridge and the water; how they have been sensibly preserved amidst greatest dangers, while (as it were) an inhibition hath been served upon these, that they should come near, but not hurt, and only met with them, that they might read their preservation from them.

14. That an enlarged heart doth meet with an enlarged *allowance*; and bearing burden with *others* of the people of God, hath helped to make their *own* private burden the lighter.

15. That real godliness and religion hath as much in hand, as it may be a reward to itself; which beautifieth the soul, and maketh the face and conversation to shine with an observable lustre; that guardeth and preserveth the heart from many vexing crosses, preventeth sad strokes and sorrows, that others are pierced with, who will follow their idols, and the ways of sin, which are bitter in the close.

In a word, this is surely found, that God is the best friend; and when there is peace with him, things without do not offend: but they shall then understand what it is to be *in league with the beasts of the field and stones of the ground*, having a sweet agreement with all the providences and dispensations that come in their way.

V. *That the scripture threatenings, have also a certain accomplishment*, are found to be sad earnest, and do not fall to the ground, the christian can also seal from his experience.

We are not here to understand the threatenings of *vindictive wrath* (from which believers are freed in Christ) but of a *fatherly displeasure*, which because of sin may draw deep, yea, bring forth very dreadful effects, to witness *that it is an evil and bitter thing to depart from God*, and that *their own doings shall chastise them*; and these threatenings of the covenant, *If thy children forsake my law, I will punish their transgression with rods, &c.* (*Psal.* lxxxix. 30.) are sure truths, which want not in every time a performance.

To clear this (ere I speak any thing particularly) I would premise some things to be considered.

1. That the *word* is a perpetual rule, which in every time must take place; and though *affliction* is a piece of the common misery of man, yet doth it not arise out

of the dust, neither fall out at an adventure, but doth oft visibly follow the *tract of sin* (as a sluthound*) pointing at such evils as the cause, by the stroke, and at the truth and fulfilling of the threatenings, written upon both.

2. We should adore his sovereignty, whose way both in the measure and manner of his people's chastisement is so *various*, as that none can infallibly conclude, what he is to do in such a case ; I mean, we are not to *limit* the Lord to such a way and method in his working : yet, this we may assert and firmly conclude, that not only the threatenings of the word have a performance, but men may also have even beforehand some more than probable conjecture, yea, a clear discovery, what *such a case* doth threaten, and what will be the issue of a sinful course, by considering the Lord's *ordinary* procedure, both with themselves and others ; how sin hath very sad effects, and his way in all ages is still *uniform*, agreeing with itself, and with the word.

3. Though a *gracious* state doth surely privilege from wrath and condemnation, yet not from affliction, and sad strokes of divine anger because of sin ; for he taketh vengeance on men's inventions, even when he will spare the inventors.

4. The Lord doth oft contend with *his people* for their folly and miscarriages, *more severely* than with others ; and will not overlook in *them*, that which he passeth by in the *world*, without being a reprovor ; but when light and love and the law will not *hedge up their way*, he will *set briars and thorns* before them, yea, speak by chastisement upon their bones, to *withdraw men from their purpose*.

5. It is known, how very *deep* the holy anger of God may draw against his children, even sometimes to pursue them out of the land of the living, and follow them to the grave, with some remarkable stroke ; yea, it hath made them dreadful examples of judgment in this life, for whom he hath accepted an eternal sacrifice in Christ.

6. I shall add, this is the Lord's blessed end in making out his threatenings against his people, that they should not perish with the world. O ! what a blessed exchange is it, that the flaming *sword*, which once stood to guard the *tree of life*, doth now stand as it were in the way of the saints, to keep them from running into the *paths of death*.

Having premised these things, I shall now instance some *particular evils*, wherewith the godly are ready to be overtaken, which the word doth expressly threaten, and hold

* A dog so called in *Scotland*, that hath an exquisite sense of smelling.

forth the hazard of, both as to outward and spiritual strokes, and give in here the christians' witness from their experience, in all ages, of the truth of these threatenings.

FIRST. *Security and carnal confidence*, which we find the word doth threaten, is one evil wherewith christians are ready to be overtaken; but they do also know by sad experience, what *bitter fruit* this brings forth, and that therein the word falleth not to the ground, which is held forth in *Hos. ii. 1, 9. vii. 9. Isa. xxx. 16, 17.*

First, that a *secure* condition is the usual *forerunner* of some *sad change*; that when they are most *at ease* in a dull and dead temper of spirit, some *sharp* rousing dispensation is upon the back of it; either a *gross sin*, or a *searching cross*, as a thorn in the bed of their security, to *drive them to their feet*.

2. That *seldom reckoning* with conscience, the running on of accounts for some time upon their hand, doth *ravel their case*, unto a sad confusion, and maketh it a bitter and heartless work to retire alone, or within themselves; yea, hath a most direct tendency to a further *hardening*, and real deserting of their duty.

3. That when security and deadness groweth *within*, it quickly maketh them dry up and wither *without*, in the external performance of duty, and in that vigorous lively appearance, which did formerly brighten their walk and carriage before others, so as very bystanders may read the languishing of *grace*, in the dead exercise of their *gifts*.

4. That going about duty with most *confidence in themselves* doth usually give them the most clear discovery of their *weakness*; yea, when they have *least looked* for any cross, they have then been sure to meet with it, with that sad addition, of being a *surprisal* in a secure condition: whereas, on the other hand, they may tell what refreshing disappointments they have got, where some trials have been most feared and looked for.

5. That secure *sporting* with a *temptation* may soon turn to *sad earnest*; they have found it very hard to dance about the fire, and not be burnt: and the temptation, which at a *distance* seemed small, upon a nearer *approach* they have found had more bands on their heart, and was another thing than they could have believed.

6. That the *means*, whereon they have laid *most weight*, they have also found to have given them the saddest *disappointment*: the putting of them in GOD's room, and out of their own place, hath been the way to cause them to miscar-

ry ; yea, to turn their cross. Whereas they have oft seen something *unexpected*, made the mean of their help, that they might know means are *ordered of the Lord*, and are useful, because he maketh them so.

7. Their experience can also witness, that carnal *confidence* despising the trial at a *distance*, is usually punished with carnal *diffidence* and despondency of spirit *under* the same ; one extremity made the punishment of the other, like the hot and cold fits of an ague, which do mutually make one and the other more intense : yea, that their immoderate confidence and expectation of a thing, hath after resolved in as immoderate discouragement at their stroke.

SECOND. The *christian's unwatchfulness* and intermitting in the exercise of that so necessary and commanded duty, we find the word threateneth, and holdeth forth the hazard thereof, *lest ye enter into temptation*, the verifying whereof their experience can also witness. Luk. xxi. 34. 36. Matth. xxvi. 41.

1. That it is not easy to guide their *walk* and conversation, when their guard over the *heart* doth slacken ; but the giving loose reins for a little may make such a sad and large breach, that many, many days will not easily make up ; yea, they do also know, how a sensible withdrawing of the spirit, and drying up their life and liberty, is the usual fruit, which *unwatchfulness* brings forth.

2. That this helpeth to make their sunshines *transient*, and causeth a low ebb after the greatest enlargement, whilst they *do not guard* against their peculiar evils ; and that usually there doth haunt such a condition the swelling of the *flesh* (when the *spirit* is most enlarged) which will soon put them as far behind, as they formerly thought themselves at an advantage.

3. That when once the heart lieth *open*, it is quickly seized on and made a *prey* ; with what a bitter *sting* doth it return, after it hath taken liberty to *wander* ! yea, doth find there is a *swift* progress, that *sin* hath from the *thoughts* to the rolling of it to the *imagination*, and thence to the *affection*, wherewith it is more easy to engage, than to shake this off.

4. That *unwatchfulness* hath oft turned the most special times and opportunities for advantage, to the greatest *loss* ; which, through their neglect of these, hath put them further behind, than they were : it hath turned their *retirement* and solitude, to be their snare ; made the desert worse and more dangerous, than the city ; and made them find, that *vain thoughts*, the following whereof seemeth pleasant to the

mouth, will prove gall and wormwood in the belly ; there being no sadder company, than a man's *spirit* let loose upon itself, whilst they cannot stop that current whereto they had given a vent.

5. Their experience of this can witness that *unwatchfulness* hath an undoubted tendency to *cast off prayer*. How hard is it, in the evening to *retire* to God, whilst the heart is *abroad* all the day ? To be religious in *worship*, when men are not so in their *walk* ; yea, they do find, that this will bring their distemper within, out of doors ; to some disorder, impertinency or passion in their words, or outward communication : a thing, which experience may tell, doth wound the soul, make a sad breach in their peace, and doth quickly overcloud the spirit, and unfit them for communion with God, and going about of spiritual duties.

THIRD. To *restrain prayer, and neglect calling on God, is an evil also which the word doth threaten*, and hold forth the same hazard thereof, as of *unwatchfulness*, lest ye enter into temptation ; yea, that this is even a step to the *casting off of fear*, the christian's experience, from frequent trial can witness. that this scripture threatening is true, *Mat. xxvi. 41. Job xv. 4.*

1. That they have found this the rise, which giveth *life* and *increase* to their prevailing *evils* ; and that corruption then is upon a sensible growth, as the lively exercise of *prayer* begins to be intermitted.

2. That this *weareth out* their spiritual *life*, and bringeth a consumption upon the vital spirits of christianity ; so that those who sometime *flourished*, and kept green, (as by the *scent of water*) that correspondence, which they had with the fountain of their life, while his *dew did lie all night on their branches*, hath through neglect of *prayer* been brought to a poor *shadow* ; so although sometimes the greatness of their loss and distemper hath been hid from themselves, yet might be easily discerned by lookers on.

3. That wearing out of *prayer* and of *delight* therein, will quickly make them *disrelish* any other piece of religion ; put them out of frame to meditate, or to give thanks, or entertain fellowship with the saints ; yea, the more lively and spiritual these are, it maketh them the more a burden and torment to them.

4. That wearing out of this is a strong temptation to a *further forbearance*, and will sensibly wear them out of any sense of their *need* hereof, and make them strangers to themselves and to their own case : so that they shall find, the less they are in this exercise, the further they shall

be indisposed; and the fewer errands they have, the less felt necessity of the same.

5. Their experience can also witness, that *little prayer* maketh a *heavy burden*; doth multiply their straits; and cause their care to grow, as this is abated; they must then bear their burden alone, and with heaviness take counsel within themselves, while they ply not this best tried remedy, to make their requests in all things known to GOD.

FOURTH. We find the word doth threaten defection from the truth, and turning from the way of GOD in a time of trial, as an evil, into which those that are kept by grace from final apostacy, may yet through the violence of a temptation fall. *Jerem. ix. 13, 15. Psalm lxxxix. 30, 32. Jos. viii. 11.* and their sad experience can witness the truth of the scripture threatenings concerning this also, while they have found,

1. That in *one day* they may adventure on that, which through most of their life they have not got over, but it hath made them go with their back bowed down to the grave: that their giving the Lord's work a *wrong touch*, is one of those things which doth scarcely leave them all their time; but, beyond other sins, they have found this still come up with a bitter and heavy reflection; yea, in the evening of their life they have found this so sore on their spirit, that it could not lie hid or silent, but they were forced to witness their sense of it before the world, ere they could obtain any ease.

2. That this the Lord doth usually meet, with some *sharp* and *public reproof*, even before men; that though he pardon his people, yea, give some sensible intimation thereof to their souls, yet he hath not passed them, as to some visible mark of his displeasure, because of such a thing.

3. They see, that a *crooked* and *uncleanly way* proves not the mean of *extricating* them out of trouble; but their straits have been made to *grow* therewith; yea, they have found, that which they eschewed in God's way, hath more sadly accosted them in another rod; and that there is a thick dreg in the bottom of the cup, which maketh it worse to drink thereof at the close, than at the beginning.

4. That it is not *easy* to make a *stand* in turning aside from the way of GOD, when once they are engaged; a retrograde motion is very violent, and yielding in a little will bring with it some necessity of going further, as a judicial stroke.

5. That foregoing of some clear *opportunity*, to give a testimony for the truth, when called thereto, hath turned to be their *judgment*, that they should not have further *access*, or be made useful *that way*; a thing truly obvious to such as are wise to observe the judgments of God in their time; yea, likewise that public backsliding doth oft visibly wear men out of personal tenderness.

FIFTH. Unsubduedness of spirit, and want of mortification to outward things, the word doth clearly threaten, and hold out its hazard; the accomplishment whereof christians' experience can witness. Rom. viii. 6, 7.

1. That God hath oft turned their *idol* to be their *cross*; put a mark of his jealousy on their dearest things, when once they put them in his room; yea, frequent observation of the Lord's way, both with themselves and others, doth shew, if they would be quit of a thing, they may set their heart immoderately on it; such eagerness and exorbitancy of affection being a sure presage, it shall either be their judgment, or sorrow, or cease to be.

