

expression, verse 15, is somewhat more emphatical, "For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God and the gift by grace, which is by one man Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many." If it shall be supposed that many more millions of men are dead through the offence of Adam, than are justified or made alive by the grace of God in Christ, Paul's glorying over the grace of God in Christ, as much more abounding to the justification of many, must fall to the ground. For, if by the offence of Adam all became dead, and a few only be made alive by the gift of the grace of God in Christ, who will not judge but that the offence of one much more abounded to the death of many, than the grace of God to the justification or life of many?

6. And lastly, the apostle having said, verse 20, that "Where sin abounded, grace superabounded;" he adds, verse 21, "that as sin hath reigned unto death, so did grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Now, evident it is from verses 14 and 12, that sin reigned over all men, without exception, unto death; therefore, grace must have a proportionable reign unto life, *i. e.* must by a strong and overruling hand put all men into a capacity or estate of life and salvation. If so, it undeniably follows that Christ died for all men, without exception for any, because otherwise all men could not be put into an estate of grace or salvation by Him.

Nor was this interpretation counted either heretical or erroneous by the most orthodox expositors of old. Chrysostom himself commenting upon the place, makes the apostle to speak thus, "If all men were punished through the offence," (or his offence, meaning Adam's,) "they" (*i. e.* these all men) "may doubtless be justified from hence;"* (*i. e.* by that overabundance of grace and righteousness as he there speaketh, which is given in Christ.) The former part of his commentary is more full and pregnant to this purpose, but because the transcription would be somewhat long, I leave it to be read in the author himself. Nor are there wanting amongst our late reformed divines, surnamed orthodox, men of eminent learning, piety and worth, who subscribe the said interpretation. "That our reparation," (restoration,) saith Mr. Bucer upon the place, "is made by Christ, and that it is more efficacious than the sin of Adam, and that it is of larger extent, is that which the apostle argueth in this and the following section.† Again, upon those words, "Sed non ut παράπτωμα," and thus: "The apostle here meaneth, that the grace of Christ did more profit mankind, than the sin of Adam damnified it." Doubtless, if all men, without exception, were brought into a condition of misery by the sin of Adam, and but a handful only, in comparison, made happy by the

* Λέγων, ὅτι εἰ διὰ παραπτώματος ἐκείνου ἐκολάσθησαν ἅπαντες, δύναται ἂν καὶ ἐντεῦθεν δικαιωθῆναι.

† Reparationem nostri factam per Christum, et esse Adæ noxâ efficaciorē, et patero latius, est id quod Apostolus hæc, et sequenti sectione—pertractat. Intelligit gratiam Christi hominum generi profuisse amplius, quàm nocuerit lapsus Adæ.

grace of Christ ; the grace of Christ cannot be said to have profited mankind more than the sin of Adam damnified it. Yet again, upon verse 16, "For whereas the world was lost" (or undone) "by the one sin of Adam, the grace of Christ did not only abolish this sin, and that death which it brought," (upon the world,) "but likewise took away an infinite number of other sins, which we, the rest of men, added to that first sin."* The commensurableness of the grace of Christ with the sin of Adam, in respect of the number of persons gratified by the one, and damnified by the other, cannot lightly be asserted in terms more significant. Nor do the words following import any thing contrary hereunto, wherein the author addeth, "that the said grace of Christ bringeth all that are of Christ into a full or plenary justification." For by a full or plenary justification, it is evident that he means an actual justification, yea, (as he explains himself a little after,) that justification which shall be awarded unto the saints at the great day of the resurrection ; to the obtaining of which, it is acknowledged, that men must receive a new being from Christ by faith. In what sense Christ abolished the sin of Adam, together with that death which it brought into the world ; and so in what sense he is said to have brought righteousness, justification, and salvation unto all men, remains to be unfolded in due place. Upon the 17th verse the aforesaid author yet more clearly attests the substance of our interpretation, where he gives an account how the grace of Christ may be said to be of larger extent than the sin of Adam, notwithstanding it be true that this grace took away nothing but what, in a sense, was the fruit and effect of sin. "If we consider," saith he, "that every particular man by his transgressions increaseth the misery of mankind, and that whosoever sinneth, doth no less hurt his posterity than Adam did all men ; it is a plain case, that the grace of Christ hath removed more evils from men than the sins of Adam brought upon them. For though there be no sin committed in all the world which hath not its original from that first sin of Adam, yet all particular men who sin, as they sin voluntarily and freely, so do they make an addition of their own proper guilt and misery. *All which evils, since the alone benefit of Christ hath taken away, it must needs be that it hath taken away the sins of many, and not of one only. Manifest, therefore, is it, that more evils have been removed by Christ, than were brought in by Adam.*"† And yet more

* Cum enim ex uno Adæ peccato orbis perditus sit, gratia Christi non hoc solum peccatum, et mortem quam intulit, abolevit, sed simul infinita illa sustulit peccata, quæ reliqui homines primo illi peccato adjecimus.

—inque plenam justificationem, quotquot ex Christo sunt, adduxit.

† Verum si consideramus singulos mortalium, suis quoque transgressionibus malum generis humani auxisse, et non minùs, quicumque peccant, suis posteris nocere, atque nocuit omnibus Adam ; in aperto est, gratiam Christi plura depulisse ab hominibus mala, quam Adæ noxa intulerit. Nam licet nihil in orbe peccatum sit, quod ex illo primo Adæ lapsu non trahat originem ; tamen singuli qui peccant, ut suâ quoque liberâ voluntate peccant, ita suum quoque adjiciunt reatum, suam adferunt perniciem. Quæ omnia mala, cum beneficium Christi solum sustulit, certè jam multorum peccata sustulit, non unius Adæ. Manifestum est igitur plura per Christum mala submotâ esse, quàm Adam obtulerit.

plainly and expressly to the point in hand (if more may be) upon verse 18, the sense whereof he gives thus : " As by the fall of one, sin prevailed over all, so as to make all liable unto condemnation : so likewise the righteousness of one so far took place on the behalf of all men, that all men may obtain the justification of life thereby."* By this time I suppose Bucer hath said enough, both to assert the interpretation of the Scripture in hand, that hath been given, as also the universality of redemption by Christ.

The said Scripture calls for the sense and exposition asserted, with such a loud and distinct voice, that Gualter also (another divine of the same rank and quality with the former) could not but hearken to it. " As by the offence of one," saith he, completing the apostle's sentence, and rendering his sense therein, " condemnation was propagated unto all men ; so also, by the righteousness of one, justification of life was propagated, or imparted, unto all men." Again thus, " As by the offence of one Adam, the judgment or guilt came upon all men to condemnation ; so also by the righteousness of one Jesus Christ, the gift or benefit of God, abounded unto all men to justification of life."†

Any man that shall read with a single eye what Calvin himself hath written upon the said contexture of Scriptures, cannot judge him an adversary to the premised exposition. " Paul," saith he, upon verse 15, " simply teacheth that the amplitude," or compass, " of the grace purchased by Christ, is greater than of the condemnation contracted by the first man."‡ Not long after, " The sum of all comes to this, that Christ overcomes Adam: the righteousness of Christ vanquisheth Adam's sin: Adam's malediction," or curse, " is overwhelmed with Christ's grace: the death which proceeded from Adam is swallowed up by that life which comes from Christ."§ Doubtless if the curse brought upon men by Adam prevails and remains still untaken off upon far the greatest part of men, it is not overwhelmed with the grace of Christ: nor is the death which proceeded from him swallowed up by the life of Christ, if still it reigns and magnifies itself over and against far greater numbers of men than the life itself of Christ preserves or delivers from it. Upon verse 18, he presenteth his thoughts in these words, " He," Paul, " makes grace common unto all men, because

* Infert hic apostolus, repetit, et summat, quæ tribus præmissis collationibus disseruit: hæc scilicet. Sicut ex unius lapsu peccatum in omnes invaluit, ut redderit omnes condemnationi obnoxios: sic etiam unius justitiam in omnes homines obtinuisse, ut justificatio vitæ omnibus contingat.

† Itaque quemadmodum per unius offensam in omnes homines propagata est condemnatio: sic etiam per unius justitiam in omnes homines propagata est justificatio vitæ. Sicuti per unius Adami offensam judicium sive reatus venit in omnes homines ad condemnationem: sic etiam per unius Jesu Christi justitiam, donum sive beneficium Dei redundavit in omnes homines ad justificationem vitæ.

‡ Sed simpliciter majorem gratiæ per Christum acquisitæ amplitudinem esse docet, quam contractæ per primum hominem damnationis.

§ Huc autem summa tendit; quia Christus Adamum superat. Hujus peccatum, illius vincit justitia: hujus maledictio, illius obruitur gratiâ: ab hoc mors profecta, illius vitâ absorbetur.

it is exposed unto," or laid within the reach of, "all men: not because it is in the reality of it extended unto all men," *i. e.* not because it is accepted or received by all men, as the words following plainly show: "For," saith he, "though *Christ suffered for the sins of the whole world*; and through the goodness or bounty of God be offered unto all men, yet all men do not take, or lay hold on him."* So that if Calvin would but quit himself like a man, and stand his own ground, he would remonstrate as stoutly as Corvine, or Arminius himself.

CHAPTER VII.

The third sort, or consort of Scriptures, mentioned Chap. V., as clearly asserting the Doctrine hitherto maintained, argued, and managed to the same point.

WE shall not need, I conceive, to insist upon a particular examination of these Scriptures, one by one, (the method observed by us in handling the two former parts,) because they are more apparently uniform and consenting in their respective importances than they. In which respect, a clear and thorough discussion of any one of them, or a diligent poising of the common tendency and import of them all, will be sufficient to evince their respective compliances with the cause in hand. The prospect of these texts is this. "And him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out," John vi. 37; "He that believeth in me, shall never thirst," ver. 35; "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved," Mark xvi. 16; "That *whosoever* believeth in him should not perish," &c. John iii. 16; "That through his name, *whosoever* believeth in him, shall receive remission of sins," Acts x. 43; "Even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, *unto all, and upon all* who believe; for *all* have sinned," &c. Rom. iii. 22, 23; to omit very many others of like tenor and import.