2. That *outward* things did never *yield less*, than whilst they *pressed* them *most*: that when they are eager in pursuit of the world, and satisfaction there, their spirits are sensibly hurried with many perturbations; so that they must say, that which keepeth them from enjoying of God, doth also hinder the comfortable enjoying of *themselves*.

3. They have found, that slow advance in the work of *mortification*, hath at last *doubled* their *smart*; and been the procuring cause of some very sharp cure, when the disease did come to that height, that a small and ordinary potion could not do the turn.

4. That *immoderate desire* and pressing after an outward thing, they have sometime got *answered*, but therewith a sharp *reproof* from the Lord; yea, usually have found small satisfaction in their enjoying that, about which they were so unsober in their pursuit. *Give me children, or else I die*, said *Rachel*; she obtained children, and she died in bringing one of them forth.

5. Their experience can also witness, how *overcaring anxiety* hath oft caused things to thrive *worse* under their hand; whilst they found never a more *satisfying issue* in a particular, than by a quiet submissive *dependence* on the Lord for the same.

SIXTH. The doing violence to light, and sinning against conscience, as it is clearly threatened in the word, so likewise the sad effects thereof have been clearly witnessed, in all ages. Prov. xxix. 1. Psal. lxxxi. 11, 12.

1. What a direct tendency *this* hath to the further *darkening* of their light, and to a judicial *hardening*; and that reproofs not entertained, do usually become less frequent, yea, less pungent and searching; their heart then doth not so easily smite them, and put tears in their eye, as sometimes a word, or secret rebuke of the conscience, would have done; so as they can now digest greater things, who would sometimes have stood at that which comparatively was very small.

2. That when they would not read their *bosom distemper*, which both by the word and conscience was pointed out, *others* have got leave to read the same written on their *forehead*; and the shifting off of discovered guilt, and of all serious endeavour to get the quarrel taken up in *secret*, betwixt God and them, hath brought the matter at last to some *public* hearing, even before the generation.

3. That their *darkening* of their *light* upon some *private* interest, while they would again and again inquire if such a thing be warrantable, concerning which the Lord had once cleared their mind, is a most *perilous* thing; yea, hath got an answer according to the *idol of their heart*, and their choice made to be their judgment.

I shall but add, what bitter and sad experience can tell, how dreadful it is, to give the *conscience* a blow, which is more easily hurt than healed; that deliberate, adventuring on the occasion of a temptation, when they would go to the *high priest's hall*, without warrant or a call, hath cost them dear; and they have found that *bold sinning* doth afterward make *faint believing*.

I know, it is by serious and experienced christians, and by these only, that this argument in the meaning thereof can be reached; and it is sure, such will not debate the same, who know the truth, and have it dwelling in them, and on another ground than report, are established in its certainty. For these can witness, what sweet comforting hours they have had with *Jesus Christ*, in a sad uncomfortable time; that he hath both spoken, and himself also hath done it; and such must therefore seal his word and the truth thereof, because he hath sealed it on their heart; yea, doth so surely know, *it is God who worketh all their works in them*, that with their last words and dying breath they have confidence to assert this, and commend that excellent study of godliness to others.

I know, that with a great many of the world this grave convincing argument of experience hath no weight; for *strangers intermeddle not with that joy*, and therefore fancy it a pure fiction, as the only expedient and preservative

to their heart from the horror and inexpressible torment, which must seize on them, if the certainty and necessity of godliness were granted; these scoff at this excellent thing, as some vain conceit or distemper, because they would have it so. But with such I must here crave a serious and free communing; yea, in so great and interesting a business must obtest, that they would not shut their eyes, but allow reason that weight, they would do in any other case. O what do you allege, on what ground do you reject this great witness of experience? If you deny it, because you have not *found* it, do not others assert this, because they *surely know* it? And their assertion hath these two advantages; (1.) that they once had the *same* sentiment and opinion with *you*, which now they reflect on with much *horror*. (2.) The reality of its *effects* on them proves both the reality of the cause, and the excellency thereof. And now if these be indeed serious, and their testimony true, whom you thus challenge, are you not in a sad and dreadful case; since you cannot think to lodge together at night, or that your interest and theirs will meet in another world, which hath been so very opposite here by the way! You must surely part with these at death, and land at some other port, to whom all your life you have walked so cross! O sit but with yourselves alone, and consider this; you *bate* serious religion, and therefore you *reproach* it; will you take such a revenge on yourselves, 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 christian's experience; while there you have so *great a cloud of witnesses*, who bear that same testimony; but it is on yourself 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 falsehood, 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 dementated ; for it were a strange and 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 human 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 alleged, 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 *human* testimony can allow no debate, which in this present case must be undeniable ; 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 them-

selves, 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 the 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 hindrance 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 hatred and prejudice against them, that it hath a convincing savour of humility? yea, their 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 pressed 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 smothered within, which gets no vent, than appears without ? 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 intolerable 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 itself, 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 short coming in the study of godliness, have not these complaints been still to commend *religion*, and the excel-

lency 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 *yourselves*; 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 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 such a thing as serious godliness, the world could never have known how to personate 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 to the world and ordinary observers, if there be not even to them, some discernible *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* does commend itself to men's 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 its 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* does witness the truth of religion, of whom it must be said (*even their enemies being judges*) their being serious in that way and choice thereof, must be *for itself*, and hath no outward design or interest, to which it can be subservient, whilst in this oft they run the greatest hazard, and are rendered a prey to others ? O must it not be a marvellous thing, which hath that dominion over the souls, to teach men the practice of *selfdenial* ; not only to quit, but to cheerfully quit their nearest interest to smile on the spoilers, to rejoice in their sufferings 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 poison 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 extremes 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 suited 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 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, whatever 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 *undetermined 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 *horrid* 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 human 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 human nature, and level it even with the beasts ? (6.) Whilst you scoff at serious religion, I dare appeal to yourselves, if in your *retirements* when you have any sober reflections, you are not forced 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, *this 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 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 does enforce on men the persuasion of this by a more near and convincing discovery, than 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 souls 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 believinng 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 to leap within for joy; and is there *enough* 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 ourselves 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 awe 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 dependence, that without him they cannot 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 doth 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 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 forced to look with some astonishment. One christian doth admire this in another ; and the more it shews itself, 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 persecutors. Now it is the truth and reality of this excellent thing, that this argument does 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 entered him into a new world, and translated him from a state of darkness unto a marvellous light, causeth the soul to breathe 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 linked 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 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 does 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 does not only witness the reality of grace in its acting and exercise (which in this former section is specially pointed at) but does 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 suited 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 quickening 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 that far exceeds 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 *transformed 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, and 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 does sometime dazzle 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 ΕΥΦΡΑ, as though 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 does indeed rise above *Archimedes'* reach, and such who ever followed the search of nature in their most exact and subtile inquiry. O blessed souls, who have found it! for they have found a *treasure*; the thoughts 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 bystanders 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 and 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 does 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 concernments, is not this a very great thing?

that poor *man*, now upon the *earth*, hath such a passage to *heaven*, and 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 attained, yea, that it were but in one part of the earth, should we not 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 returned again; and under some *deliquium*, that by *wrestling* they have at last *prevailed*; 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 is 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 does 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 does 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 *bidden part* cause them to understand wisdom. There is sometime also 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 and season, that their *mercy*, though great in itself, hath not so much taken them up, as the *way* how it is brought about, and their discovery of the immediate *band 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* and *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 debate ; for the *soul* hath its feeling and taste, as sure as the body ; and hath a savour and 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* concerned, does 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 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, and 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 marvelously 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 *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 those 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 and 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 concernments 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 public 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 inexpressible 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.

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 *threatenings* 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 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 express, 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. xxx. 11. Mat. xvi. 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.

1. 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 lie, 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, *vicisti tandem, 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 destroyed.* 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*, than *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 *Phœnix*, and we know no other, of whom that can be said. Hath she not borne out those universal deluges, which did like an inundation go over her head, of idolatry and paganism in the

first times, and antichristianism and 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 church's 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 herself because they *were not*, yet, we may say she never wanted an offspring 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.

3. 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 trophy 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 borne 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 discernible therein: while it is so clear, (1.) That no interest, or party had ever such *ad-*

versaries, as the church, against whom the powers of the 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 whatever private quarrels men have had among themselves, yet it hath not hindered 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 *depts 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 reached 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* cried 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 grave's 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 en-

tainment 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 tossed and hurried by *antichrist* into the wilderness, an adversary more cruel than any that had gone before, where the *dragon* watched 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. lxxxix. 25. ii. 8. Isa. xlii. 4. liv. 3.*

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 tro-

phies. Hath not the gospel, like 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 tide 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 *Africa*, its great barren deserts, or scorching heat, hinder the gospel's making a visit thither? No, it was once a fertile soil, 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 designed 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 offspring* 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 tides of the gospel? May we not say, that truth is 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 offspring. *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 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 ?

5. We find the *isles*, 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 *Thule*, 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 and 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 eastern, and western empire, her old enemies : and do we not this day see her conquest advancing on the ruins of *antichrist*, her last, and greatest adversary !

6. 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 church's 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 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 emperor 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 church's 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 savage and barbarous, cause *the lion to lie down with the lamb*, and ever 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 upon 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 human *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, *Zech. xii. 10. Joh. xiv. 17. Isa. lix. 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 christian's *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 bystanders, such who never knew any saving work of the Spirit, but live in these parts where the ordinances are dispensed with 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 savour 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 otherwise 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 suitably dispensed to the various employments, and different pieces of service, the church doth call for? how are they thus suited 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 to the weary; to some the face of a lion is given, when a heroic 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, marvellously 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 outpourings of the Spirit* do also witness this truth; which at some special times, when the church's necessity requireth it, have been most discernible. When the Lord sendeth forth his servants about a more than 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 than 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 undeniable, 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 discernible, that 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 another 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 sometimes made to stand before the ministry of the word, like men standing at the bar, upon life and death, before a judge whose authority they durst not decline!

4. It is very discernible, 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 straitening of their gift, but also in power and life. Is it not seen, with what liberty these do sometimes *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 savour 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 ages so sensibly felt, yea, even obvious to the worst of men!

5. It is also clear, that wherever 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 its 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, 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 outpouring 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 otherwise 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 eyes 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, 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 selfdenial ; 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 savour of *the Spirit*, to the very discerning of bystanders ; 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.* xviii. 47, 48. 50. *Ps.* xxii. 4, 5. *Is.* liv. 17. *Is.* li. 23.

It is true, this promise hath its bounds, limits, and provisos, 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 jar 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 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 extreme 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 discernible, 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, 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* in 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 exigencies 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 and obvious remarks therein, that it was a convincing return of prayer and wrestling, with a further addition of some new and singular mercy therewith, yea, some eminent act of judgment upon her adversaries.

4. The greatest *advantages and victories*, which men have got over the church 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. xxiii. 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 employed 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 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 discernible 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 strengtheneth 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 noonday, 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 discernible, and some promising appearance from the present disposition and temper of the godly in that time (though 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 sore *rod* on the people of God, yea, *a terror in the land of the 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. viii. 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, 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 *Messiah's* 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 judgment 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 judgment of GOD on the Jews, to make way for a further enlargement to the gentile church; a *Nero* and *Domitian* to help forward the church's suffering, and a *Constantine* to give her some rest, after so long and sore an assault; and at last, the *Roman* empire mouldered 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 supreme 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 *Hushai* 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 judgment 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, 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 sore *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 sore exacting upon the church, hath *kindly wrought* towards her relief and enlargement; her *meat* hath been oft brought even out of the *caier*, by means most destructive thereto; and a *sword* must pierce the church's heart, that the *thoughts of many* may be discovered; a time of *persecution* must help to cure the *divisions* amongst the godly, 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 blessed way, to keep her from being undone.

The Second Branch, concerns those *scripture threatenings*, 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, and 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 threateneth.

I touched a little some scripture threatenings, 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 threatenings of the word. This is indeed manifest, that the greatest promises made to a people, we find backed with saddest threatenings ; 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.

Now to clear this grave truth a little, how those threatenings 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.

1. We find the *threatenings of the word do point at the time of a people's judgment*. 1 *Thes.* ii. 16. *Rev.* xiv. 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 anti-christ, 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, 1. 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 than ordinary *impression* of judgment upon the spirits of the *godly*, and the hiding of many of them in the *grave*; which, as threatening presages, 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* i. 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.* xvii. 15. Also departing from GOD, and his way; *For this the land shall be desolate*, as in *Ferem.* ix. 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.* xii. 10.

Now to evidence the accomplishment hereof, I shall point at some things most obvious to the observation 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.

1. 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 public 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 waste, and a ruinous heap; yea, houses great and fair, to be without inhabitants; so as men have with astonishment inquired, *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 discernible in the punishment of such sins, because of a very clear *resemblance* betwixt them, and the stroke; 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 *accession* to such sins; these to whom he hath given their soul for a prey, have yet got a sore 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 *Solomon*. *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 threatened in the word, *Rev. iii. 15, 16. 2 Thess. ii. 10, 11*. And truly we must say, they have not fallen to the ground in any age, without an accomplishment, as frequent ob.

ervation can witness. 1. 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 sit their day while the tide did flow; 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 reprovor* to such; yea, even saith, *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 connection 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*, and the exe-

ention 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 came 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 recompense tribulation to such*, and *plead with her oppressors*: the accomplishment whereof hath been truly manifest, yea, to the observation even of the world. *Isa. x. 5. 2 Thes. i. 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 conspicuous, 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, *Yehu* 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 sore 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 downcasting 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. xvii. 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 *discernible 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 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 into 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. ii. 3, 4.*

The accomplishment whereof hath in all ages been very discernible. *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 threatened 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 profanest 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 churchmen 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.

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 little further follow this argument, *How this also hath a manifold accomplishment, even in these most strange and dark passages of providence, wherewith 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 weighed in the balance of the the sanctuary, where we may have a satisfying look, and resolution of these things, which otherwise 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 clotheth 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* iv. 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 to bring forth, for ye shall go to Babylon, and there be delivered:* but sorest 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 *Esther*, 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 presage of a good harvest.

2. *The sore interruptions which a people's endeavours 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 insuperable 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 into the scripture with this, and we will find, 1. There is a lively portrait 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 turning 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 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 express call for building of the temple, yet, how great, and frequent interruptions did they find, sometimes environed with difficulties, *Zech. iv. 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 *nonplus*, 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 began to flourish, success following the gospel, did not a sad interruption, and scattering follow. *Acts viii.* 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. iii. 4.* proveth a searching and trying time which 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 inquiry 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 we take it into 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. xlv. 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 try 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 public 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, and 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 case may have this observable in it, that it had longer day, and 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 daybreak 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 try 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 church's 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, *Blessed 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. iii. 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 *Asbur* 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 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. i. 32. the tabernacles of the robbers prosper, Job xii. 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. iii. 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. xiii. 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 counsellors 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 the brutish man knoweth not, nor fools lay it to heart for what the wicked do oft spring, and flourish. I would add Israel's falling before Benjamin, it was an astonishing like providence; and Habakkuk was put to a stand with such a thing, why the Lord looked on, while the wicked devoured the righteous. Yea, Joshua 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. xxxii. 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 battle 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 : *Isa. xxx. 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*, 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 lie 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 Israel's trial in Egypt ; and after under the captivity, three hundred and ninety days must the church lie on her left side. O how many a sad day and wearisome night was there in that word seventy 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. xl. 27. My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment passed 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. 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 *libertinism* under a very specious pretext spring up. Thus we find the *anabaptist*, and *anti-nomian* 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 into 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 proveth more dangerous to the church. 2. That the most dreadful errors 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 ; 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 hardened.

9. *The abounding of much error and heresy, 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 trials 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 subtle undermining, under the pretext of liberty, with plausible insinuations ? so that we must say, not only as to the matter, but with all these discernible 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 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 discernible *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 corrupteth 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? *Jocl. ii. 29.* We may there likewise see, how this giveth the world an alarm, maketh the *kings and great men of the earth run together*, to hinder the rising of Christ's kingdom, *Psal. ii. 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 children: wherein our blessed Lord Jesus is express, *Matth. x. 34. I come not to send peace on 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. iii. 19. Not many wise according to the flesh,* comparatively with those 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 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 ap-

pear, 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 balance 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. ii. 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. viii. 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 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,* 1. 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 blessed meaning and intent 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 inquiry, 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, whether necessary, free, or contingent, not violencing them, or otherwise 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 to 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 men's 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 man's sword in the battle, 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 and absolute, the heart and will of man ! Must not the crowing of the cock, and the soldier's dividing of Christ's garments fall out for an accomplishment of the *scripture* ? And though it was *at a venture*, that that man drew the bow, which sent *Abab* to his grave, yet it was no *chance* did direct the arrow between the very joints of his armour. 4. Amidst the various emergents and hazards of men's *life*, may not experience tell, that surely things contingent are not abandoned to *fortune*, but there is a *Providence*, which doth *number our hairs*, and 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 surprised with some remarkable cast of mercy. 5. Is it not easy to discern, how many accidents which seem most casual, yet by no human prudence or industry can be prevented, but are observably brought about and guided to fulfil the *threatenings* of the word on *ungodly* men ! How was *Sisera* led by other places, into the house of *Jael* ! 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 poison*, when prejudices are now so universally 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 ourselves, 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 *inquire 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 brought 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 thoughts 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 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, and shut the womb? saith thy God. Isa. lxvi. 9.* But let us go into the scripture, and there inquire concerning this, and we will find, 1. How the *church* and the *world*, in that interest of their joy and grief, as well as other interests, are stated in a most direct opposition. *Jok. xvi. 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 case 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! *Rev. xi. 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 pained, 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 threatened ruin; for this seemed 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. i. 16, 17.* But if such a providence 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 sorest 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 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 marvellous 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 church's 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 sore and universal a stroke to *appear in his glory.* *Psa. cii. 16.* and thus *raise his church* with an unspeakable advantage by such a *supposed 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 inquire about this at the scripture, we shall find also some remarkable *proportion*, that the turning again of the church's captivity hath to her former *bondage*. Read *Isa.* xlix. 19, 20. and lv. 13. *Jer.* xxxi. 59. 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. *Isa.* lxvi. 10. Is it not such an hour sometime with the church, that a refreshing report is no where to be heard, but the tidings of the next day add more grief to the former day's 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. *Isa.* li. 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 inquire 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 the 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 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 *watch 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. viii. 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 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. xi. 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 discernible 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 *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 breathes, 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 longbreathing 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 therinto, 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 breasts of consolation. Are there not most sweet refreshing truths there, which the godly cannot reach so near and 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 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 stroke on *Babylon*, and those solemn espousals 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 *battle 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 ourselves, 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. That there is a time of a people's *espousals* to the Lord, and then the *kindness of their youth* and a remarkable *time of love* is seen. *Jer. xxi.* 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. iii.* 2. when very sore spent in her *life* ; yea, this decay oft upon such an insensible 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 into the world,* saith Christ, *Job. ix. 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.* *Jude 4.* and thus essay an *agreement betwixt light and darkness.* O what a dreadful poison 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 native tendency is to *humble* and abase, being thus impoisoned does 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 *Melancton* 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 does 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. x. 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 brought to a *small remnant to take root downward, and bring forth fruit upward*, *Is. xxxvii. 31*. It would seem a strange connection, but not strange to the grace of God, *Ps. cii.* that *the time of his favouring 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 deathlike 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 make 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; and herein must his promise and his people's praise 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, *Ps. cxxvi.* 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 ourselves*; 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 habeantur*. I confess this may cause wonder, (if we consider for what end the great lawgiver 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, and it is strange these should expect from others homage and 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 *framed into a law*. *Psal. xciv. 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. i. 5.* The world is not yet cured of that *madness*, of which the prophet speaks with amazement, *Psal. ii. 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 lawgiver. *Luke xxi. 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 *anti-christ* ; yet is this nothing else, but what the scripture hath foretold. *Rev. xvii.* 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 soever it be in itself, that those who should *execute judgment for 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 scriptures 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 plucked 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. v. 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 stroke of a divine hand; that when there is *no reprovor* 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 *vexes 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 (*Neb. ix. 36.*) the 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 *Psal. ii. 9.* and *xciii. 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 preeminence*) *wound the head over many countries*, 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 and 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 through 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 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 does 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 Lawgiver, 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 human 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, and then instead of being shaken or confounded 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. iv. 14.* yea, a warning given of those who *handle the word deceitfully*, *2 Cor. iv. 2.* by accommodat- ing 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. iii.* which is indeed to oppose the truth against itself, and suit it to their bias, that they may salve such a visible opposition betwixt them and themselves in their way and practice. And thus whatever *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. ii. 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 candour 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 does most convincingly fulfil and verify 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. xiii. 9.* But that we study to *know and be persuaded of the truth*, that they quiet and support the soul, though we should be left alone in following duty. *The testimony of God is sure*, and immoveable; 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. *Ps. cxxv. 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 those who walk under a cover than any other party; and here is the *counsel of the Lord* shewed, that when a piercing trial comes, which will go through 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 bias that way, how hard is it to join in a familiar correspondence with the adversaries of the truth without joining in some measure with their way; yea, it is seen, these usually are more ensnared, than the adverse party by any such tampering are bettered. It is a sad truth, which is said of *Ephraim*, *strangers devoured his strength, yet he knew it not*. *Hos. vii. 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 stroke on others, whilst they used 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 sore 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 than sword, famine or pestilence, against a nation. It is a strange ground, which is given of the *departure* of those *from the faith*, who were once in repute of the church, yea, of the breaking out of *antichrist* in the world, *2 Thes. ii. 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* lies, this is a remark, though sad, which seldom fails, that the greatest endowments and gifts, where men

are swelled and lifted up therewith, have a more easy and native bias *against* the truth, than *for* it, and threatens the church's hazard, more than any advantage the exercise of these gifts can promise ; and the greater *repute* men walk under, where humility keeps not low, lays them the more near some humbling stroke, to bring them low, ere they go off the stage, *that no flesh may glory in his presence*, 1 Cor. i. 26. We must say, the greatest *heroes* 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 master's 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 of being *serious and tender*, yea, have thus personated 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 raised 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 hand* marvellously oft seen in *rending that veil*, 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 and unspotted way, or the reality of godliness, if we will but seriously inquire 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. iii. 5. *profess to know God, being abominable, disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.* Tit. i. 16. Yea, will *come in sheep's 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 persecutors entered the stage as friends: 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.) Does not this blessed record of the scripture shew, with what *singular art* and *advantage* such may act that part, and with *Jehu* inquire, *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.* Isa. xlviii. 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 *Machiavel*, 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.) Does the scripture *allow* or *flatter any in such a way*? You cannot there have one line for its encouragement: but whilst human law does not reach this, divine law most severely threatens, *Job* viii. 13. &c. *Matth.* vii. 15. &c. And there you may see it in its own colour, how horrid a thing it is, which the more near it does approach religion (that is so excellent and lovely in itself) this false shew thereof is the more hateful and loathsome. Yea, even those who comply with it in *themselves*, are made to loathe it in *others*, which is in the highest measure a falsehood and 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 *Job*.ii. 29. (6.) Is not that *horrid and black roll* mentioned by the apostle, 1 *Tim.* ii. 3. clasped 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 *jars* and *divisions*, which are so frequent in the *church* of Christ, may seem very strange, and be the cause of stumbling and 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 instead 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. Though 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. xv. 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 xv.*) 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 prophesy in 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 itself and desirable, must be severely qualified with a respect to *holiness*. Heb. xii. 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 blessed *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 heroic practice of the apostle (*Gal. ii. 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*, and were therefore *to be noted* (*Rom. xvi. 17.*) it was *those 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, though for this they should be *men of contention* and looked 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. *Eph. iv. 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 sore upon his people, than the hand of men; and does 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. xi. 16.* And with another party the church might debate, yea, hold her own with her greatest adversaries: But oh! it is 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, and 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. xvii. 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. xxx. 14, 16.* *that the Lord seemed 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. lxiii. 10.* that they found *the Lord turned to be their enemy,* and in an immediate way seem to *fight against them.* (2.) Does 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 i. and ii.* 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. iv. 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. O 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 bias, and 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. ii. 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. i. 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 *public* lot of the church in suffering times, and the *private* ease 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. i. 2.* where you find *the sword abroad devouring*, a time of public judgment, and then it was *at home also as death* : and in v. 16. 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 does more imbitter the rod, which put *David* to that cry, *Psal. xxxix. 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 a *couching underneath their burden*, it is not then strange though that sad *wo*, *Amos vi. 6.* do so far reach them, as their personal *ease* makes them *forget the affliction of Joseph*. For thus the righteous GOD, suits their stroke to the sin ; and keeps such a proportion, that a light burden of the care of the *church* should make their care *otherwise* 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 ii. 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 hardening 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, and 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. ix. 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 does 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. xxii.* and those *who will not hearken* and *will have none of him*, should be delivered up to *the lusts of their own heart*. *Ps. lxxxii. 11.* We see in what a measure *Pharaoh* was *hardened of the Lord*, which was a plague worse than the oth-

er ten : But we find, *Exod.* vi. 34. that *Pharaoh* hardened his own heart ; and thus was a stroke suited to such a resolute resisting of light. (2.) Does not the scripture shew the marvellous conveyance of this judgment, *Is.* vi. 6. how this sad sentence is more immediately passed on the soul ; yea, by those most singular means, the *word* and *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 in as 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.* xxviii. 22. Yea, such who with these men of *Sodom* would *grope after the door*, and 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 again smitten them ; who, instead 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, *Acts* vii. 57. that when they *saw the face* of *Stephen* *shine*, and looked steadfastly thereon, they did *thent* 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, and pursue it wherein they have seen their fathers fail, 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 hands 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 lie near *sudden destruction*, and a blow that is irrecoverable, who have *hardened themselves under frequent reproofs*. (*Prov.*

xxix.) It is known, what *Pharaoh's* last rebuke was, after he had rejected many ; it stands upon public 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 does 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. vii. 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 differ betwixt one and another. *Josiah* died in *peace*, as was promised, *2 Kings xxii. 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 *Ps. i. 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. ix.* 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 inquire at the scripture; and it will shew, (1.) It was no less strange to the prophet *Jeremiah*, xii. *They prosper, and have taken root.* Did it not amaze that blessed man, *Ps. lxxiii.* that not only *their eyes stand out with fatness*, but *they have no bands in their death!* But (2.) Is not the way of 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, *Eccl. viii. 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. lii. 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.*

THE THIRD ARGUMENT

FOR the scripture's 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 very 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 sure, 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 a public witness from *ungodly* men, even the 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 interesting 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 the 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. I shall first hold forth this truth, that *man is surely fallen from that excellent estate wherein once he was formed*, (*Rom. v. 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 *beathens* some glance at this? The evidence whereof they could not altogether shun.