In all these Scriptures, with their fellows, evident it is that salvation is held forth and promised by God unto all, without exception, that shall believe; yea, that it is offered and promised unto all men, upon the condition of believing, whether they believe or no. So that, upon such declarations of the gracious and good pleasure of God towards the universality of men as these, the ministers of the gospel, or any other men, may with truth, and ought of duty upon occasion, say to every particular soul of man under heaven, "If thou believest thou shalt be saved," even as Paul saith that he preached Christ, "admonishing *every man*, and teaching *every man* in all wisdom, that he might present *every man* perfect in

* *Communem omnium gratiam facit, quia omnibus exposita est, non quod ad omnes extendatur reipsa. Nam etsi passus est Christus pro peccatis totius mundi, atque omnibus indifferenter Dei benignitate offertur, non tamen omnes apprehendunt.*

Christ Jesus," Colos. i. 28. Yea, this apostle, speaking of God himself, saith, that "he admonisheth all men every where to repent," Acts xvii. 30. Now if the gospel, or God in the gospel, offereth salvation unto all men, without exception, and insureth it accordingly upon their believing, certainly he hath it to bestow upon them, in case they do believe: otherwise he should offer or promise that unto them which he hath not for them, nor is able to confer upon them, though they should believe. If he hath salvation for them, or to bestow upon them upon their believing, he must have it in Christ: because he hath no other treasury or storehouse of salvation, but only Christ.* "Neither is there salvation in any other," &c. Acts iv. 12. If God hath salvation in Christ for all men, Christ must needs have bought and purchased it for them with his blood, inasmuch as there is no salvation, no not in Christ himself, without or otherwise than by remission of sins; nor any remission of sins in or by him, without shedding of blood. Therefore all those Scriptures, wherein God promiseth and ascertaineth salvation unto all men, without exception, upon their believing, are pregnant with this truth, that Christ laid down his life for the salvation of all and every man.

If it be here replied and said, But though God in the gospel offers salvation unto all men, and promiseth salvation unto all men upon condition of their believing respectively, yet knowing certainly beforehand that none will believe, but only such and such by name, as viz. those for whom there is salvation purchased by Christ, he may upon a sufficient ground, and with security enough, promise salvation unto all men, upon condition they will believe, I answer,

Though God, by means of the certainty of such his knowledge, may, without danger of failing in point of promise-keeping, or of being taken at his word to his dishonour, promise salvation unto all men, without exception, upon the terms specified, though it should be supposed that Christ hath not purchased salvation for all men; yet upon such a supposition as this, he cannot, either with honour or otherwise, or with truth, make any such offer or promise. Not with honour; because for a man, that is generally and certainly known to be worth but only one thousand pounds in estate, to offer or promise an hundred thousand pounds to any man that shall be willing to serve him, or to do such or such a courtesy for him, though he knew certainly that no man would accept his offer in either of these kinds, yet would such an offer or promise be matter of disparagement to him in the sight of wise and understanding men, yea, render him little other than ridiculous. In like manner, it being supposed by our antagonists in the cause now under plea, that God hath declared it unto all the world in his gospel, that Christ hath died but for a few men, in comparison, and, consequently, that himself hath salvation only for a few, in case he should promise salvation unto all men without exception,

* See more of this, Chap. viii.

upon what account, service, or condition soever, must needs turn to dishonour in the highest unto him, and represent him unto his creature extremely unlike to himself. Suppose the devil had certainly known, as very possibly he might, that the Lord Christ would not have fallen down and worshipped him, upon any terms or conditions whatsoever, would this have excused him from vanity, in promising him all the kingdoms of the world upon such a condition, when, as all the world knew, that not one of these kingdoms were at his disposal.

Again, 2. Neither can God, nor any minister of the gospel, say with truth to every particular man, if thou believest thou shalt be saved, unless it be supposed that there is salvation purchased or in being for them all. Because the truth of such an assertion cannot be salved by this, that all men or every particular man will not believe. The truth of a connex, or hypothetical proposition, of which kind this is, If thou Peter, or thou John believest, thou shalt be saved, doth not depend upon any thing that is contingent, no, nor yet upon any thing that is extra-essential to the terms of the proposition itself, (such as is, as well the non-believing as the believing of particular men,) but upon the essential and necessary connexion between the two parts of the proposition, the antecedent and consequent. If this connexion be contingent, loose, or false, the proposition itself is false, though in every other respect it should be accommodated to the best. As, for example, in this proposition, If Isaac were Abraham's son, then was he truly godly; both the parts considered apart, are true; for true it is, 1. That Isaac was Abraham's son: and 2. That he was truly godly; yet the proposition is absolutely false; because there is no necessary or essential connexion between being Abraham's son and true godliness: therefore the one cannot be truly inferred or concluded from the other. In like manner, when I shall say thus unto a man, If thou believest thou shalt be saved, it is neither his non-believing, nor the certainty of my knowledge that he will not believe, that either maketh or evinceth such a proposition to be true: because neither of these relates to the connexion of the parts thereof, nor contains the least reason or ground why the latter should follow upon the former. The man's not believing is no reason at all why, upon his believing, he should certainly be saved: no more is my knowledge, how certain soever it be, that he will not believe. But to verify such a proposition or saying, there must be a certain and indissolvable connexion between such a man's salvation and believing, in case he should believe. Such a connexion as this there cannot be, unless there were salvation for him, which he might have and enjoy in case he should believe. Now certain it is, that if Christ died not for him, there is no more salvation for him, in case he should believe, than there would be in case he should not believe: there being no salvation for any man, upon any terms or condition whatsoever, unless Christ hath purchased it for him by his death. Nor doth Christ's purchasing salvation for any man, depend upon such

a man's believing; no more doth his non-purchasing salvation for him upon his not believing. So that, unless it be supposed that Christ hath purchased salvation for a man, whilst he remains yet an unbeliever, and though he should always remain an unbeliever, it cannot be supposed that he purchased salvation for him, though he should believe: and, consequently, there can be no truth in this proposition or assertion, spoken to a man who should not believe. If thou believest thou shalt be saved; it being certain, upon the aforesaid supposition of Christ's non-dying for him, that he should not, could not be saved, no not though he should believe.

If it be replied, Yea, but the truth of this saying to any man whatsoever, "If thou believest thou shalt be saved," is sufficiently salved upon this account, that Christ died sufficiently for all men, though not intentionally, so that in case any man whatsoever shall or should believe, there is salvation ready for him in Christ.

I answer, that the vanity, or mere nullity rather in respect of the coincidence of the members of this distinction, wherein Christ is affirmed to have died sufficiently for all men, but denied to have died intentionally for all men, hath been demonstratively and at large evinced formerly. I here only add, that if there be salvation ready in Christ for all and every man in case they should believe, then must this salvation be found in him, either naturally and in respect of his mere person, or by way of purchase and procurement, *i. e.* by means of his death. No man, I presume, will affirm the former, as, *viz.* that there is salvation in Christ for any man, in respect of his mere nature or person; or howsoever, himself plainly denies it: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground, and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit," John xii. 24. If there be no salvation in him for men but by purchase, and this with his blood, then hath he no more salvation in him than what he thus purchased; no man hath any thing more by purchase than what he hath bought or purchased. Therefore, if Christ hath salvation in him for all men without exception, he must have purchased or bought it for them with his blood. If so, he must either purchase more than he intended, or else intend to purchase salvation for all and every man. And what is this, without any parable, but to die intentionally for all men? Therefore the distinction of Christ dying sufficiently for all men, but not intentionally, is ridiculous, and unworthy from first to last of any intelligent or considering man.

Nor is that distinction, because it relates to the subject-matter of our present chapter, so emphatically insisted upon by Mr. Rutherford, of much better import. "That eternal life," saith he, "should be offered unto all and every individual man, upon condition of faith; and that life should be offered unto all and every individual man, out of an intent on God's part to give life unto them in case they believe, are two sayings widely different."*

* *Longo differunt ista, vitam æternam omnibus offerri et singulis, sub conditione fidei; et omnibus et singulis offerri vitam ex Dei intentione dandi illis vitam, si crediderint.—Sam. Rhetorfortis. Exercit. Apolog. p. 309.*

For, doubtless, the latter hath every whit as much truth in it, yea, every whit as much clear and pregnant truth in it as the former, yea, hath in effect one and the same truth. For when God offers eternal life unto all and every individual man, upon condition of faith, is it not his intention that they should have eternal life upon their faith, or in case they should believe? If not, then in such an offer he should offer and promise that which he intends not to give or perform, no not according to the tenor of his promise. If it be said, in favour of the distinction, But though God intends to give eternal life to all and every individual man, upon condition they believe, this being the express tenor of his offer or promise, yet it follows not that such an intention in him should be his reason or ground of tendering such an offer or promise unto them? Unto this I answer, That if this were the intent of the author, I mean to difference the latter proposition from the former in point of error or falsehood, upon this account, because the latter supposeth such an intention, as that mentioned, in God, to be the adequate reason or motive why he tenders such an offer or promise unto them, I should not much gainsay, because, I suppose, that God hath indeed other reasons, and these of greater weight, why he makes a tender of salvation unto all men upon condition of faith, than his intention of giving salvation unto them in case they shall believe. Yea, I do not conceive that either God or men do any thing which they intend, simply out of their intentions thereof, or because they intend it, but out of a desire to effect, or to procure the effecting of it, or because they desire it.