It is true, the cause and 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 inhesion; 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 and diseased, and 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 inquiry, *whence* such a thing is, or whether there can be a *recovery* of so sad and

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 fabric*, 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 another 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 ; 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* ΚΟΙΝΑΙ ΕΝΝΟΙΑΙ, which we may see are no ways impressed 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 witness, 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 discernible ? 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 ; unsatiable 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 *good* he wanteth, and the *evil* he is subject to. Is there any of the creatures subject to such outward misery and 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 *sore travel* is appointed to man ; at how much toil he is for an outward subsistence ; 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 and 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 portrait 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, *John* iii. 3, 6. *Eph.* ii. 1, 5. *Colos.* iii. 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 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 professed 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 choicer 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 the value of *outward* things, as well as others, *grace* hath reached. Can the atheists object, *Do any of the rulers, or rabbies 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, than some who are most serious in the matter of religion. (6.) Hath not this change been made discernible 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 wayfaring 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 itself 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 falleth 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 passed by. O doth not this witness the grace of GOD, and sovereignty thereof! (10.) Is not this change oft discernible 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 an 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 *choose* 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 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 mar-

vellous, 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, does witness an irresistible, efficacious power with the *word*, that *converteth the soul, enlightens the eye, and maketh wise the simple*, *Psal. xix. 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 does 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.) 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 greatest *earnest*, and no counterfeit ? and surely 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 ; *Matthew*, 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 discernible 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 does 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 bystanders 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 does also reach men in their *old age*, who have been long rooted and inured to the world, who have sat out many a call, in their resisting the gospel ;

yet is it not 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 public *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, and 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 alleged; 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 humour and disposition, is made discernible. Yea, must it not be something above *moral swasion*, or any persuasives of human eloquence, since here *the foolishness of preaching* is found more effectual, than any such way? Yea, it is seen how the most sublime and polished 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 does 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 excel-

lent 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 human 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 began to be serious in the way of the Lord.

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 profane, a horrid swearer, and much accustomed to mock at holiness, and those 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 *poperly*: 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 divers *months*; yea, these assaults in the pangs of the new birth were such, that it might have been said, *Ut nec color, nec sensus, nec sanguis superesset*. But at last a blessed sunshine brake out, and he after to his old age proved a burning and shining light. Now besides these two great men, I think it not unsuitable (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 and *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 sore wrestling, a most kindly word of *repentance* did appear, 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. *1 John i. 3. Phil. iii. 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 reckoning, 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 worst 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 unbiassed, 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 discernible 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 so mad as to quit their former pleasures, and choose 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. xii. 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, through 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 itself, 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 discernible 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 *hate* 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 scarecrow and terror to the profane, 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, 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 *yield 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 metal, 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 *enticements* of carnal gain and pleasure, which to many may seem a wonder : as the popish party did once

say of *Luther*, *Bestia hæc 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.

FIFTH. 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.* ix. 9. *Is.* li. 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 king's 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 proveth; 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 extreme 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 whether 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 sorest dash, help to strengthen others, justify GOD's way, and that tender 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 *timorous*, yet when called to *suffer for the truth*, have without the least appearance of discouragement, showed an invincible *resolution*, and not only their own fears, but the expectations of others have a marvellous disappointment ! O is there not there a visible fulfilling of the scripture, that *shaking reeds* should be made to *stand*, where strongest *cedars* have bowed ; yea, some of very mean and ordinary parts have been so discernibly 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*, 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* resolution of a natural spirit in death and suffering, and that joy and confidence of a christian, which hath then showed the composure and tranquillity 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. ii. 9. is a thing obvious even to the world, which they must needs confess, both from its 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 whether he will, or not ? wherewith he would gladly be at peace ; but amidst his greatest mirth and prosperity this doth mingle his wine 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 lie ; yea, bewray to bystanders, whether they will or not, some secret trouble, and sore 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, another 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 presage 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 par-

ticularly 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 they are even persecuting the saints 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 passed 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 passed 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.

This is a great truth, and 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 itself*, 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, and passes sentence, yea, in some measure puts that in execution, and can make hell begin there, by an inexpressible 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 and rule over him ? For it is sure, the conscience in all its actings 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, does 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, whether this power hath not some access to overawe men, even without any visible awe 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 does 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 actings 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 *extremes*, 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 wakened, 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 noise, by some violent deep stroke! (8.) Are not these *sudden* unlooked for *outbreakings* 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*, does both declare this, and that impression they have upon them of a deity. (9.) How marvellous a *confidence* and *support* does 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 *insupportable*; 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. *Ps.* lviii. 11. *Is.* iii. 10. It is true, that the christian's 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 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 recompense 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, and 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 human 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 men's 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 *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 *feast* in a *good conscience*, how little soever they partake of the world ? that well doing, and the practice 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 falsehood, 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 sore 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 discernible.

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 discernible 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 out-run such who were once before them. Yea, it is truly seen, how grace helpeth men's gifts, doth raise and sublimiate their spirits, above that which once they were.

7. Doth not the Lord put some *visible difference* oft 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*, and 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 and 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 names* 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.

EIGHTH. That verily there is a God who judgeth in the earth, Ps. lviii. 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 have a little touched this in the second argument how the accomplishing of scripture threatenings 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 as-ize 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 acknowledgment, 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 discernible 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 by a divine hand*. We may say, time could never yet wear out the observation of this truth, through the world: and though many things may be received and credited, which not having a sure ground do quickly vanish, (it being truth's privilege still to outlive falsehood) yet it is sure, how in the darkest parts of the earth; this hath been still noticed with a special remark, and 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 stately sound 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 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 than 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 otherwise looked most probable ; how remarkably such are confounded, even in the use of their ordinary abilities, and their heart and 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, and 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 axe 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 countries in a small time! Do not these tell aloud to the world that they come not unsend, 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 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 discernible 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 *Adonibezeck*; 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 paid 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 hunt after 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 *treacherous* and deceitful men are thus dealt with by others, yea, children who have been *undutiful* to their parents, have from theirs met with the same recompense.
- (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 those 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 *joined* 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 discernible thereon, since they had hand in some gross acts of *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 insensible 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 public use, hath caused a visible waste and consumption in their own estate. (5.) That men's asking counsel from the *devil*, and turning to that quarter for their help, doth usually re-

solve in a sad and *tragic* 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*, whatever 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 ; and 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 an extraordinary way ? while it is seen, (1.) By what *strange unexpected means* these have been brought forth ; such an astonishing affliction, and concurrence of things therein, as hath forced not only lookers on to 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 public 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 tried 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 *itself* ? 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 *cries* of many *dying* men, who have most sported

with sin in their life; that may tell standers 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* ii. 30. *Luke* xxi. 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 puni-turus est gentem et urbem, prodigiis, id solet significare.* And *Lucan* could tell what went before the Roman's civil wars, — *Superique minaces prodigiis terras implerunt.* 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, 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.* vi. 12. *Rev.* xx. 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 and 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 itself 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 an interesting 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?

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 public in their appearance under such names of *fairies* 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 public 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, wherewith some are visibly driven, in their acting with such an unsatiable 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!

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 cannot 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 itself, whether 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. iv. 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 itself. 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 bondwoman, 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 itself, even in those who are otherwise noted for a *calm* and peaceable disposition, while once they begin to be *scorched* 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 appearance 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. From what a *strong inclination*, and *inward* principle, doth the world thus act in its opposition to the church and followers of GOD? whilst 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 each 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 stepmother; while on the other hand it is clear, that professors turning *loose*, and running to an *excess of riot* with others, will cause their old adversaries to be 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. viii. 20. Eccl. ii. 11.*) is a piece of the scripture, in such great letters written forth to the view of men, that none can be strangers thereto.

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 public 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 sorest 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 politic 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 Seges est ubi Troja fuit*; the ruins whereof, 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 terror 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 passed, and the former time, men's happiness and misery may be reckoned as though it hath never been. *Nam quicquid retroest, 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 discernible 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 maketh them pleasant. Hence many sensual men have turned monastic, 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 farewell.

6. Is it not found that *riches*, and abundance of the earth doth *load* more than it fills, and men's *wealth* only further heightens 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 die 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 oftener want a stomach and rest, than the poor want meat and a bed to lie in.

7. In what an *endless circle* do *voluptuous* men 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 *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 suit 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 oft times 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 *perisbeth 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 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 style, while men of the choicest spirit are buried under contempt and poverty? yea, do we not see how quickly men are cried up, and down in the world? That which in one age is raised, is oft razed in another; yea, many at much labour to undo that which others have done with greatest care and expense? what a sore vanity is this!

12. Will not the *want* of a very *small* thing oft *imbitter* the pleasantest lot, and *turn it into wormwood, and gall*? The smallest touch of pain, the gravel, or tooth ache, 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 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 sunshine 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, whatever rub it may seem to have by the way, yet hath a sweet and comfortable close. *Psal. xxxvii. 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 discernible 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 discernible 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 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 *choose 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 cannot 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 cheerful 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 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 cheerful 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 discernible 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 *fervent 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 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 bias 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 borne 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 scripture's 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 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 concerned, 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 demonstrated to the world. 3. How great a thing it is, to believe and be assuredly persuaded 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 na-

ture, 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 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 shewed themselves about this : which speaks out more some perplexed 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. *Eccl.* xii. 7. And you may further see, *Heb.* xii. 9. *Gen.* ii. 7. *Luke* xvi. 22, 23. *1 Pet.* iii. 9.

2. This grave testimony, which the scripture of God does 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 does, 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 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 induldering down ; either a *dependence 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 body's wasting and its fall : but I think, you would not so far contradict reason, as to allege 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, and 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, and 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* and *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 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 and 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 preeminence 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, cannot 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 contradict 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 *struggling* 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 itself, those marvellous products of the understanding, and *new discovery* ? why are men so anxious and concerned 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 and 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 hate and fear it, yet cannot be rid thereof ? and I must also ask, how are the *choice* and the *excellent* of the earth so oft crushed under the feet of their *oppressors*, whilst these wretches do oft wallow in all satisfying outward delights ; yea, sometimes go hence *without bands in their death* ? In a word, O 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, and 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 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 countryman, 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 swimming 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 some times 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 fulness 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* 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. xviii. 30.) *and that his works are perfect; and his ways, judgment*, (Deut. xxxii. 4.) *yea, that he does all things well*, (Mark vii. 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 misplaced; yea, in all he does 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 does 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 depending, *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 as to dazzle their eyes, and force this acknowledgment, 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, wherein 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 human contrivance, that ever was. It is true, *her glory*, that does 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 oft-times are in such a disorder, as darkens the beauty of the whole; there is such an intermixture of the *hay and stubble* of human inventions, with this choice building, that helps to mar its order and beauty; the carved work also may be spoiled 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 forced the world, and the great men thereof, to consider that sight with wonder and amazement, which you see, *Psal. xlviii. they saw, they marvelled, and hasted away.* And the preceding 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 forced them to see that it was something more than human. 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 founded: it is no less marvellously *united and joined 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 joints 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 though divided in so many parcels through the world, yet is still one entire 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 human societies, yet an inclosure and incorporation by herself; 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 sore 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 politic body, is related also to him, as its supreme head, by a political government and guidance, and hath an express 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, than awful and authoritative in her rejection? (7.) It is 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 suited to

the same. (8.) She is of such a mould and frame, that though she can boast of an *intrinsic power*, within herself, yet must derive it from *another* fountain; 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 human 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 human power can make void; and though cast in among the nations, yet by peculiar bounds is kept from all other societies 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 *monarchic* 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, whilst a private essay for gaining, is to go before a public 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 whilst she is losing and in a decay as to particular members, she is still *travailing in birth* for a new offspring 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 fabric the Lord hath founded, and raised up, and that surely this piece of the word is therein fulfilled, *His way is perfect, and 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 bosom 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 sight, 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 observers, 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 comes to the striking of the hour, if we may so say: and then the most stupid are forced to observe, what once seemed 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 downcasting? oft is she humbled, in order to an upraising and deliverance; yea, oft is one step of the way of the Lord made clear to her by another. O 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 designs*; yea, bring forth such *various* and *contrary effects*, that no human 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, and after product; would seem repugnant; yet no real jar. For the church sinking, yet does 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 human reach to give a present reason for the same: yet in all these may there not be discerned a remarkable *dependence* 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 suit another, for making the whole complex providence beautiful; that on a serious review the world must con-

fess, this is a concatenation so strange, that it must be his work, and 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 does 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 *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 harbour 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 seemed furthest off, and had been much followed with many a weary look from some other quarter, with what a strange surprisal does 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 discernible, 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 discernible 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 and temperament of contraries* is discernible 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 overreach 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 framed! 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 human reach, and worthy of the great God; yea, that herein *his way is most absolutely perfect*; and no sight can be like this, where we may see so excellent a correspondence between the foundation and superstructure, that the whole tract of the gospel is but one entire and complete mean for glorifying God, and does in this as the ultimate end resolve. Here men may see the greatness of his *power*, that inexpressible freedom of his *grace*, the holy severity of *justice*, all meet and join together in a sweet agreement; where both justice is salved and fully answered, and yet sinners sayed; where mercy does rejoice over condemnation; vengeance is taken on our inventions, and the inventors 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 itself (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 piece of work this is! And is not *his way perfect* therein, where you may see that grand plot of the devil to undo man, break upon himself, and *by the seed of the woman his head crushed!* where so glorious a fabric 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 persuasive 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 suitableness 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 *appre-*

hended: where the Lord does 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 *redeemed* 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 does all things well) with respect to that *marvellous order of nature, and disposal of the works of God under the sun*: how inexpressible well all are fitted for some use, and 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 xvii. 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 most *common* 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, shews unto the sons of men, *he does 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: and if any will question the glorious former of all things, why things are thus ordered and disposed, let him but retire within himself and he will 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 easy to enter, than to find an outlet; 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 fabric that in all its parts is most exactly joined, 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 does it travel betwixt the tropics, to fulfil its annual course; and in diverse parts does 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 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 withdrawings 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 and 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 groping 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 veil 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; and 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 in a sweet and silent composure from the noise and hurrying of the day. Yea, does not every *evening* solemnly warn men of their approaching *death*, and the swift passing away of time, that they may have no excuse for being surprised 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 inquiry 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 human reach; how thus it does keep its centre, and rests thereupon; and is it not clear, how steady the axis of the earth is, and perpetually parallel with itself, that it cannot tumble this or 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; and yet from these, though thus cross to other, there results a singular harmony, in which the conservation of the world and production of things here below are concerned, 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, and caused the sun to keep its course from east to west so long: but O how well are all these things ordered, and 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 framed 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 displayed 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 medi-

um for correspondence betwixt the higher and lower world? It is here the birds find use for their wings; through this the rains find an easy passage; this does intervene 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 perplexed 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 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 oil of scorpions is against the sting thereof. You see, the *poor* people have medicinal waters provided *without money*; and 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 *loadstone*, 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 distilled and dropped 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 travail of the *beasts*, in bringing forth their young, proportioned to their condition, and to that longing they have ? *Job xxxix. 3. They bow themselves, and bring forth their young, and cast forth their sorrows.* And as their time and duration is for most part shorter than man's, is not their *growth* also suited 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 recompensed 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 hind 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 *easy* 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 choose a fit place, nor do they 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 *graft* and the *tree*, which exceeds human art, if nature did not so wonderfully cooperate therein, and in the inoculating a small bud into

a stock? And O that wonderful *increase*, 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 rising of their bodies. For it is sure, the ordinary things of nature are great and convincing hieroglyphics, 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 fabric 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 subtile composition, in which there is so notable an harmony made up of many contraries! I think, those who would learn atheism, are not only concerned 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.

THE FOURTH ARGUMENT

I SHALL here offer to prove the scripture's 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 itself, which should cause us until then 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 interesting 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 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 Chaldean about this, who without doubt had then some of those oldest records true and uncorrupt. *Eusebius* also doth mention some fragments of *Abidenus*, and *Appolidorus*, 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 scope and drift of the same. For it points out an universal defection, 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*.

II. What we find expressly threatened by the Lord, (*Gen. xi. 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 human 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 unveil and shew its meaning. (3.) It is sure, there is no language one more than another, that is *natural* to men, but what *ex institutio* 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 alleged 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 proved. (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

choose 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 countries, either in exporting or importing most necessary commodities; that which also would obstruct human knowledge, and the discovery of those excellent inventions and experiments of other places; yea, give man, whose days are so few, such a sore toil 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 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 dependent 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 independent 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, commixtures and variations of languages, which through continuance of time, through 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 entire. (4.) What a strange and marvellous thing must this be, if we consider that most of *ancient* maternal languages were *previous* to the use of *letters*, whence rules or a method could be conveyed from one to another, if it had been only some human 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 hieroglyphics, 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*. *Gen. xi.* 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 outlaw 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* turned 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* under the New Testament, as there was formerly in the *confusion* thereof.

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, he hath cast in the sea*. Wherein these things are most clear,

1. That this was a deed *known* and *public 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 most ancient heathen writers do shew they have been no strangers.

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 interesting 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 *sceptre*, 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 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 expressed, to be sad earnest, and read the lively motions of an afflicted case herein. And besides hath not this been witnessed to after ages by a visible monument, even the destruction of the *temple*, that great and excellent work, which though 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 public 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 falsehood 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 *human 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 (though 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. Its 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 prophecy 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 discernible *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* prophecy would seem most strange and improbable, such as *Belsazzar'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 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 Messiah*, 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 may be demonstrated, that the greatest height of atheism knoweth not how to state itself 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 interesting *promise* 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 afar off, yea, did *embrace* it and repose themselves thereon. And is there not a most clear and exact portrait 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 a diligent search and inquiry, 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 inquire*, 1 *Pet.* i. 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 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 *seventy 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 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 portrait 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*, *Micab*, *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. ii.*) 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* ? 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 *meeke and lowly, and riding upon an ass*, was to be betrayed, and sold (and *his price* shewed by *Zacheriab*) for thirty 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 *Isaiah* 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 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. 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 itself, 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, 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 public 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 pub-

lished by the evangelists and apostles, whilst 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 falsehood 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 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 allege 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 coming of the Gentiles*, a truth indeed great and marvellous, which is expressly held forth in the Old Testament (*Is. liv. 1, 2. Is. lx. 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,

1. That *for many ages* this truth about the incalling 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, whilst 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 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 Messias*. He should be *revealed to Israel*; before which time a bar was drawn in the way of *the nations*, and a *wall of partition* betwixt them and the church, *until he stand up* who should hold forth *an ensign to the people*, and *gather the Gentiles under his standard*; which *Isaiah* doth clearly shew, *Is. xi. 10, and xxxiv. 1, 2. and lx. 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 convincing, which is most observable, that notwithstanding of 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 that people, yea, though by the captivity they were scattered 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 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 its 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 flee 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 blessed day, that brought salvation with it to the *Gentiles*, wherein the Lord did *visit those 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* and 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*, and 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 sunburnt places of *Africa*? Hath not Christ also had a conquest, where many a blackmoor 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 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 farthest 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 *Tertullian*, who lived in the second century (in his book *contra Judæos*) doth there witness how many nations, and these most remote from other, *Parthians, Medes, Armenia, Phrygia, Cappadocia, Pontus, and Pamphilia*, with much of *Egypt*, and divers 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 discernible* 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 and 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 the greatest barbarians, and cause the *lion to lie 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 men's 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, and 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. xii. 11. Matth. xxiv. 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* 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 sceptre nor lawgiver, 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, *Animianus 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? Whilst it is clear, that notwithstanding frequent *idolatry*, and departing from *GOD*, when they were at that height in wickedness as to *offer up their children to Molech*, 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 seventy years' *captivity*, and after by *GOD'S* very immediate hand *brought again*, those who had taken them captive concurring with them to rebuild 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 and 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 demur, 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 con-

fluence 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 *hardened*, 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 (1.) 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, whatever 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, and 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 discernible 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 *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 noonday, 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. ii. 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,

1. 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 clear a discovery of the whole fabric, rise, and progress of that party, with such particular circumstances and differing 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 they knew was to fill his room. Yea, do we not find, the church's 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 persecu-

tion, 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 whercof 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 lying 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 merchandise, 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 portrait 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 witness*, to point him forth, even in the darkest times ; *many of whom loved not their lives*

unto the death, that they might seal this truth; and 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 style 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 Lawgiver, maketh moral prohibitions void by his authority; yea, halloweth 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 *wandering*? 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 whatever 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, it 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.

I know it is a sore 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.* xvi. 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 access to convince, where malice at the way of the Lord turns men mad, yea, cruel against themselves; but since the *popish* church does not avowedly deny the scriptures, the divinity of the New Testament and prophecies thereof (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, and to their own conscience, yea, to the sober and 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* and 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 and growth, his reign and fall; and not merely by a pass-

ing word : whom the apostle, *2 Thess. ii. 3, 4.* points out by such peculiar marks ; whom *John* does describe and distinguish from all other *antichrists*, that were only to be his forerunners, and shews him a more noted and principal adversary of Christ above others ; yea, we have through the whole *Revelation* most clearly discovered, under different styles, what he should be, and what a sore and long trial the christian 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 constrained 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 shewed, *this mystery of iniquity was working*, (*2 Thess. ii. 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 itself 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, in the order of the *trumpets*, clearly *after* the revealing of the *antichrist* ; and this horrid scourge held forth (*Rev. ix. 20.*) as a remarkable judgment from the Lord, on the *christian* world, then turned *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 ΚΑΤΕΧΩΝ imports.) For it is very clear, whilst the *Roman empire was heathen*, 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 cognizance, 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 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 to 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 *popish* party, or is justly applicable to them: but I am sure, if without a prejudicate bias you would seriously judge, and abstract from application, in this you could not deny an assent, that *such a*

party (whosoever he be) bears that great badge of *antichrist*, in *exalting himself against God*? who, as a friend, doth assume those *titles* only due and competent to the glorious God, and to the Mediator to be *head and chief doctor* of the catholic church, and alleges her for *his spouse*, who challengeth an infinite power, by making use of that, *Mat. xxviii. 18. All power is given unto me, &c.* (which that book, intitled *Pontifical Ceremonies*, does assert, *Lib. i. 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 unchangeable; 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 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. iv. 3.* and in *Rev. xviii. 13.* you have there a *merchandise with the souls of men.* And O! can any be 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. ix. 20. the worshipping 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 learned 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. xvii. 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 loath 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 and their interest to that party, and yield to so strange a subjection under their yoke ; it seems so very irrational, yea, like an infatuation, 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 subtile device of auricular confession ; what intolerable 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 *popish* 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 lower in these worst and darkest times, than the word 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 *cognizance*, which his *followers* should receive, for *differencing* them for any other party, *Rev. xiii. 16*. Now in this I desire the world and most common 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 indispensably 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 baptize, or receive by confirmation; but do ascribe also to it an *effective* and *operative* power, and as a charm or magical sign make 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 pendiaries; 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 catholic*, if he but avow 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 *anticrist*, whose name must be understood, and reckoned by the *number* thereof, which is the *number of a man*! *Rev. xiii. 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 scripture's 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 shews, 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 *politic 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 know *what* a man that is ; that as he cannot be known, if we take him alone, without respect to a politic 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 politic 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 subtile 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 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 otherwise 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 another. (4.) We find here a *large number*, wherein there is a plurality of many different degrees, rising one above another, 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 dependence on each other; yea, is thus knit, that one part comprehends the other; such as is most clear and obvious, in that subtile politic 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 closely 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 quadrature, to discover that adversary, and gives us such ground that his *number* points at his *frame* and composition, I think, without any challenge of unsobriety, such a remark very suitable. (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 closely 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, whether 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 itself, which the 13th ver. does shew, wherein that great bulk of the *Romish* church is not to be sought ? 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 itself, 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.