But that the author's meaning in impleading the said latter proposition of error was far differing from this, appears sufficiently by the account which himself gives hereof in the sequel of his discourse. From this account it clearly appears, that in framing the said latter proposition, he useth those words, "ex Dei intentione," for "cum Dei intentione," and placeth the error of the proposition in this, viz. that it supposeth an intention to be in God of giving life unto all men upon their faith, when he makes the offer mentioned unto them. To prove this to be an error, he argues to this effect, from John xvii. 2, for his other arguments are plainly ἀποδείκνυσα; "God the Father gave power unto the Son to give eternal life to those *only* who were given unto him by the Father. But reprobates," saith he, "are not given unto the Son by the Father; therefore the Father gave no power unto the Son to give eternal life unto reprobates; and consequently the Son can, either according to his own, or to his Father's intention, offer remission of sins or eternal life unto reprobates." To this I answer, That the whole proceed of the argument ariseth from a mistaken ground, or a plain misunderstanding of the Scripture upon which it is built. For by a "power given unto the Son to give eternal life," &c. is not meant a power of dying for men, one or other, but a power of an actual and real investing men with eternal life, or a power to confer eternal life actually upon men, as appears from the

former clause of the verse: "As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life," &c. From whence it is evident, that the power here spoken of as given unto the Son to give eternal life, &c., is a consequent branch or effect of that power or sovereignty which the Father hath given him over all mankind, as, viz. to dispose of them, especially in respect of their eternal estates and conditions, according to such rules of righteousness and equity as the Father, with the Son, have judged meet and accordingly agreed upon, for the regulating of such high and important dispensations. Now, a power of conferring eternal life upon men, may very well be conceived to be a branch or part of that sovereignty or larger power, which the Father hath given unto the Son over all flesh. But an injunction or command, or a free leave or liberty, notion it how you please, given unto Him to die for a few men, cannot reasonably be looked upon as any part or branch, especially as any such considerable or high-importing branch as this here expressed must needs be conceived to be, of that most transcendent and majestic power. Or,

2. By eternal life may very well be meant, not eternal life properly and formally so called, as, viz. the blessedness and glory of the world to come, but such a discovery or manifestation of God and His counsels, which is an effectual means to bring men in time to the possession and enjoyment of this life. It is a frequent dialect of Scripture to call the means and cause, yea, and sometimes an opportunity only, which are proper and effectual for the compassing, effecting, or obtaining a thing, by the name of the thing itself, which is to be, or may be, procured or effected by them. Thus Numb. xxii. 7, the wages or rewards by which the elders of Moab sent from Balak the king, to Balaam the wizard, expected to procure divinations, or some imprecatory and devilish practices against the people of God from him, are termed divinations. "And the elders of Moab," saith the text, "and the elders of Midian went, and divinations in their hand," &c. Thus, good tidings is put for the reward which good tidings usually procure unto them who bring them, 2 Sam. iv. 10. In this phrase of speech, the Scriptures, or the saving knowledge of God therein revealed, are, according to the general sense of our best interpreters, termed salvation, John iv. 22. So again, Heb. ii. 2. Thus wisdom is called a man's life, "Keep her, for she is thy life," Prov. iv. 13, because she is the means of life, *i. e.* of peace and well-being unto men. In this sense also, to forbear further instances which are in great numbers at hand, the gospel, and sometimes the preaching or ministry of it, is frequently termed the kingdom of heaven. According to this manner of speaking, so familiar in the Scriptures, by eternal life, which the Son had power given him over all flesh, that he might give to as many as the Father had given him, may well be meant the words of eternal life, as Peter calls them, John vi. 68; or that manifestation of the name of God, as himself speaketh soon after, John xvii. 6, by which they might be effectually brought to the

fruition and enjoyment of eternal life. And that this indeed is the very meaning of our Saviour, is abundantly evident by the sequel of the context all along, for several verses together. For having said that the Father had given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as he had given him, verse 2, he immediately declares, verse 3, what he means by eternal life, "And this is life eternal, that they know thee the only true God, and him whom thou hast sent, Jesus Christ." This notion he still carrieth on, saying, verse 6, "I have manifested thy name unto the men whom thou gavest me out of the world; thine they were, and thou gavest them me," &c. So again, directly still to the same point, verse 8, "For I have given them the words which thou gavest me," &c.; yet again, upon the same account, verse 14, "I have given them thy word," &c. That which, verse 2, he had called eternal life, here he calls his Father's word, as before, the declaration or manifestation of his name, as we heard.

From the carriage of the context, that further is abundantly evident, that by those words, verse 2, "As many as thou hast given him," are not meant the elect, or the entire number of the elect, or of those for whom Christ died, (in Mr. Rutherford's sense,) but precisely and particularly his apostles, of whom alone he speaks, and for whom alone, and apart from the rest of the elect, he prayeth all along the chapter, until verse 20, when he enlargeth his prayer thus, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe in me through their word." From this passage, it is as clear as the sun at noon-day, that from the beginning of the chapter until now, he had managed his prayer and heavenly conference with the Father, with particular reference to his apostles, and had not mentioned any thing about the residue of the elect. That he speaks of the apostles only, verse 2, under those words, "As many as thou hast given me," is most apparent from verse 6, "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world; thine they were, and thou gavest them me, and they *have kept* thy word." First. Christ had not yet manifested his Father's name to all the elect, no, not to all the elect at this time in being in the world. Second. Neither could he say to his Father concerning all the elect, that they had kept his word, many of them having not as yet received it. Again, to pass by several things by the way making out the same truth, verse 12, thus, "Whilst I was with them in the world," (meaning those of whom he had spoken from the beginning of the chapter,) "I kept them in thy name," *i. e.* I preserved them from the exorbitances of the world by the knowledge of thy name, which still I have been communicating unto them; "Those that thou gavest me I have kept; and none of them is lost but the son of perdition," &c. Evident it is, that this son of perdition was one of that number of men which the Father had given him out of the world, and which he had kept entirely without the miscarriage of any one, this son of perdition only excepted. I presume, that neither Mr. Rutherford, nor any of his judgment, will

say that this "son of perdition" was one of the number of the elect; but certain it is, that he was one of that number of men which the Father had given unto Christ out of the world. The words are too express to bear a denial of this, "Those that thou gavest me I have kept; and none of *them* is lost but the son of perdition," &c. Therefore, by as many as the Father had given unto him, with an intent that he should give eternal life unto them, verse 2, are meant the apostles, and these only. These may be said to have been given unto Christ by the Father, not because they were the Father's by election from eternity, for doubtless the son of perdition, as hath been said, was none of His in such a relation, nor simply because they were by any peremptory designation appointed and set out by him from amongst other men, to make apostles for his Son, as if Christ had been necessitated to take these, and had no liberty or right of power to have taken any others into that relation; for how could then Christ say unto them that he had chosen them, viz. to the office and dignity of apostles, John vi. 70; xiii. 18; xxv. 16—19, but because God the Father by a work appropriable unto him, of which I conceive we shall have occasion to speak more at large hereafter, had qualified, fitted and prepared them for Christ's hand and nurture, and so to make apostles of in time; in respect of which work of God the Father, in and upon them, Christ, out of that wisdom wherein he excelled, and that knowledge which he had of the several frames and tempers of the hearts of men, made a prudent and deliberate choice of them from amongst other men for that service. "Thine they were, and thou gavest them unto me." They are said to have been the Father's, *i. e.* as it were, the Father's disciples, or persons "taught by the Father," John vi. 45, and so, after a sort, appropriable unto the Father, (as those that believe and are taught of Christ are said to be Christ's, or to belong to Christ,) before they became Christ's apostles, or were chosen by him upon this account; and are said to have been given unto him out of the world by the Father, because they were peculiarly qualified, and, as it were, characterized and marked out by the Father as fit matter to be formed into apostles by his Son. The word "give" is frequently found in such a signification as this in the Scriptures, and to import the preparing, furnishing, or fitting, whether of things or persons, for such and such ends and purposes, in reference to the accommodations of men. In this sense Christ is said to have "given some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry," &c.; *i. e.* to have every ways prepared, qualified, endowed, fitted, furnished persons for all these offices and services in his church, for the benefit of the saints, &c. Thus Acts xiii. 20, "he gave them judges," &c.; *i. e.* he qualified and furnished men amongst them, from time to time, with public spirits and with gifts fit for government, &c. So Neh. ix. 27, "Thou gavest them Saviours;" *i. e.* thou furnishedst men with hearts, and courage, and wisdom, &c., to save them. See Eph. i. 22, "He gave him to be

head over all things to his church;" *i. e.* he furnished him with sovereignty of power, wisdom, majesty, and with all manner of endowments otherwise requisite for such a head. Thus Psal. xlv. 11, "Thou hast *given* us like sheep for meat," &c.; *i. e.* by withdrawing thy presence, help, and protection from us, thou hast prepared and fitted us to become a prey and spoil to our enemies. In this sense also God saith to Jeremy, that he had *given* him (for so it is in the original) "a prophet unto the nations;" *i. e.* that he had furnished him, and meant to furnish him yet further, with prophetic gifts and endowments for the benefit of nations, if they would hearken to him, Jer. i. 5. So Psal. xxi. 6, "Thou hast given him to be blessings," (so it is in the original, and is your marginal translation;) *i. e.* thou hast so furnished, qualified, and disposed of him, (meaning Christ,) that whosoever will apply themselves unto him, may be made happy and blessed by him. See Ezek. iii. 8, 9; Isa. xliii. 16, in the original, with other like. Our Saviour himself useth the word in the sense now instanced from the Scriptures, when he expresseth himself thus: "All that the Father giveth me, shall," or rather, will "come unto me," &c., John vi. 37; of which place more in due time.

Nor ought it to seem any hard, uncouth, or unpleasant expression unto us, wherein that which is prepared or any ways made fit for us, and withal so disposed of or set in our way that we may readily and lawfully serve ourselves with it, is said to be *given* unto us by him or them who thus prepare and dispose of it. He that shall prepare wholesome and savoury meat, such as a man loveth, and shall set it before him, and give him free leave to take it or eat of it, may in sufficient propriety of speech be said to *give* this meat unto him, yea, whether he takes or eats of it upon such terms or no. So God the Father, having wrought and fitted the men whom Christ chose for apostles, to serve and honour him in this capacity, and withal disposed of them in their times, residences, and conditions in the world, so that Christ might both readily and lawfully call them to his service, he may very well in these respects be said to have given them unto him.

Thus, by a diligent and narrow inquiry into Mr. Rutherford's Scripture, it evidently appears that there is *nec vola nec vestigium*, not the least mutter or peep, of any such notion in it as he imagineth, *viz.* that if Christ should offer eternal life unto any more than only unto the elect, (so called by him,) he must needs do it besides his own and his Father's intention. Here is not the least word, syllable, letter, apex or *iōra* concerning either the Father's or the Son's intentions about the offer of salvation unto men.

By the brief discussions of this chapter, it fully appears that all those texts of Scripture which offer either forgiveness of sins or salvation unto all men without exception, and which promise either or both these unto all men upon, or upon condition of, their believing, which are very frequently numerous, do with the clearest

light and evidence of truth hold forth the universality of redemption by Christ: from whence it follows, in regular and due process of reason and discourse, that all they "make God a liar" in such Scriptures, who restrain the salvation or redemption purchased by Christ to any lesser number of men than all.

CHAPTER VIII.

Wherein the Scriptures of the fourth and last association (propounded Chap. v.) as pregnant also with that great truth hitherto maintained, are impartially weighed and considered.

WE shall, God assisting, examine every of these Scriptures particularly, and so shall have occasion to exhibit the purport and tenor of them respectively as they shall be produced to act their several parts in order; in which respect we shall not here transcribe them, especially considering the reader may with a very little pains see them in their muster, Chap. v.; but shall only point at their several dwellings or situations in the Book of God, which are these: Rom. xiv. 15; 1 Cor. viii. 11; 2 Pet. ii. 1; 2 Pet. ii. 20; Heb. x. 29; Matt. xviii. 32, 33, &c. We make these Scriptures of one and the same combination, and associate them by themselves because their import is in effect one and the same, they all supposing that Christ hath died for those who may perish notwithstanding, yea, for those who will perish; and, certainly, if he died for those who, notwithstanding his dying for them, may perish, yea, and for those who will actually perish, as well as for those who shall be saved, he died for all men without exception. For as for that opinion of the Valentine Council, in France, mentioned by Estius,* and adopted by him, as it seems, for his own, which supposeth some reprobates, as he calleth them, to have been redeemed by Christ, but not all,—this opinion, I say, is not like, as far as I conceive, to make many proselytes, nor to attract the judgments of considering men: for if the dying of Christ for men be to be esteemed matter of love to them, as without all controversy and question it ought, what reason can there be imagined why he should die for apostate reprobates, (who yet are that kind of reprobate for which only Christ died, according to that opinion), rather than for those who, though living and dying in unbelief, yet never contracted the guilt of so desperate and provoking a sin? But this by the way.

The tenor of the Scripture first in view, amongst those lately appearing, is this: "Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died," Rom. xiv. 15.

* In 2 Pet. ii. 1; see also Jo. Ball, Covenant of Grace, p. 238.

1. That the destruction here spoken of, whereunto the strong Christian is so earnestly admonished and dehorted by the apostle from exposing the weak, is not any temporal destruction, but that which is of body and soul for ever, is more clear than to require proof. It is not easily imaginable how or that a strong Christian, or any other man, by eating meat sacrificed unto idols, should expose a weak Christian unto the danger of any other destruction, but of that only which is decreed by God against those who shall depart from the faith, or finally apostatise from the profession of Christ. Besides, it is every man's notion, that this is that destruction, that first-born of things formidable and dreadful unto the precious souls of men, with which this great apostle had so much to do, and from which the great prize that he runs for with all his might in all his epistles, was to deliver them.

2. Whereas he chargeth men not to destroy those "for whom Christ died," though he doth not indeed suppose that all those shall be actually destroyed or perish, whom another may be said to destroy, *i. e.*, to do things tending to their destruction, which is the sense of the word in this place; yet this he clearly supposeth, that such men "for whom Christ died" are obnoxious to destruction, may be destroyed, and perish everlastingly. Otherwise we shall quench the spirit of his zealous tenderness over the precious souls of weak Christians, expressed in this serious item or charge unto others, not to destroy them; yea, and make him speak very weakly, and, indeed, ridiculously. To admonish men in a serious and solemn manner, to take heed of destroying those who are out of all possibility of being destroyed, especially this being known to the men that are thus admonished, is as if a man should seriously and affectionately entreat an archer with his bow and arrows about him, to take heed of shooting too high for fear of hurting the sun, and causing him to fall down out of the firmament of heaven.

If it be said; Yea, but though it be supposed, that the persons admonished in this case do know in the general that they, for whom Christ died, are not under a possibility of perishing, yet they may be ignorant in particular, whether those men whose destruction they are like to procure or promote by the abuse of their Christian liberty, be of the number of those men for whom Christ died or no; and consequently the apostle may upon a good account admonish them to take heed of destroying such.

I answer, it can at no hand be supposed that the persons here admonished should be ignorant, whether the men about whose destruction they are so deeply cautioned by the apostle, be of the number of those "for whom Christ died," because the apostle himself so plainly and positively asserteth it: "For whom," saith he, "Christ died." Besides, the main strength and stress of the argument or motive by which he enforceth the dehortation standeth in this, that those persons, whosoever they be, whose salvation they shall endanger by eating things sacrificed to idols, are of those for whom Christ died. Now, to press an exhortation or dehortation upon the

consciences of men by such a motive, wherein these men shall be supposed ignorant whether there be any truth or no, is to fight with a wooden sword; especially when it shall be yet further supposed, that such men are under an absolute incapacity of ever knowing whether there be any truth or no in this motive, which must needs be the case here, if we shall suppose there be any number of men for whom Christ died not. For, impossible it is, and so generally confessed to be, for one man certainly to know the truth of grace or faith in another; and much more to know the certainty of his perseverance unto the end; and consequently, according to the principles of anti-universalism, for any man to know whether Christ died for any man in particular and by name but himself.

Therefore most certain it is, that there is a possibility for those to perish and be destroyed for whom Christ died, or notwithstanding Christ's dying for them. And if so, then Christ's dying for men doth not suppose a necessity of their salvation; and if so, then Christ died as well for those who may not be saved, and shall not be saved, as for those who may, and shall; and consequently, for all men: for they who may, and shall be saved, and they who may not, neither shall be saved, together comprehend all men whatsoever.

The exposition of the Scripture in hand, as importing the death of Christ for those who yet may be destroyed and perish, is so pregnant with evidence and truth, that it hath subdued the judgments of all expositors I meet with unto it. "And Christ verily," saith Chrysostom upon the place, "refused not, neither to be made a servant, nor to die for him; and wilt not thou so much as neglect thy belly to save him? For although Christ was not like to (win, or) gain all men, yet did he die for all men, so fulfilling that which appertained to him,"* (in order to the procuring of their salvation.) Our late protestant expositors follow in the same path. "Another consideration," saith Calvin, "wherein the offence of the brethren renders the use of things, in themselves good, vicious (or faulty) is, that in wounding a weak conscience, the price of the blood of Christ is dissipated (or dissolved); for even the most contemptible brother, or member of a Christian society, is redeemed by the blood of Christ; therefore a (very) unworthy thing it is, that he should be destroyed for the satisfaction of any man's belly."† I trust that from henceforth, no man that shall read these passages from his pen will say but that Calvin clearly held a possibility of the destruction of such men for whom Christ died, and consequently, that Christ died for more than shall be saved: and if so, for all, as we formerly argued.

"He," saith Peter Martyr, meaning Christ, "hath redeemed him;

* Καὶ ὁ μὲν Χριστὸς οὐδὲ δούλος γενέσθαι, οὐδὲ ἀποθανεῖν παρηγήσατο δι' αὐτὸν, σὺ δὲ οὐδὲ βρωμάτων καταφρονεῖς ἵνα αὐτὸν διασώσῃς; Καὶ τοιγε οὐ πάντα ἐμελλε κερδαίνειν ὁ Χριστὸς, ἀλλ' ὅμως ὑπὲρ πάντων ἀπέθανε, τὸ αὐτοῦ πληρῶν.

† Altera ratio est, quod dum vulneratur infirma conscientia, dissipatur pretium sanguinis Christi: nam contemptissimus frater Christi sanguine est redemptus: indignum est ergo ut perdat, quo ventri satisfiat.

wilt thou *destroy* him, (speaking of the apostle's weak brother.) He hath shed his life, soul, and blood for thy brother; canst not thou for his sake abstain from a poor piece of meat?" Therefore the clear sense of this orthodox man is, that the redeemed of Christ may perish and be destroyed.

"If the salvation of our brethren," saith M. Bucer on the place, "be to be procured by us by the laying down of our lives, and nothing be to be respected in comparison thereof; how impious and accursed a thing is it, that any man should destroy a brother for meat." He had said immediately before: "If we follow Christ, he for the rescuing, or saving, our brethren, suffered death; therefore we also ought to lay down our lives for the salvation of the brethren, and to abhor the destroying of a brother more than death."* Therefore he also plainly supposeth, that even such a brother may be destroyed, and that for meat, for whom Christ died.

Musculus speaks by the same spirit with the former. "To this grieving of the brethren, the apostle aptly subjoins the destruction of those who are offended at the unadvised liberty of those that are strong. For the mind being thus grieved, as being weak, easily falls to this point, viz., to begin by little and little, being shaken through a sinister suspicion, to fall away from Christianity, and *from true faith.*" † In which words, the author clearly avoucheth the opinion of those, not only who hold that those may be destroyed for whom Christ died, but theirs also, whose judgment stands for a possibility of falling away, and that to destruction, from true faith. But as to the former point, he speaks more significantly, a little after the former words. "It is all one, as if the apostle should say, Christ would have him saved, and sought it by his death; but thou dost not only despise thy brother, but opposest Christ also, and makest void," or of none effect, "through thy rashness, and that for the sake of meat, that *death* of his, which he underwent *for his sake*, and by which thou thyself also art saved." ‡

Nor doth B. Aretius break rank, but marcheth in close order with his fellows. "The apostle's argument," saith he, "is from the effects: thou destroyest him with the use of things indifferent, whom Christ redeemed by his death. What madness is that?" And soon after, "Meat haply preserves thy life: but Christ died for him whom thou slayest, not by dying, but by living: what cruelty is this?" §

Let R. Gualter bring up the rear, for saying, "The apostle in

* Jam si salus fratrum etiam nobis morte nostrâ paranda est, nec quicquam illi non post habendum, quàm impium et execrandum sit, si quis perdat fratrem cibo, &c. Si Christum sequimur, ille pro adserendis fratribus nostris appetit mortem: et nobis igitur pro salute fratrum, ponenda anima est, morteque magis aversandum, fratrem perdere.