XI. What was prophesied about the *killing of the witnesses under antichrist*, (*Rev. xi. 3, 7, 8.*) we may say, hath clearly come to pass, and at this day may read 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 downborne 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 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 sorest 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 vallies of *Piemont,* the sore and violent persecution of the church through 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 under 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. xvi. 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 *Thes. ii. 2, 8. Rev. xvi. 10, 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 sore 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 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 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 barbed 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 re-

turn. 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 sounding 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, and her trials now must not be so long as in former time. *Rom. ix. 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! Rejoice over 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, *Isa. xi. 15. Rom. xi. 24. Rev. xvi. 12.*

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. xi. 11. Zech. xii. 10.* with *Rom xi. 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 *Isaiah* 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 ix. 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 ix. 14.* that the very *bills 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 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 *Jezrael*, shall be a very remarkable and solemn time: which will cause astonishment to the nations round about, and 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 mixed or incorporated with other nations, which is most usual through long converse, that people of several parts of the earth will unite and 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*, *Africa*, and in those places of *Europe* where the christian church is? and 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 anti-christ 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 helped 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 and prosperity in the days of the gospel*: which I humbly conceive, are not yet fully made out, but shall have a more remarkable accomplishment before the close of time. *Isa. lxxv. 25. lxxvi. 12. Mic. iv. 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 unveil 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 increase 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 *Isaiab* and other of the prophets do put over this great flourishing of the church to the days of the gospel, the apostle, *Rom. xi.* 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 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 church's 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 loosing*, and his going forth to gather his broken forces, for that *great battle*, 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 sunshine of the gospel* is held forth; some such remarkable *spring tide of the Spirit*, that shall be as discernible as the church's 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. xlvi. 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 *join themselves to the Lord*, pure ordinances, a more universal sameness amongst the worshippers of God, the walk of christians with a discernible 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 and 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 terror and awe 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 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. xx. 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 darkening 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 prophecy, but that manifest correspondence which is betwixt it and the event at this day.

(1.) 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 itself, 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. xi. 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. iv. 5.* and *Mat. xi. 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 agreeable the scripture is with itself. (3.) Is not the meaning of the spirit in this prophecy clear, that the *greatest enlargement* of the church, yea, and 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 worshipped 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 prophecy, 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* 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 shews, 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 : and 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 *Bobemia*, by a violent course of persecution so borne 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 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 distinguish it from the second, and is held forth in an opposition to the first death.

V. We have a prophecy held forth, *Rev. xvi. 12*, which compared with *Rev. ix. 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 is 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 chap.* 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 *portrait* 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 *breastplates 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 *anticristian 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 hands, that so brutish and barbarous an adversary should be let out for a scourge. I truly think, that as *anti-christ*, 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 overrun 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, whereto 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*.

VI. Now to close this, there is yet one *great assault*, which we find the church shall have *before 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, and once again this *ungodly world* will shew its *rage*, rally its broken scattered forces in a general muster (*Rev. xx. 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 canonic 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 and oppression of men. O blessed, and 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 fulness 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, 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.

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. xxxiii. 20.* that *the covenant with the day and the night* is there given to the church to confirm that covenant betwixt the Lord and his people. This also is held forth, *Jer. xxxi. 35.* *Thus saith the Lord, who giveth the sun for a light by day, and the moon and 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, *Ps. lxxxix. 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 *Psalms*, the *sun and moon* given to the church as a *witness*. Is not the *rainbow* also, *Gen. ix.* (though not natural, but an instituted sign, because there is no correspondence betwixt the sign, and 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 and amazing 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 *phenomena* 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 concourse of atoms* ; yea, some held an eternal preexistence 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, than 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 itself; for to exist, and 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 and years and ages to be infinite, or how one thing in a continued order should go before another, without coming to some first and 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) 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 mariner's compass by the loadstone, 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 most ancient records of time, or of things past, do not exceed some thousands of years. And could this be possibly conceived, that *infinite* ages preceding (if such had been) should give *no* account, nor leave a remembrance to posterity, when these *late* ages hold 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* be-

ginning 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 *most excellent* 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 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 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 conse-

quence, 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 easy 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 by a clearer evidence, than this consequence from such premises 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 *serves himself*, in this great frame and composure of the world, that this promise shall not fail, but it is easy 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-

ed, 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*, and 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 and confirming seal of that great truth 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?

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 die and be *cut off 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 *Pilate* 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 die, his blessed

side was pierced with a spear, and upon the 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 became 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 travail 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 angels with wonder do look! Which, we may say, is unspeakably greater 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, 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 convulsions 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 presage her greater enlargement; as the tender buds and leaves of the fig tree are put forth to shew the summer's approach. *Luke xxi. 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; 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 began 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. xiii. 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 outpouring of the Spirit, for acting with these gifts of courage and resolution, suitable to the service of the 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. xix. 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. xi. 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 so interesting 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 recompense 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. xviii. 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 meanness, contempt, and persecution: shall put some glory on his church, pro-

portionable to its former abasement; 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*, *Zech. xii. 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, and 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. xv. 3*, his *great power* and *outstretched hand* being no less discernible 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.) *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 politic 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 *shakings* and alterations of the *earth*, this late glorious *reformation* of the church from *antichristianism* hath been ushered in? Which have been more strange, 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 heroic 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 and work of the time, hath been most discernible! 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 V.* and caused him to flee over the *Alps*? Yea, what marvellous resolution and courage did attend the actings of the confederates of the *Low Countries*? And in latter times do we not find *Gustus* king of *Sweden*, *Bernard* duke of *Weymar*, landgrave 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, and 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 this 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 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 twenty years together was a field of dead men; and *France* from the days of *Henry II.* to the establishment of *Henry 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*; beside 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, and be as a pledge in their hand of the full accomplishing 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 discernible 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*, through much of *France*, *Germany*, *Sweden*, the *Low Countries*, *Poland*, *Denmark*, yea, even in *Hungary*, and *Transylvania*? Sure this was a great work, which should be marvellous in our eyes, how that *antichristian empire*, contrived with such wisdom, underpropped 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 discernible 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 indulgences. 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 forty 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 brought 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*, *Melanchton*, *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 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 falsehood 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 sucked 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 emperor: and good *Melanchton* 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, *Those 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 find a *Spanish emperor*, devoted to the *popish* interest, and 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 *Boores*, and *anabaptist* party, whose being so gross, and 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 *overtbrow* 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 politics on foot in a strong combination, how to ruin the church.

5. The *interim of Germany*, a most subtile 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 *catholic 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 VI.* of *England*, and establishing of a cruel persecutor, 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 must add, that which was as sore an assault to the church as any, so grievous 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, wherever 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 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, something much *above themselves*, their own natural temper and disposition, did in their most extreme 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* and *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 persuading 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 persuasions 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 peremptorily reject the same. *Antonius Riceto*, 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 entreaties 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 cheerfully *part* with the same, and *chose rather suffering for the truth*. We may instance those two great witnesses, *John Frederick* of *Saxony* and the *landgrave* of *Hesse*, who under that long imprisonment by *Charles V.* bare out many sharp assaults, both by threatenings and offers, without yielding in the least to the prejudice of the truth; yea, on this account did the *duke of Saxony* forego his estate and dignity. *Annas du Burg*, counsellor of the parliament at *Paris*, of great parts and repute, who before *Henry 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 otherwise he might have kept) and embraced death for Christ. The prince of *Conde* at the massacre of *Paris*, when the king expressly shewed him he should within three 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 Zeroton*, a Moravian baron, of great interest and authority in that country, in the late *Bobemian* 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*, and 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, and 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 Burg*, 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 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 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, farewel faith and hope, and welcome love.* *Robert Agurie's son*, when at *Lisle*, 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, and 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 writes to his friends, "I am going to the bishop's 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 Sabbath.*" *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 de Bres*, *The ringing of my chain hath been sweet music 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 die with joy; and on the scaf-*

fold cried 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. Washart, who thus spake amidst the fire, This flame doth torment my body, but no whit abate my spirits.

Fourth witness is, Those 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 discernible, 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.

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 began to sound a retreat to his church from *Babylon*, are far beyond other preceding ages. I would be sparing 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 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 began visibly to decline, he is forced to fly before *Mauritius*, and seek a retreat in the furthest confines of the empire, and after broken with melancholy and discontent, like another *Dioclesian*, doth resign his empire, and turn to a private life.

Philip 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 dominions, 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 10,000 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 two years together, with inexpressible pain and anguish.

Henry II. of France, a most violent enemy to the church, whilst he had caused sentence of *Annas du 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 IX.* that bloody persecutor, I shall mention elsewhere how remarkably the judgment of God did pursue him.

Henry III. who (while he was duke of *Anjou*) did assist at that horrid council kept at *St. Cloud*, near *Paris*, where the massacre was concluded, is some years after stabbed to death by a Jacobin friar in that very chamber: a thing which *Du Serres* doth twice mention with a remark, as a marvellous instance of the judgment of God.

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 III.* at *Blois*, with whom they had oft joined 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 treacherously reached, as the admiral and protestants by *Charles 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 *Aumale*, who was a joint actor with the duke of *Guise* in that massacre, doth a little after fall by a shot off the walls at the siege of *Rocheb*; 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 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 II. a great persecutor of the church in *Germany*, who after his victory over *Frederick* and the *Bobemian* 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 sight 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 *Bobemian* scourge, do fall, turneth *Germany* and the emperor's 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 24,000 *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 *Bobemia*, 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, whatever 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 Oneale* taken, publicly 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 in the time of king *James V.* 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 public street of *Edinburgh*.

It is also known, what violent persecutors cardinal *Beaton* and his successor bishop *Hamilton* were, who were no less conspicuous instances of the judgments of the Lord in that time : also what befel one friar *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 friar 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*, chancellor 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 chancellor of France, through the torment and anguish of his mind, caused the very bed to shake under 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 visi-

bly 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 three things, which 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 public acknowledgment of his guilt and apostacy, and of the 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 subtile way did endeavour the overturning the discipline and liberties of the church, for setting up of prelacy, and by underhand dealing, got himself first thrust into *Glasgow*, and after to be archbishop of *St. Andrews*, yea, at last was chancellor of *Scotland*, his eldest son a baron in *Fife*, and his second son president of the session, his daughter also married to *Rodline*, then a considerable baron. 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 foretell 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 battle of *Philipbauch*, was beheaded at *St. Andrews*, and his *Oy* young *Darzie*, beheaded at *Edinburgh*; and for his daughter who was married to *Rosline*, 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 began to assault the 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 physic, which pressed him more than 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 solomen nemo, dare nemo salutem,
 Te præter poterit, Rex Jacobe, mihi,
 Quæ corpus gravat, atque animam, tantum exime mitræ
 Huic caput, hujus onus me premit, et perimit.

Mr. William Couper, sometime minister of *Pertb*, one who witnessed much zeal against prelacy, both by preaching and writing; in a letter to *Mr. George Grabam*, who had written to him entreating his charity towards his own conforming, he hath these words, *Sir, for yourself I never hated you, but the course you are in I never loved: low*

dangerous is their estate, who cannot rise, but with the fall of many who in Christ have entered 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; 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 yourself, where you was, and where you now are, et 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 pastime 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 oft 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 hypochondriac 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 Foster*, minister at *Dumfermling*, 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 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 passed 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 otherwise 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 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, entreating 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 public 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 passed for banishing him out of that parish: and though he was then otherwise staged, upon the account of the public 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 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 Machbryar*, who was a member of the late parliament, being one of the commissioners of the boroughs, 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 he 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 reencounter, 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. O was not this *the finger of God*, and a convincing proof of his righteous judgment!

Fifth 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 downpouring 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 is to the gospel, then hath this in a more full and large measure been discernible. 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 borne 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, and 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 countries 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 *Zurick*, and *Basil*, when so thorough a reformation followed, to the throwing down of images, abolishing of the mass by public authority, notwithstanding 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 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 public 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 *prelatic* party. This, by the profane 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 *terror* (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, some of the most gross, who used to *mock* at religion, being engaged, upon the *same* that

went abroad of such things, to go to some of those parts where the gospel was then most lively, have been *effectually reached* before their return, with a visible change 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 savour 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*, *June 20*, 1630; at which time there was so convincing an appearance of *God*, and downpouring of the *Spirit*, even in an *extraordinary way*, that did follow the ordinances, especially that sermon on the *Monday*, *June 21*, with a *strange unusual motion on the hearers*, 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 discernible *change* wrought on them, of whom most proved lively christians afterward: it was the sowing of a seed through *Clidesdeal*, 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 sunshine* 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 downpouring 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 hearers*, 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 bearing* 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 thirty, forty *miles* to these solemn communions, which they had ; and there continue, from the time they came, until they returned, without *wearying*, 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 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 *public 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 is 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, in these *late* times, what a solemn *outpouring* of the *Spirit* hath been seen ! A large harvest, with much of the fruit of the gospel discernible, 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 and 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 public 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 sorest downcasting 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. *Welsh*, 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 spake 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 another 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 rejoice !” 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 crieth out, “ I disclaim all ; the port 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 witness is, *That convincing appearance of an extraordinary and apostolic 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 anti-christ* : 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 and endowments have been given forth, to the church under the New Testament, for which the first dawning of the gospel there were both apostles, and prophets raised up. It cannot be also denied, that *since* the canon 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 *humble sobriety* on that account.

It is known what extraordinary instruments, how wonderfully called and qualified, *Luther, Zuinglius, Calvin, Wisbart*, and *Knox* were, whom GOD sent in these latter days to grapple with antichrist, and sound a retreat to his church from *Babylon*: likewise *Melanchton, 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, fervent in spirit, were clothed 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 public 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 *prophetic and apostolic 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 *Kircubright*, in *Galloway*, and afterwards was transported to the church of *Aire*, whom Mr. *Rutherford* in one of his books called that heavenly prophetic and apostolic man of GOD, and sheweth that from the witnesses of his life, he had this account, that of every twenty four 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 sure 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 cold-

est 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 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, whilst he knew not how it was with many of them.*

And another time whilst she found him alone, his spirit almost overcharged with anguish and grief, upon her serious inquiry, 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.

Whilst 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 virtue of an intrinsic power from Christ, as any kingdom on the earth, for which he was ready to lay down his life, yea, would rejoice 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. Whilst 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 whilst he did expound the scripture after his supper, in the prison (as his custom was) whilst he with much 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 inquiry 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*, provost 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 passed upon him at *Linlithgow*, he in a very short time acquired the *French tongue*, with such a facility therein, as was thought strange by those who knew it. *Trochrig*, in his commentary on the *Ephesians*, sets down this passage, 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 *Trochrig* 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, and that he was delivering his message, he could not regard either great or small, but all flesh did then go out of his mind.

Whilst he was minister at *St. Janc 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 not then prevail) went himself with the

cannoneer up the walls, and desired he would charge such a piece of cannon, and shoot, for *God should direct that shot, and cause to prosper*; which accordingly did, to the astonishment of lookers on, dismount that battery, and the Lord so ordered things after, that the king did parly 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. *Welsb's* hazard, did seriously deal with him, that he would forbear to go forth, and preach, the court being there; from which he by no entreaty would be hindered, 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 forthwith before the king, and whilst he was entering the church, which had some difficulty by reason of the multitude, Mr. *Welsb* did turn himself toward that entry, and desired the people to give way to one of the great *peers* 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*; where-with that man was so affrighted, that he fell a shaking, yea, was forced to crouch down, and make no further trouble. A third passage no less remarkable was upon the close of the sermon, whilst Mr. *Welsb* 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 heresy 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 yourself, and heard: and for my doctrine I did this day preach these three truths to your people.* (1.) *That man is fallen and by nature in a lost condition, 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 own 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. *Welsb* did publicly foretell: at which time it is known, how the king passed a solemn *order*, that none should in the least wrong Mr. *Welsb*, 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 lords of the session, his father being then a considerable baron, who had many friends: but a more pressing and irresistible 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 terror 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 kingdom*.

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 sometime 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 another 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 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 prelatiſh, 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 began, 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 meet-

ing of divers godly ministers at that time there, on some special ground of the church's concernment, 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 *Lothaker*, 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 profanity 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 *Didoclavius'* testimony, in his preface to his *Altare Damascenum*: *Robertus Brusius, Vir genere et virtute nobilis, majestate vultus venerabilis, qui plura animarum millia Christo lucrificet; cujus anima, si ullius mortalium (absit verbo invidia) sedet in caelestibus: anima mea, cum anima tua, Brusi, si ex aliena fide esset pendendum.*

III. Mr. *Davidson*, minister of the gospel at *Salt Presboun*, may be truly here instanced as one of an *extraordinary, prophetic spirit*, who was likewise eminently zealous and faithful for his Master in a time of the church's defec- tion; as *Didoclavius* 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* was 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 *Newbaile*, who then had a great interest in the parish, engaging to help it forward: from which he after resiled, 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 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.

At a certain assembly of the church, Mr. *John Spotswood*, and Mr. *James Law*, who were then entered into the ministry, were processed for some gross acts of profanity: 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, though 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 parish, 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 among 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 profane 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 publickly 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 rencounter with Mr. *John Ker*, a young gentleman who lately came 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 rapier, 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 wondered 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 express 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, though 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 human 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 convickers 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 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's* hand, of *Carnock*, 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 sore 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 9th 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 Bailyes 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 human*, 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 entreaty, 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, and also prevailed; and now God hath made good his words, which he spake this morning to you; for I am plucked out of the hands of Satan, and he shall have no 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, and 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 ; and might say, as the Lord fed *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 9th of August, what consolation the Lord gave thee, and how he performed what he spake, according to Zech. iii. 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, *Absit 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 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 nephew, Mr. *James Melvin*, that holy grave and prudent servant of Christ, Mr. *Andrew Dulkan*, Mr. *John Scrimger*, Mr. *Charles Fereme*, Mr. *James Balfure*, &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 in-

quiry, 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 styled him) Hast thou no other thing to do, but carry down to Scotland such commissions, whereby the poor church there is wrecked: 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 persuaded, *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 busy, perfecting that great house of his at *Berwick*, and had appointed a sumptuous 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 *Aire*: 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 cheerfully 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 inquire, 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 cheerfulness he came forth, and upon their inquiry 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 myself certainly found the answers of his prayers from the Lord in my behalf.*

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: and 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 public 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-itself the *word of life*, will never prove the *power of God to salvation*. And therefore though he was known to take much pains in *searching* 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 suitableness 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 travail 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 public 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 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 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 breakfast 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 breakfasted 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 the souls of others, and much pains and seriousness about *making his own calling and election sure*, had an entrance ministered unto him abundantly into the *everlasting kingdom of his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*.

II. In the next place, reader, I shall in prosecution of my design, which is thy edification, hint to thee some things concerning that burning and shining light Mr. *John Welsb*, 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 expectation, if making mention of him, I should not acquaint thee with something rare and 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 expectation, take these few *remarkable passages* which follow. 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 cloth to the town of *Aire* from a neighbouring place, &c. where there was yet no suspicion that the Lord's hand had smitten it with the *plague*, which was then sore 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. *Welsb* : So the bailiff bids them disburden their beasts, till he considered what was to be done : a little after, Mr. *Welsb* 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. *Welsb* 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 a quarter of an hour, at last said, *Bailiff, 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 contagion 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 supplication : whereof take these following instances amongst the many which might be given.

One is, that being on a certain night under an extraordinary 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 accompanied 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 afraid to interrupt him, went home, and heard not the close. At last he came home, and reentering his bed, his wife began to reprove his unmercifulness 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 endured a great fight for *Scotland* this night, and hardly could I get a remnant reserved, yet *he will be gracious*.

After this he arose another night, but went not out of doors, but in a chamber he travailed 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. *Welsb's* mother in law, being *John Knox's* wife: yet being much taken up in king *James's* court, he took not time to be so comfortable to his cousin *Welsb* as he should: but being convinced of his own unkindness, he caused Mr. *Welsb* to sup with him one night in the castle, where were also several other gentlemen, and amongst them a *popish youth* sat toward the lower end of the table; Mr. *Welsb* 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. *Welsb*. But after supper, while the guests sat a little, this youth stood up at the lower end of the table, and while Mr. *Welsb* 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, and 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. *Welsb*, as

moved by the Spirit of GOD, broke forth into these words : *Gentlemen, the Spirit of God is provoked against us, and I shall entreat you not to be afraid to see what God shall do among you before you rise from the table, for he will smite 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's* 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, entreating 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 ; and 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, and what was become of his petition ? The captain surprised, 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 cap-

tain *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 is 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 quickener 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 numbered 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 (though 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 outrun 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 *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 easy 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 gave Mr. *Blair* did often speak to others, which then took a deep impression upon himself, and helped him to see it was something else to be a minister of Jesus Christ, than to be a knowing and eloquent preacher. He was for divers years *regent* in the college of *Glasgow*; where he made it his work, to train up those under his charge in the study of *godliness*, as well as of human 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 masters of the college, he inquired at a fellow regent of his, Mr *Garwin 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 choice of to preside as moderator, and upon his appearance in that deplorable case could not shun the observing of that former 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 visit 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 immediately 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* borne in upon him, that the dean of *Bangor* was *sick unto death* and should rise no more; which at first he rejected, as an impertinent 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 immediately disappeared; but after, 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 *Mertiness*: 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 yourself, 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, and 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 hindered 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 choose him for his refuge. He was after threatened 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 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 another: 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 matter; 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 wresling 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' 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 Scotchmen.*

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 came 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 seems an eminent instance of the providence of God, and worthy to be on record, that concerns the laird of *Raitb*, 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 publicly 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's* 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 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 session; and another of them laird of *Halbill*; 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 lord *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 among 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 *Gascoine*, 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 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, and death itself, and 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 cheerful, and 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 *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 asleep 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 indubitably holy, which the queen of *Navarre* did herself 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 *Rivet* 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 *Dunagor*, which, (together with some of these other remarkable instances here mentioned) were transmitted unto me from his worthy son, *Mr. Andrew Steward*, minister of *Dona-chade*; 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 *Monday* 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, hanged directly over their head, which to all present threatened 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*, begged their leave to retire a little from the place, and went to another 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 swell.

ed, 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 *Dunagor* 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 asleep 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 and 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 meant 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 liath 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 balanced 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 become 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: and he that is for famine, to famine; 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; and the sons of Saul must be hung up before the sun.* By which last word, none knew what he meant. 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 and 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, he had done with them.* And whilst they mentioned one of his daughters, he desired to be foreborne, 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-farewel: 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 and to this day famous christian in our country, *John Steward*, provost of *Aire*; 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 straitened 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 *Aire*, and trade much decayed, he himself fell under some straits, and some of the profane in that place began 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 *Rochel*, the salt and other commodities were become exceedingly 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 *Aire*, with expectation of the ship's return. But after long waiting he was informed 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 abased*, 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, and 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 such a trial. But at last, having gone forth to visit the widow (as then supposed) whilst with that family they were mutually witnessing grief, *John Ken-*

nedy 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 wellbeing ; 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 myself, 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 : and then Mr. *John Ferguson* 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 and three children*, one of them upon the breast : they had not gone far before they were stripped 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 *Locheach*, 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 wronged you, nor yours, you must remember o die also yourselves, and one day give an account of this cruelty, to the judge of heaven and earth*. On which an *Irish* priest 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 smoke 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 ; and 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 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 leaping 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 smoke appeared, which was an Irishman'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 ensnared 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 entreated 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 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 *nobleman* 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 style 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 style; 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 through, 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 nobleman 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, he was struck with a remarkable infatuation, 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 meanest 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 insert the same, after some safe warrant as to the certainty thereof, from those I had ground to believe.

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 and 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 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 *Abab'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; and 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 falsehood, they have this one most discernible, that they are the support and warrant of 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 *lie 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 inquiry) 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 public 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 ? 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 Countries*, 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 midday, 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 *West Flanders*, 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 to 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 in that town, had shewed him from some who were most considerable there, as he sets down in his epistles.

Charles 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 stupendous 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 stripped almost naked, and after by one of them threatened, that except she would give him her money, he would forthwith run her through ; 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 through *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 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 three years in contriving, did convincingly witness a divine hand opposing the same. And how remarkable was that issue of all the counsels, expense, and cruelty, which *Philip II.* 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 400,000 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 commonwealth, 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*, though 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 *popish images and altars*, almost in one night, through much of the *Netherlands*, which for so many hundred 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 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 *Spaniard*, 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 even the greatest atheists, and such who judge things to fall out by change, must confess ?

What wonderful providences did attend the actings of that poor handful of protestants in the vallies 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 seven or eight under the conduct of that worthy gentleman *Joshua Gianavel* (whom God made use of as a choice instrument, to help that poor scattered remnant) was made to fight 300 soldiers, 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 *Pianeza*, who then commanded the duke of *Savoy's* forces, were opposed by eleven of the protestants, and other six with slings : and after a short conflict, were forced to flee with a considerable slaughter ; the terror of the Lord upon the one, and a spirit of courage and resolution in the other being very manifest. After these, there was another party sent forth of 700 soldiers, to seize on all the passages : upon which about 17 masters of families, whose hearts God had in signal manner strengthened to the battle, 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 another time the protestants there joining in a greater number, being 300 under the conduct of the fore-mentioned captain *Gianavel*, 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 inquiry, 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 of peace, to get the sword out of their hands; however they pretended it as a compliment, put on neighbouring princes, who did intercede for the same.