† Commodè subjicit huic contristationi, perditionem eorum, qui temerariâ fortium libertate offenduntur. Animus enim ad hunc modum contristatus, tanquam infirmus, facile eò labitur, ut incipiat sensim per sinistram suspicionem labefactus, deficere à Christianismo, et à vera fide.

‡ Idem est hoc, ac si dicat, Christus voluit hunc salvum, idque suâ morte quæsit: tu verò non solum fratrem contemnis, sed et Christo repugnas, et mortem ipsius, quam illius gratiâ subiti, quâ et tu servatus es, tuâ temeritate, idque cibi gratiâ, inanem reddis.

§ Ab effectis argumentum est: usum rerum mediarum perdis, quem Christus redemit suâ morte: quæ illa est insania? — Cibus tibi vitam conservat fortè: sed Christus pro illo mortuus est, quem tu occidis, non moriendo, sed vivendo: magna est illa crudelitas.

this teacheth that Christ himself is sinned against, yea, and that the merit of his death is overthrown when we destroy him whom he, by his death and blood, hath vindicated," or restored "unto life."*

Here are many witnesses, though many more might readily be summoned in with the same evidence, and those of the first-born qualification for authority and credit in such cases, (I mean men orthodox and sound in the judgment of those, who assume the same honour unto themselves, and who are the high opposers of the doctrine under protection in the present discourse,) speaking the same things plainly, expressly, and without parable, with the assertors of this doctrine. Neither, indeed, could they, or any other man, having such Scriptures before them as that last insisted upon, with the former, to order their judgments and thoughts, conceive, or speak otherwise, with any tolerable ingenuity, or without some such winking with the eyes which is unworthy men pretending friendship to the truth. But let us hear what the Spirit of God saith further in the point.

The next Scripture lately directed unto was 1 Cor. viii. 11: "And through thy knowledge," or through thy meat, as Chrysostom reads the place, "shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died." Some copies read the words with an interrogation, and thus, either our English translators or printers, or both, deliver them unto us; others assertively. This difference in the pointing makes none in the matter or substance of the doctrine contained in the words. Only the interrogative is more piercing and provoking to the consideration of the truth imported. The tenor of the place is the same, in effect, with that last opened; and clearly supposeth, upon the account given in the traverse of that Scripture, that such a person may miscarry in the great business of salvation, notwithstanding Christ's laying down his life for him. The reader is desired to revise our debate upon the former place for his satisfaction herein; unless, haply, the consent of the best interpreters in that behalf will balance that accommodation.

"Thy Lord and Master," saith Chrysostom on the place, "refused not to die for him; but thou makest no reckoning of him, no not so much as to abstain from a polluted table for his sake; but sufferest him to *perish after salvation procured for him* upon such terms." And soon after, "So that here are four accusations," or matters of charge, "and these exceeding high; 1. That he is a brother. 2. That he is weak. 3. That he is one *whom Christ so highly prized as even to die for him*. 4. That after all this *he perisheth* for meat." †

* Ita verò in ipsum Christum peccari docet, adeoque meritum mortis ejus everti, quando eum nos perdimus, quem ille per mortem et sanguinem suum in vitam asseruit.

† Εἶτα ὁ μὲν δεσπότης ὁ σὸς ἀποθανεῖν ὑπὲρ αὐτῆ οὐ παρητήσατο, σὺ δὲ οὕτως οὐδένα αὐτῆ ποιεῖς λόγον, ὡς μηδὲ τραπέζης ἐναγῆς ἀποσχέσθαι δι' αὐτὸν ἀλλ' ἔξῃς αὐτὸν ἀπόλλυσθαι μετὰ τὴν σωτηρίαν τὴν οὕτω γενομένην. "Ὡστε τέσσαρα τὰ ἐγκλήματα, καὶ σφόδρα μέγιστα. ὅτι καὶ ἀδελφός, καὶ ἀσθενῶν, καὶ οὐ τοσοῦτον ὁ Χριστὸς ἐποίησατο λόγον ὡς καὶ ἀποθανεῖν ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ, καὶ ὅτι μετὰ ταῦτα πάντα διὰ βρῶμα ἀπόλλυται.

The expressness of the words overruled even Calvin's pen also to an assertion of the same truth. "He is indeed weak whom thou despisest, but yet a brother: for God hath adopted him. Therefore, cruel art thou who hast no care of thy brother. But that which follows is yet more pressing; viz., that even those that are rude or weak, are redeemed by the blood of Christ. For there is nothing of greater unworthiness than that Christ should not scruple to die, that the weak might not perish; and we in the meantime lightly esteem the salvation of those who have been redeemed at so great a price. A memorable saying, whereby we are taught how highly we ought to value the salvation of our brethren; and of these, not only, as considered in the lump, or in the general, but of every one of them in particular, inasmuch as *Christ's blood was shed for every one of them.*"* Nor can it reasonably be pretended that by the brethren, for "every of which," he saith, "the blood of Christ was shed," he means only the elect. For evident it is, that he speaks of the generality of professors who were joined in external communion with the churches of Christ, many of whom he could not but know, were not elect, at least in the sense of such pretenders.

Aretius worketh the place thus: "Here is another fruit" (or effect) "of that licentious liberty, greater than the former. For the former only was, that by means of such an example men were strengthened in an evil error; but here he showeth, that he that is weak is even destroyed." And presently after: "In conclusion, this practice mightily differs from the example of Christ, for he died for the weak sinner," &c.† So that this expositor also clearly supposeth, that men may destroy him for whom Christ died.

Nor doth learned Musculus vary an hair's-breadth from the import of these things, upon the place demanding thus: "How, I pray, can he be excused, who for meat's sake destroyeth him whom Christ redeemed with his blood?" And not long after: "What greater sin can be committed against Christ, than to slay" (or destroy) "him for whom he himself died?"‡

I finish this account with Mr. I. Diodati's gloss upon the words. "Perish," *i. e.* saith he, "shall be in danger of wounding his conscience mortally; and whereas before, through tenderness

* Est quidem infirmus, quem tu contemnis, sed tamen frater: nam eum adoptavit Deus. Crudelis es igitur, qui fratris curam non habes. Sed vehementius etiamnum quod sequitur; rudes quoque aut infirmos Christi sanguine redemptos esse. Nihil enim indignius quam Christum non dubitasse mori, ne infirmi perirent: nos floccipendere eorum salutem, qui tanto pretio redempti sunt. Dictum memorabile, quo docemur, quanti nobis esse debeat fratrum salus: nec omnium modo, sed singulorum, quando pro unoquoque est fusus Christi sanguis.

† Alter fructus est licentiæ illius superiori aliquantò gravior. Nam prior fructus saltem erat, quòd in malo errore confirmarentur hujus exemplo. Hic autem quòd etiam perdatiur indicat; nec simpliciter, sed qui infirmus est—Denique factum hoc vehementer discrepat ab exemplo Christi: is mortuus est pro peccatore infirmo.

‡ Quomodo quæso excusari potest, qui cibi gratiâ eum perdit, quem Christus sanguine suo redemit?—Quid enim gravius peccatum in Christum committi poterit, quam eum occidere, pro quo ipse est mortuus.

of conscience, he abhorred any thing that drew near to idolatry, he may peradventure use himself to it to the shipwreck of salvation."

These expositors do not mince the words, as Piscator and some few others do, who destroying hereby the best of the nourishment in them gloss them thus: "Thy weak brother shall perish," viz. "as to thee, or as much as lieth in thee."* I confess such a bridle as this doth well in the lips of some other Scripture expressions, which will not be ruled by the truth without it, but it encumbers the Scripture in hand, and abridgeth the serviceableness of it. For if it shall be supposed, that that kind of offender against the weak Christian, of whom the apostle here speaketh, knoweth certainly beforehand that his act in eating meat sacrificed unto idols can have no such sad effect or sequel upon it, as the destruction of a weak brother, must he not needs be tempted hereby to despise the apostle's charge on that behalf, being grounded mainly upon such an assertion or supposal? and so be comforted or encouraged in his sinful practice? To put restrictions upon Scripture phrases or assertions, without necessity, and this demonstrable, either from other Scriptures, or unquestionable grounds of reason, is not to interpret the Scriptures now in being, but upon the matter to make new.

If it be replied in favour of the said limitation or explication of Piscator, That there will be great weight and force enough to command the consciences of men in the apostle's argument, and to take them off from abuse of their liberty, though it should be supposed that there is only a tendency in such a practice towards the destruction of weak believers, whether it be supposed that such persons may actually perish and be destroyed or not.

I answer, There can be no tendency supposed, in any action or means towards an impossibility. For that which is simply impossible, or which is the same in effect, impossible upon a condition that is immutable and cannot fail, is never the more possible, nor any whit nearer unto being upon any other account, or for any thing whatsoever that can be done. Therefore there is nothing can be done with any tendency towards the effecting of such a thing. Besides, were it granted, that there is a tendency in such a practice, the forbearance whereof the apostle urgeth towards the destruction of a weak brother, yea, and further, that this practice in respect of such a tendency in it were sinful, yet would there be very little in either, or both of these, to deter men from such a practice unless it be withal supposed that that sad effect, whereunto the said tendency is acknowledged to relate, may possibly be effected or produced by it. For the more secure a sinner may be that his sinful practice will not be so sadly consequenced, as the nature and property of it only considered, it might very possibly be, the greater temptation lieth upon him to adventure

* Peribit] nempe per te quidem, seu quantum per te stat.—See also the *Annotations of the English Ministers upon 1 Cor.* viii. 11.

upon it. The confidence which Judas had, that his act in betraying his Master would not have been accompanied with his death, but that he would now, as several times before he had done, find some way or other to make an escape from those into whose hands he was betrayed, was one main thing which betrayed him into the deadly snare of that most abominable fact. For it is said, that "When Judas saw that he was condemned" (which implies, that this was more than he feared or expected, notwithstanding his act in betraying him) "he repented himself and cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself," Matt. xxvii. 3—5.

Thirdly, and lastly, the mention and tender of an impossible effect by way of motive, to overrule the consciences of men against a practice in one kind or other whereunto they are inclined, is little less than ridiculous, especially when the said impossibility is presumed to be known beforehand to him, the overruling of whose conscience is attempted thereby. Suppose I be full of this persuasion, 1. That I am a true believer. 2. That being such, I am under an impossibility ever to fall away so as to perish, and under this double persuasion were very much addicted to such or such a sinful course; the consideration of my falling away and perishing were the most improper and impertinent argument that lightly could be pressed upon me, to persuade me out of the way and practice of my sin.

But some as willing to break loose from the Scripture in hand as the former, yet being not satisfied with their projection for an escape, try the same conclusion another way, and by another device. The apostle, say they, calls a weak professor of the gospel by the name of a brother, not as if it could be demonstratively known that he is a brother indeed, but because others stand bound by the law of charity to judge him such: after the same manner he saith that Christ died for him, not as if he would have men to believe this according to the judgment or with the certainty of faith, but only with the judgment of charity. Upon this supposal they draw up the apostle's argument for him, thus, "Thy brother shall perish, for whom," &c., *i. e.* by the abuse of thy knowledge, thou mayest be the destruction of him whom thou art bound in charity to look upon as thy brother in Christ, and one of those for whom Christ died. But,

1. Why stand we not bound to believe, only with the judgment of charity, and not with the certainty of faith, that Christ is the Son of God, or Saviour of the world, &c. as well as to believe only after this manner, that he may "perish, for whom Christ died?" this latter being as positively, as clearly, as roundly and fully asserted by the Holy Ghost, as either of the former? Or what is such a liberty of interpreting Scriptures, as this, being interpreted, but an effectual door opened for the reducing of all things whatsoever in matters of religion, yea, the truth and authority of the Scriptures themselves, to the judgment of charity, and

consequently to the casting the judgment of faith out of doors ?
But,

2. To enjoin me a belief, only according to the judgment of charity, where a belief, according to the judgment of faith, would be ten times more beneficial and serviceable unto me for the preserving of me from sin, especially when the ground-work of Divine Revelation before me will better, and with less descant upon the words, admit the latter belief than the former, which is the case in the Scripture in hand, is very contrary to the rule of charity, which restraineth me from doing my neighbour any prejudice or harm, as well in his spiritual, as outward estate : yea, and much more in the former, than in the latter.

3. If I stand bound to believe with the judgment of faith, that it is impossible for any man to perish, for whom Christ died, what will such a consideration as this (whether believed according to the one judgment or the other) viz. that Christ died for such or such a man, advantage me by way of preserving me from such a practice, which is apt to destroy him ? For if it be a truth, that Christ did die for him, I need not, according to the supposition mentioned, be at all tender about doing any thing, or forbearing any thing, out of any apprehension of danger, lest by the one or the other I should occasion his destruction. If it be a truth, that Christ did not die for him, upon what account should the apostle suggest unto me that he did die for him, or that it may be that he did die for him, by way of argument, to deter me from doing that which may tend to his destruction ? Suppose one part of the men in the world were impenetrable and invulnerable, the other part, as now they are, exposed unto the danger of death upon wounds received, were it a congruous motive or ground of persuasion, whereby to caution me from wounding or smiting such or such a man with a sword, dagger, or the like, to inform me that this man is or may be invulnerable ? or that I ought to presume or judge this man to be invulnerable ? Would not such an argument as this rather strengthen my hand to a smiting of him, than any ways occasion me to forbear ? They clearly make the Holy Ghost himself to reason at no better rate of understanding than this, in the Scripture in hand, who make it only a matter of charity to believe that Christ died for a weak brother ; and that in case he did die for him he is upon this account undestroyable.

4. And, lastly, most evident it is, that the scope of the apostle in that, 1 Cor. viii., and there is the same consideration of, Rom. xiv., is to deter Christians from an unseasonable and undue use of their liberty and knowledge : and this by an argument or motive drawn, not so much from what is unseemly, uncomely, or dangerous, in respect of themselves, but from the consideration of what danger or damage may very possibly accrue thereby unto others. The whole tenor and carriage of both contexts proclaim this aloud : so that there needs no more proof of it than only the perusal of the chapters themselves. Now the danger or damage which a Chris-

tian, by such an abuse of his liberty, as is here expressed, may very possibly create or occasion to another, the apostle affirms to be the destroying of his brother, for whom Christ died, *i. e.* the depriving of him of that great salvation and blessedness, which Christ by his death purchased for him. Now if this strong Christian stands bound to believe, according to the judgment of charity, that this person is a true brother, and one for whom Christ died, he stands bound to believe, according to the same judgment at least, if not according to the judgment of faith itself, that he may perish through the abuse of his liberty. Otherwise the apostle's argument for the dissuading of him from such an abuse, cannot be supposed to take any place in him, nor work at all upon him, in order to such an end. For no consideration or saying whatsoever, unless believed with one kind of faith or other, can have any influence or operation upon men, either to persuade them to or from any practice. If, then, the strong Christian stands bound to believe, be it only according to the judgment of charity, that the weak professor is a brother indeed, and one for whom Christ died, he stands bound, also, to believe, according to the one judgment or the other, that he may perish through his unchristian misdemeanor in the use of his liberty. If so, then he, and consequently every other Christian, stands bound in conscience to believe that such a man may perish, for whom he stands bound in conscience likewise to believe that Christ died. For a belief, according to the judgment of charity, where it is required, is matter of duty and of conscience, as well as a belief according to the judgment of faith, in cases appropriate hereunto.

Neither is it true, according to the principles of that opinion, which we now implead, that a Christian stands bound in conscience to believe, no not according to the judgment of charity, that all that profess the faith of Christ are true brethren, or persons for whom Christ died. For the patrons of this opinion generally hold, 1. That many who make such a profession, are hypocrites, and not true brethren. 2. That many of this number will perish at last in their hypocrisy and unbelief. And thus far they hold nothing but truth. But, 3. and lastly, they hold yet further, which they should do better to let go, that Christ died for none of those professors, who perish in the end. These things they hold and believe, not with a belief according to the judgment of charity, but dogmatically, and according to the judgment or certainty of faith. Now certain it is, that no man stands bound in conscience to believe that according to the judgment of charity, which is contrary to what he believeth, or what he truly judgeth himself bound in conscience to believe according to the judgment of faith: because no law or rule of charity bindeth me to believe, with any kind of belief whatsoever that God is a liar or untrue in his word, which is the foundation and rule of what I stand bound to believe, according to the judgment of faith. Such men, therefore, who believe, according to the judgment of faith, that all professors

of Christianity shall not at last be saved, cannot, with the safety of their own principles, say they stand bound in conscience to believe, with the belief of charity, that Christ died for them all: because in their notion, and according to their grounds, these two propositions are inconsistent in truth, viz. that Christ should die for all, and yet some perish. But thus it still happeneth to those who are engaged in the defence of an error; I mean, to entangle themselves, and to nonsensify such passages of Scripture which manifestly oppose their error, by such evasions, such unnatural and forced interpretations, which for the keeping alive of such a tenet, which were better dead, they are necessitated unto.

Nor will it avail them here to reply that they do not judge themselves bound in conscience to believe in a way of charity that all and every professor of the Christian faith are true brethren, or persons for whom Christ died, but only that there is no particular or single person in this heap concerning whom they stand not bound by the law of charity thus to believe, at least until they have ministered grounds of suspicion that indeed they are hypocrites; for to this I answer,

1. In such an explication of themselves as this, they clearly grant that for a time, viz. until professors administer grounds of jealousy that their faith is not sound, they stand bound to conceive of them all, one or other, without exception, (I mean, according to the judgment of charity,) that Christ died for them. But such a belief as this is contrary to what they believe dogmatically, as hath been said, and according to the judgment of faith; therefore they still interfere: for to believe that Christ died for every individual professor, and to believe that he died for all professors without exception, is but one and the same belief, nor can any difference be shown between them.

2. Neither is a symptom of hypocrisy, seen or observed in a professor, any sufficient ground for the reversal of such a judgment of charity concerning him, according to which we judged him a person for whom Christ died; because, 1. There may be many symptoms or signs of hypocrisy which are not demonstrative or of any essential eviction: and, 2. If a man were an evicted hypocrite yet may he recover from under this condemnation: therefore hypocrisy, though certainly known by a man, is no sufficient or reasonable ground, no, not according to the grounds of the doctrine now oppugned, why I may not or ought not, in a way of charity, to judge that Christ died for him notwithstanding. Thus, then, we see at last that no colour, plea, or pretence, no turning, shifting, or winding about this way or that will save the impertinency, that I say not importune absurdity, of any interpretation whatsoever of the Scripture in hand, which doth not in a clear comportance with the words, and scope, and drift of the apostle therein, suppose a possibility of their perishing for whom Christ died, and that in order to their non-perishing, as we shall have occasion to show further before the end of this chapter, in asserting another passage of Scripture to the same point.

The next in the order propounded is 2 Pet. ii. 1: "But there were false prophets among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction." Here it is clearly supposed, and as good as in plain terms affirmed, that men bought by the Lord, viz. Christ, as all interpreters expound, may, yea, and that some will, "bring upon themselves destruction." If so, then evident it is that the Lord Christ bought with the price of his blood as well those who perish, and are destroyed by their own wickedness, as those that are saved; and consequently all men without exception.