Have we not also to reckon among the great works of the Lord in these last times, *Henry VIII.* of *England*, most violent in opposition to the truth, who by the pope was styled *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 marquis, 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 entreaties 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 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, though 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 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 V.* hindered a present prosecuting of this design. And his successor *Gregorins 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. 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 some way 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 highway 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 IV.* a religious princess, afterwards dutchess of *Lorraine*, to whom the foresaid Monsieur *Figureus* was her preacher: and unto him he made his address (though 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 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 church's safety) that there were many others in *Italy*, yea, in *Rome* itself, of the reformed religion, who had their secret meetings, and even *Gregory XIII.* before his advancement to the papacy, was thoroughly 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 entertained by that prince, where he sheweth that he saw him, and from his own mouth re-

ceived 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*' 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 *popish 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 very time, whilst the *king's commissioner* did rise from the throne to ratify this woful act, by the touch of the sceptre, 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 (1.) 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 public and visible witness from *heaven* against the same. (4.) Which was also most strange, upon the *Monday* 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 continued

all the time of their *reading* at the *cross*. And truly when the Lord thus doubled his 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, though not from any fear of their own sufferings, but with a respect to the 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 leaks; yea, the rudder of the ship breaking, so that the *pilots* were turned wholly hopeless, 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 hopeless 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 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 an-

other 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 five 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 become 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 *Wastraw*, a most bloody man, and otherwise 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 afterwards sore troubled in mind thereabout, he told him, *more* of that *practice* would be the *best cure* : for he himself had killed six, and 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 account 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 and repentance by his afterwalk, 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's sake he would give the one again, for he had no more to maintain his poor family, but what he could gain by them; but it was in vain. He carrieth them home with him, 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 sought 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 into *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 lain 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 public 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, and forced them to see a truth and 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, and

after his conversion (as he shewed to many of his christian friends) was in such a frame, so affected with a new world wherein he was entered, the *discoveries of God*, and of a life to come, that for some months together he did scarce ever sleep, but was still taken up in *wondering*: His life was very remarkable for tenderness, and near converse with God in his walk; and which was worthy to be noticed, one day after a sharp trial, having his only son suddenly taken away by death, he retired alone for several hours, and when he came forth, did look so cheerfully, that to those who asked him the reason thereof, and 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, and 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, and *give it him back* according to his need; which accordingly this blessed man did with much seriousness practise; and on his death bed, to his minister, and divers christians that were present, he did solemnly declare, how wonderfully the *Lord* had *answered*, and 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 brought 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 and action, to break the government of the church of Christ in this land, and lay so much of his vineyard waste and desolate, and this in the height of their power and

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, and like a violent tempest did carry all before them, 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 and 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 and authority so much to turn many of the godly of the land, both ministers and others, out of their houses and families, tossing them from place to place, should thus be dealt with from the Lord, and recompensed with that measure; being forced to quit his lodging once and 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! And 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 men's 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 cheerfulness, 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 and 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 *cheerfulness*; 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 diffi-

culty, 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 godly 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 chosen 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 passed his word to the church for the fall and ruin of that adversary, fall 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, and 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, and his word is tried*, *Psal. xviii. 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 through 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.

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 enlighten those parts of the earth, on which it shines, than the sun, in its noonday 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 awe of God, and weaken their assent to the truth : for we see men every where making it their work, to load his way with reproach, and put discredit on his faithfulness, 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 incorrectness 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 against 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 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 itself 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 itself, yet by a *supernatural* light and evidence can only be known, which no human 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 discernibly 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 *entered 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 through 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 concernments 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 inexpressibly greater value, than that gold and treasure, which ever came from the *Indies*, does offer itself! I say the professed *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 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 stopped, 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 salve that heart aching 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, 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. i. 22.) the *Lord's* putting to his seal, which by all his people is well known : and have you not also (John iii. 33.) the *christian's* seal and witness most expressly held out and called 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 another 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 called 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 lxxxix. 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 public 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 iii. 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 passed 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 he 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, *Luke xxii. When you are converted, strengthen your brethren.* (4.) When a christian is confirmed, upon some remarkable *fainting 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 caused by his fainting? 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

discernible. Thus we see, *Hezekiah* after such a remarkable plunge and fainting, comes in with his witness, *Isa. xxxviii. 15. What shall I say? He hath both spoken, and himself also hath done it, &c.* And *David, Psal. xxxi. 22.* How concerned was he in such a duty, *I said I am cast out of thy sight; yet thou heardst the voice of my supplication.* (5.) When we see *atheism* much abound, and hath a *public* 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 tied; 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 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 xlii. 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. *Isa. xlvi. 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 *due* 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, *Psal. lxvi. 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 pressure 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. iii. 16.* 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, that 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 thronged 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. vi. 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 steps of his life he knows *God is true*, and *hitherto hath believed*. 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, and as it were judicially assisted 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 through 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.* vii. 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.* xxxii. 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 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 and 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 *choosing sin, rather than affliction*, do what in them lieth to *make God a liar*.

Inference III. From the scripture's accomplishment, is this, that *as there is a personal debt on the christian, there is a public 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 prophecy held-forth, (*Psalm cxlv. 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 something 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 and 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 and 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 *public 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 and 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; and 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 no private appearance can answer to a public record and monument, it is thence clear, that in a time of great encroachment on the truth, when a remarkable breach is like to be made, and the assault not from a private adversary, but a public 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 public 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. xii. 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 indifferency 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 brought in a debate; when *one line* of this is of more inestimable worth, than the crowns and sceptres 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 among 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 converse with God, in the secret and the more public duties of a christian, that is assuredly found ? Oh what cause is there to fear, the shadow and *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 *public 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 relig-

ion up again, which now is at so sore 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 seemed 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 hazard appears to the truth, or sore 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 farther 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 some time public *gazettes*, the great concernments of the neighbouring churches, and the more remarkable occurrences of providence therein, are but little known. I should account it *a token for good*, if something of a public 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 whilst 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 choice *English* pieces, in *other languages*, 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 another

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 *travail in birth, to have Christ formed* in their hearers, 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 it is 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 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 deery that excellent office and appointment of Jesus Christ for his church, because of the *abuse* thereof; whom I dare not, from the awe 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 ad-

vantage, the church and the power of religion hath by a faithful ministry, I must further add this, as a *deb*: 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 saddening 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 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 sky ; the church universal so sore benighted, that she hath almost lost her way amidst these mists, and among the multitude of these bypaths : for then it is not only incumbent on the public 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 inquiry, for a right discovery and *under-*

standing of the time; and shall shortly touch it in a few particulars.

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 perplexed 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 shore. 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 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 subservient 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 dis-

cerned : that after many conflicts, and sore wrestling, since her victory begun over *anticrist*, 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 *anticrist* and the *Lamb*, even in his falling state, (*Rev. xvii. 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, and 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 travail, 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 iv. 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 *anticrist* this day, and the advantage he seems to have, with these sore strugglings of the church of Christ, as in an extreme betwixt life and death, do more promise, than threaten ; and are a hopeful presage of 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 (*John iii. 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 adversary's side; for thus we find the scripture point forth *antichrist's* ruin, and the progress of his judgment 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 *catholic 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 soldier'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, and with whom is the number of 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 though 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 discernible, though little no-

ticed 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*; and 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 lives 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 *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 *Thess.* ii. 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 darkened, *his consuming* and mouldering 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 sky and morning brightness is to the watchman, of the day's 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 inquiry 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 inquire, 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 an awful and humbling impression ; for they truly threaten.* Yet I must say, with a reference to the *scripture*, and 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 though this or that particular church may be cut off, and spewed out of his mouth (as many have, and most of the particular churches may this day meditate terror : If he spared 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 oftèn 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 the very few *serious*, who are yet left (or delivered from that spiritual 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 *his time to be short*, and that it will be no continued or long storm, *Rev. xii. 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. xx. 7, 8.* where he is in a more special way let loose, but we find *v. 10.* his being *chained up for ever* follow. (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 sunshine 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 a 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. xx. 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 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 discernible : 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 sceptre, and snatch it from him ? And if this also be sure, and in the volume 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 sceptres 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 looked 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 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 *extreme exigence* of the church's case, and the Lord's *eminent appearing* for her relief. See *Isa.* xxx. 18. lxiii. 5. li. 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 surprised her. (2.) Is not such a disadvantage and forsaken case expressly held forth as one of *grace's opportunities of doing good to his people*? Read *Fer.* xxx. 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, and 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*, and 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.* xi. 34.) it is written, *Out of weakness they were made strong, &c.* I shall further add, Can there be cause, from the withdrawing of human 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.* vi. 1, 2, 3. Nor have her adversaries any cause of triumph thence, *Micah* vii. 8, 9, 10.

4. As to the present appearance of the time, is not this a *threatening sign*, which hath a very dreadful aspect on the church, even *that discernible loss and disadvantage the best now seem to be at, in their frame, and that under a*

growing trial of the church ; and 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 itself 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. xlviii. 9. For my name's sake will I defer my anger, &c.* (2.) We find the covenant made use of by the Lord, to assist a judicial procedure against his people. *Psal. cvi. 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 forfeited all the former grounds of confidence. *Deut. xxxii. 26.* (4.) We may read how sovereign grace 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 forwardly in the way of their heart, Isai. lvii. 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. *Hos. xiii. 9. O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself ; but in me is thy help.* Yea, hath not grace rescued those on whom their mercy must be forced, and while on a hot chase in departing from GOD ! *Hos. ii. 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. xxvi. 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*: and is not this a sad scripture presage of evil coming, when such are, (as it were) hastened away, that they may be *bid* 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 *Israel's* coming forth out of *Egypt*, taken away on a near approach of their entry into *Canaan*. (2.) It is sure, some of the greatest promises of the scripture, waits on the church, when brought to a very small remnant, *Ezek. vi. 8, 9. Isai. xxxvii. 31.* (3.) Hath not the Lord said in such a case, *The consumption determined shall overflow with righteousness? Isai. x. 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 another? 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 foretells 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 it 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 inquire, 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. iii. 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 comforta-

ble 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, *Luke xxi. 22*, and made subservient to the bringing forth some special truth 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. lxiii. 1. Ezek. ix. 4. Rev. iii. 10.* (3.) May we not see also the church's *enlargement*, and some of her greatest mercies thus ushered in? Which is clear, *Isa. lxiii. 4. Zeph. iii. 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 *Luke xxi. 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 public 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. xxvi. 21.*

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. ix. 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 subtle and indiscernible 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 *Samson* 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 public snares of the 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 *snares of that time*. For then the temptation of the time goes therewith, as the present distemper discovers itself, whether 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 between 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 defile-

ment from a *public* 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 *public 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 of present duty, he will with more facility find out the scent, on which the snare of the time is, how it directes 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 biassed* from any outward incitements. For this speaks men's finding a sad invention, to be rid of their *conscience*, by *extenuating* present controversies : 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 *fainting upon the heart*, from want of resolution to suffer for the truth, will not long want a *scruple in the bead*, to cause a debate thereabout ; and then it is 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 *public snare* in its 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 quarrelling, turns men's eyes off the public 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 most eminent in the church, were it a *Peter*, (*Gal. ii. 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 their 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 *1 Cor. xi. 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 ourselves, 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 are wont to *threaten*. 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 *adders' poison is under their lips*, whilst wrath is boiling in their heart, (*Psal. cxl.*) yea, that the cruel man can change his countenance, 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 sometimes 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. xxix. 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 *breastplate*: but he hath no piece of armour for his *back*, when he turns his face from resisting. It is sad, when the adversary is taught to fol-

low, 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 *public 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 subtile reflection 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, *Psal. lxxiii. 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* 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*, than 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 bear 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, whatever 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 subtile 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 discernible 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 *inquiry* 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 itself indifferent, *Circa sacra et cultum Dei*, is pressed by the magistrate, as necessary by virtue of his sole command, and to the subjecting the godly in things wherein they are not subject, and to the prejudice of another jurisdiction; can there be an inquiry 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 *public 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 so far down,

that they are like to lose their *band* 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 xvii. 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*. Though other foundations be shaken, the godly man does then lie 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 even sinking into the grave, since the Mediator will bring it up again? Men's evil eye cannot hurt, 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*, and 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 is 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 certainty 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 mettle, who with resolute peremptoriness would *for-sake 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 *Moseses* are dead, by whom we were led through 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 discernibly 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 offscouring 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 sometimes been forced to give in his retraction, and 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 style; 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. viii. 11.* And it is there men may see, a short relieve 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; and 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 profanity 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 itself 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 inconceivable, 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 tes-

timony 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 bias ? 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 another part touched it a little, I would add further some few remarks, 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 and 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 and 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 infests 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 *aristocratic*, 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 as 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 politic grounds and with respect to an outward interest, it is easy to judge, that way wants not a persuading bait ; if something great-

er were not to preponderate, 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. ii. 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 discernible 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 Thes. ii. 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 *human 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 itself 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 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 launch 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 politics are found too weak, to ward off some impression of that, which with an awful appearance and authority does justify itself 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 itself; which if men would but weigh in the balance 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 weakening of the assent of many 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 within 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 *Josbua* did in such a case (*Josb. xxiii. 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 *quadrately* and marvellously *accord* with the *word*? I challenge an instance. But this, I am sure, men must see, there are such things fallen 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? 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 (whatever they design therein) must be concentric with his great end, nor out of that bounds can they possibly move. (4.) I must attest the world, if they do not see, *this way of godliness*, which seems 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 another witness! (5.) Must you not confess, there is *no such deep in the heart of man*, or so close and subtile 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 unveiled, which from their dearest friend they have concealed. (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 discernibly, though of the same parts; that *suits* and does accommodate itself 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 discernible 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 *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 composure 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 mon-

strous 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 composure 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 earth!* And here I challenge men, though 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.



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