That which is excepted against this interpretation and inference from the place, is very faint and weak. If you desire it, as it is, I shall impart it. First, say some, the Lord Christ is not here said to buy those here spoken of, and who are said to bring destruction upon themselves, after the same manner or upon the like terms on which he is or may be said to buy those that are saved. These he buys for one end or with one intent, as viz. to adopt for sons; those, with another, as viz. for slaves and vassals only. I suppose the world never heard of such a purchase as this made by Jesus Christ till these latter days; I mean, of men only to make slaves and vassals of them. Certain I am that the Scripture makes Christ's freemen and Christ's servants or bondmen all one: "for he that is called in the Lord," saith the apostle, "being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant or bondman," 1 Cor. vii. 22. And, indeed, it is the blessed liberty and freedom which we obtain by Christ that makes us his servants or bondmen, *i. e.* which engageth us to be such unto him: but if Christ buys men with the price of his blood only for slaves and vassals, I would know whether they come to the actual enjoyment of this privilege (for such it must needs be supposed, as by the context itself will appear presently), by faith, or without faith. It cannot be said that they come to the possession of it by faith, for by faith men are put into the blessed relation of sons: "Ye are all the children of God," saith the apostle, "by faith in Jesus Christ," Gal. iii. 26. If they should come to it without faith, then Christ should show more favour, at least in this respect, to his vassals than to his sons. His sons come not to the actual enjoyment of their privilege but by faith; but his slaves, it seems, may attain the actual enjoyment of theirs without the performance of this or any other condition whatsoever.

Again, If Christ bought wicked men, and such as perish, for slaves and vassals, I would know whether they act the parts of slaves and vassals, and so serve him in that capacity which he aimed at in his purchase of them, or whether they act contrary to the nature and laws of slavery or vassalage. If they act as slaves and vassals, then they answer and fulfil their Lord's intentions and desires in his purchase, and so are not to be blamed, but

commended rather. If it be said that they act otherwise, I mean, than as becometh slaves and vassals, this must be either by acting righteously or unrighteously. If it be by acting righteously that they transgress the law of slavery, then it follows that men may prove better, and live more holily, than Christ ever intended or desired they should. If it be by acting unrighteously, then Christ did not intend that those whom he bought for slaves should live unrighteously, but holily. If so, then were his intentions towards those whom he bought for slaves altogether as gracious as towards those whom he purchased for sons; his intentions towards and concerning these, in his purchase of them, being clearly this, that they should "serve him in righteousness," Luke i. 74, 75.

Again, If Christ should buy some men for slaves and vassals, then, in case any of these, bought for such an end or with such an intention as this, should repent and believe, Christ should be not only disappointed in his bargain, but this by the righteousness of the persons bought or bargained for by him. To allege here, that it is impossible that any person who is bought for a slave should repent or believe, 1. Is absolutely untrue, there being no man but only he who hath sinned the sin against the Holy Ghost who is not in a capacity or possibility of repentance. 2. Though it were true, yet it hinders not at all the truth, or the force of the consequence in the proposition mentioned, viz. that in case any of those should repent whom Christ hath bought for slaves, then he should be disappointed in his bargain, and that by the righteousness of those bought by him. Reason teacheth us that a connex proposition may be demonstratively true and pregnant, though both the parts of it be never so false; as, for example, if Ishmael had been the natural son of Lot, he could not have been the natural son of Abraham. This is a proposition of a manifest and clear truth, yet both parts of it are false: for, 1. Ishmael was not the natural son of Lot. 2. He was the natural son of Abraham. Yet,

Again, if Christ bought some for slaves, then hath he some base, servile, hard, or drudgery work to do, such as is not meet for sons to put their hand unto, for they have no need of slaves that have no servile or slavish work to do; but Christ hath no work to do but that which is honourable and worthy the most ingenuous of all his sons to do. "All the commandments of God," David saith, "are righteousness," Psal. cxix. 172. And a little before, "All thy commandments are truth," ver 151. Now Christ hath no more work to be done by men in the world than God hath, neither hath God any more than what is expressed and set forth in his commandments, and all these, as we heard from David, "are righteousness," *i. e.* requiring nothing but what is righteous and just for men to do, and consequently meet for sons, yea, chiefly for sons, or righteous ones, to do. Yea, God hath no need of any man's lie, or of any man's sin whatsoever. Therefore neither did Christ buy any for slaves.

Once more, If the persons here said to be bought by Christ,

were bought by him for slaves, then must the apostle be conceived to extenuate their sin in denying him, by saying, that he bought them; whereas, by the emphatical carriage of the context it is evident, that his intent was by this consideration to aggravate that their sin, and set forth the heinousness, the high demerit, and provocation of it. He that buys men being slaves, to make them freemen, and set them at liberty, may well expect thanks and free service from them; and if they should not own such a person as their great benefactor, they deserve not only to be divested of that liberty, which this benefactor of theirs hath purchased for them, but to be subjected to a bondage seven times more grievous than that from which they were delivered. But if a man shall buy those that were slaves before, only to put them into a condition of worse slavery than that wherein they were, they are not to be blamed if they deny him to be any great benefactor to them. In like manner, if Christ shall be here said to buy the men spoken of for slaves only, he should buy them out of a more easy slavery, from under a lighter condemnation, only to put them into an harder bondage, and subject them to a greater condemnation; and, consequently, their not owning him, or their denying him as any benefactor unto them, were no just matter of provocation to him, nor of displeasure from God. What is that state of bondage or misery, in any kind, out of which Christ may be said to buy those whom he is supposed to buy for slaves? And what is that estate of slavery unto which he subjecteth them, or into which he putteth them, by this purchase, or buying of them, that so we may compare them together? Doubtless that bondage and misery out of which these men can be supposed to be bought by Christ, is, in the utmost line and pitch of it, but an obnoxiousness or lialleness to have been cast into hell-fire for their sin, committed in or contracted from Adam as soon as they were conceived or born, or the like; but that estate of slavery, whereinto (according to that interpretation of the place which we now oppose) they are bought, by being bought by Christ, is seven times more grievous than so. For, 1. Under this they are as liable to be thrown into hell-fire as in the other. Nay, 2. They are sure to be cast into hell-fire with much more guilt of sin upon them, than in their former condition they were capable of, and consequently to be so much the more grievously tormented for ever. Therefore their sin of denying Christ is so far from being aggravated by their being bought by him for slaves, that indeed it is extenuated, and brought to nothing by it; and, consequently, such an interpretation is diametrically opposite to the apostle's intent in the place.

Lastly, for this, If Christ bought the false teachers here spoken of, with other wicked men who in fine perish for slaves, in what respect or with what intentions may he be supposed to have bought such infants, who dying in their infancy, and before the committing of actual sin, are supposed through the want of the privilege of election to perish? Must we not have another device or notion

whereby to form the intentions of Christ in his purchase of these? For it can at no hand of reason be said or thought that he bought these for slaves, inasmuch as he never intended that these should live so much as to a capacity of doing any work at all in one kind or other for him. If the assertors of the interpretation now ready to fall, shall think to relieve themselves at this point, by saying, That it is not necessary that Christ should at all mind such children in his purchase, so as to buy them in one kind or other, but may well be conceived only to leave them as he found them, I would demand of them only this, How then, or upon what account such children should enjoy the benefit of life, though but for a short season, as for a month, two, &c., together with the comforts of life appropriate to their age, as nourishment, nursing, looking to, &c. If no consideration at all was had of such in the death and purchase of Christ, I would gladly understand what other friend they had to mediate with God for such things on their behalf: or whether God be so far well pleased with them without all mediation, as to indulge such mercies and comforts unto them?

Nor can it with any colour of reason be said, that Christ bought the persons here spoken of for slaves, or servants unto the saints, because, 1. As the sphere of the affairs of this world moves, the saints are rather servants unto the wicked than these to them. "Thy seed," saith God to Abraham, "shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs: and they shall serve them, and they shall afflict them four hundred years," Gen. xv. 13. And, 2. Though there be a sense, wherein all things are said to be theirs (the saints'), "All things are yours," &c., 1 Cor. iii. 22, &c., yet wicked men are in no other sense here said to be theirs, than that wherein Paul, Apollos, and Cephas, are said to be theirs. Therefore as it doth no ways argue, that Paul, Apollos, and Cephas, were bought by Christ for slaves, because they are here said to be the saints', *i. e.* for their service and benefit, so neither doth it prove that wicked or impenitent men were bought for slaves by him, because they are here said to be theirs also, or because in some sense they are or may be serviceable to them.

Some seem to grant upon the account of the Scripture in hand, that Christ did buy some reprobates; (*viz.* such as are spoken of herein, and afterwards more fully described in the chapter;) but, say they, this concludes not the question in hand, unless it can be shown, that there is the same reason of all reprobates. "For," they say on, "the thing to be proved is, that Christ died equally for all and every man: and it is one thing to die for the reprobate in some sense, and to die for them with an intention and purpose to save them: and if Christ died for some, and but some, that perish in a manner not common to all and every man, it is manifest he died not equally for all men."* How unlike himself is the author in these passages? or what pen ever dropt such divinity

* See Mr. J. Ball, *Covenant of Grace*, pp. 238, 239.

as this, with that which follows in the same contexture of discourse besides? For, 1. Is it reasonable to demand a proof, That there is the same reason of all reprobates (viz. in all circumstances, or in every respect,) to evince this, that Christ died equally for them all? Suppose some of them be greater sinners, and some lesser, and sufficient proof can be made, that Christ died for the greater sinners amongst them (which the author of the said passages plainly grants), is it a reasonable ground of denial that he died for the rest that they are lesser sinners than they? Or suppose there can be ten thousand differences shown between reprobates and reprobates, yet if there be none of them competent to evince a difference in the intentions of Christ, in or about his dying for them, they are all of them put together of no consideration at all, to prove that Christ died not equally for them, nor yet to infringe their assertion who affirm he did. As suppose some of them be tailors, others carpenters, a third part mariners, or the like, such differences as these, though never so many, are no ground whereon to conclude that Christ died not equally for them all.

Secondly. Whereas he makes this the state of the question between him and his antagonists, whether Christ died equally for all and every man or no; confident I am that this is a very palpable mistake, especially if by equally he means, as mean he must, if he means to speak congruously to the interest of his own discourse, intentions of procuring them by his death the actual enjoyment of equal conveniences, equal opportunities, equal accommodations in every kind for their respective salvations. For certainly no remonstrant was ever dissented to such a degree, as to hold that Christ intended in or by his death, to purchase any such uniformity of divine dispensations in the government of the world at the hand of God, that all and every man, for example, should enjoy a ministry of the same efficacy and power for conversion, edification, establishment, &c. or that all and every man should be disposed of unto callings equally free from, and equally subject unto, temptations, occasions, opportunities of sinning, &c., with twenty and ten particulars more of like consideration which might readily be instanced; nor was ever any contra-remonstrant engaged, or occasioned by any adversary to remonstrate against any such opinion as this. But the question between them touching the intentions of God and of Christ in his death was, whether God did not as truly, as really, as cordially intend the salvation of one man as another, considered as men, in or by Christ's death. That God, in his providential dispensations, putteth a difference between one man's spiritual opportunities and another's, doth at no hand argue any different intentions in Him towards the one and the other in Christ's death, but may flow from several other principles or causes, as either from a different use and improvement in men of their original stocks of grace, or from different applications that have been made unto God by others, as in prayer, intercession, &c. in the behalf of some, in respect of others; or from different respects borne by God to the

parents or forefathers of some, in regard of their signal piety and serviceableness to his great name in their generations above others; or lastly, from the wisdom of God in conjunction with his goodness in and about the government of the world, according unto which he judgeth it most expedient, as well for his own glory as for the comfort and equitable consideration of his saints, and such as walk before him with upright and perfect hearts, to make or to permit all that variety and disparity which is now seen in the world, in the spiritual conveniences or accommodations of men, some men's proportion and allowance in this kind being but the omer, and other men's the ephah, which the Scripture makes ten times larger than the other, *Exod. xvi. 36.* From some, or all of these considerations, and possibly from some others besides these, that inequality mentioned between men and men in the enjoyment of the means of grace may very probably arise, so that there is not the least colour of a necessity to resolve it into any difference of intentions in God in the death of Christ. And if difference of means vouchsafed unto men would argue different intentions in God touching their respective salvation in the atonement made by Christ's death, it will be found every whit as true that Christ died not equally for the elect themselves, as that he died not equally for all reprobates. Nay, if an estimate be made of the intentions of God in the death of Christ, concerning the salvations of men, by this rule it will be found that he bare more gracious intentions in the death of Christ towards many reprobates and their salvation, than towards many of the elect, or of those who in the end come to be saved. For nothing is more evident, than that many perish under greater and more excellent means of salvation than are vouchsafed unto many others, who yet are saved thereby. So that it is a reasoning of no value which concludeth that "Christ died not equally for all and every man, because all and every man have not the same means of salvation granted unto them," *Matt. viii. 10; xv. 28;* compared with *xi. 20, 21, &c.* Yet in what sense it is, at least, very probable, that all and every man have the same means of salvation vouchsafed unto them, shall be taken into consideration in due place.

Thirdly. Whereas, the same author saith, "that it is one thing to die for the reprobate in some sense, and" (another, I suppose he means,) "to die for them with an intention and purpose to save them;" I verily believe that neither he nor any of his persuasion in the present controversy, are able to credit such a distinction, unless captiously and altogether irrelatively to the business in hand, understood either by the Scriptures or any solid reason. For I confess I am yet to learn where, in the Scriptures, Christ is said to die for any, for whose salvation he died not. It is true Christ died not so precisely or adequately for the salvation of any man, as not to die for the obtaining of many other good things also for them, which are not comprehended in salvation formally taken; and in this sense the distinction may be admitted, inasmuch as upon this account it amounts to no more but this, it is one thing to say that Christ died

for the reprobate in some sense, *i. e.* for the obtaining of lesser mercies for them; and another, to say that he died for their salvation. I confess that these two assertions are not formally, and every ways the same, as lesser things and greater things, compared only between themselves, are not the same. But such a sense as this no ways accommodates the author's discourse; therefore, his meaning, to make him speak like a man, must be, that to say that Christ died for the obtaining of some good things for reprobates, may, according to Scripture principles and grounds, stand and be justified; but to say that he died for the salvation of such men, cannot by these principles and grounds be evinced. But in this sense the said distinction hath not yet been, nor, I believe, ever will be, in the latter member of it made orthodox or sound upon such terms.

The said author, in process of the same discourse, to save his bottle of hay or stubble from being burnt in the fire of the Scripture in hand, advanceth another distinction, every whit as helpless that way as the former. "We confess," saith he, speaking of the false teachers in the text before us, who bring swift destruction upon themselves, "that they were bought by the blood of Christ, because all these were fruits of Christ's death, whereof they were made partakers." But, a few lines after, he retracts upon the matter the substance of this his confession, by mincing it thus: "To these men their sins were remitted *in a sort*, in this world, and *in a sort* they were bought with the blood of Christ, but *inchoately* only, and as they tasted the word of life."* Such shifting, intricate, and winding expressions as these, falling from the pens of grave and learned men, are the constant symptoms of a judgment distempered with some error, labouring and toiling in the service of it. But, First, who ever heard of sins remitted in a sort? or who is able to notion such an expression? what is that remission which is in a sort? If by remission of sins in a sort, he means remission of sins to a degree, or with some imperfection, this contradicts the generally received opinion of protestant divines, who admit no degrees, no magis and minus, in justification; still assigning this for one difference between justification and sanctification. If by remission in a sort, he means a conditional remission (which seems to be his meaning by an expression used a few lines before) I know no other sense can be made of the expression, but only this, or of this import, *viz.*, that God forgiveth some men their sins upon such terms as to reserve a liberty unto himself of reversing or recalling that grant, in case of such or such an unworthiness in them afterwards. This I judge to be most orthodox and true, though not in relation to some men only, but with reference unto all, without exception, to whom God at any time granteth remission of sins in this world, (of which more before the close of this chapter,) yet this sense, I presume, no ways

* Mr. J. Ball, Covenant of Grace, p. 240.

befriends the author's judgment in the controversy depending; so that the truth is, I know not what sense to make of his remission of sins upon condition, and in a sort.

Secondly, Every whit as mysterious and uncouth to me as the former is that expression also of these men being bought with the blood of Christ in a sort. I wish that either some of the publishers of the discourse, or some other friend, either of the person or cause, or both, would explain it. For as for his own explication (so intended, I suppose) in the words following; "But inchoately only, and as they tasted the word of life," it is to me rather a further obscuration than explication. Were they bought with the blood of Christ inchoately only, and not perfectly? How then can this author say, in the passage next following, "That by promise he," God, "assured them of salvation, if they did believe?" and again, that "if they had unfeignedly believed in him, without question they should have been saved?" Would their believing have altered the intentions of God concerning them in the death of Christ? or cause them to have been bought by the blood of Christ, though they were not bought before? Or did God assure them of such a salvation, which never was, nor ever so much as intended to be purchased or procured for them? Doubtless, if so be they should without question have been saved, in case they had unfeignedly believed, they were bought as perfectly and completely with the blood of Christ as any of the elect themselves, their unbelief notwithstanding; because their believing could not have procured or bought any other salvation to them, but only that which was fully and completely purchased and bought for them with the blood of Christ, without any dependence at all upon their faith. Therefore, unless we suppose that salvation was completely purchased for them by Christ in his death, we cannot say or suppose with truth, that in case they had believed, they should, without question, have been saved.*

That which is behind, "And as they tasted of the word of life," is yet more inaccessible to my understanding than any thing that went before. For how, or in what sense, with what congruity to a rational apprehension, can men be said to have been bought with the blood of Christ, as they tasted of the word of life? Surely the meaning is not that when or whilst they tasted of the word of life, they were so bought, (I mean with the blood of Christ,) nor that this their tasting of the word of life, was the formal or precise consideration under which Christ bought them, though the particle "as" frequently imports this consideration. As well the one as the other of these senses, are the abhorings of common sense itself; and besides, they are at enmity with the principles of the author relating to the business in hand. Nor am I conscious of any thing at all intended in the

* See more of this, Chap. VII., pp. 177, 178.

clause, unless, haply, this may be it; viz., that inasmuch as they tasted of the word of life, it is an argument that they were bought with Christ's blood, *i. e.* that they were partakers in the fruit and benefit of Christ's death, or that the intentions of God in the death of Christ extended thus far, or in this consideration, unto them. But can it enter into any reasonable man's thoughts to imagine, that if this had been all which the Holy Ghost intended to say, viz., that God intended by the virtue or means of Christ's death, to cause these men to taste of the word of life (especially with exclusion of all intentions in him to save them) that he would have expressed it by saying, that Christ bought them? Suppose a man should buy or procure such a quantity of meat and drink for a poor captive, as were sufficient to nourish him well and with good satisfaction two or three days, but should intend no such thing as to purchase his liberty, or redemption from captivity, will any man call this a buying or redeeming of the person of this man? It is a very strange thing to observe with what importune, bold, and broad-faced absurdities, error sometimes, though in company and conjunction with modesty and soberness of judgment, will attempt an escape out of an exigency or strait. But further, to the point in hand, evident it is, as hath been already observed, that the apostle, in these words, "who bought them," intends an emphatical aggravation of the sin of such teachers who should deny their Lord. Now, if there were nothing more intended in the said words, but only this, that their Lord procured this for them, that they should taste of the word of life, but intended nothing further or better than this to them, this would be so far from aggravating the sin mentioned, that it would rather ease and qualify it. For if there was nothing purchased for them by the Lord Christ, but only this tasting of the word of life, impossible it was for them to have obtained any thing more; weak and sinful man being in no capacity of obtaining more good in any kind than what a way hath been opened for him, in and by the death of Christ, to compass. Now, for a man to taste only of the word of life, and to be in no capacity of making any further progress in the way of salvation, nay, to be in no capacity of doing that by which he might be actually saved, no whit bettereth or sweeteneth any man's condition, but makes it much worse and much more grievous than otherwise it would have been. "Better it had been," saith our apostle afterwards in the same chapter, "for them not to have known the way of righteousness," *i. e.* to taste of the word of life, "than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them;" which yet they must of necessity do, if they were in no capacity, under no possibility, of going forward, or of being saved. Now for a servant to deny or disclaim his Lord, in case he never intended to make his condition any whit better, but in many respects worse, is a far lesser and lighter sin (if any at all) than it would be to deny him, upon a supposition that he had never done any thing at all in relation to him, neither

good nor bad. Therefore, this author is inextricably entangled with his exposition of the place in hand, and makes no earnings of it at all. He gives no tolerable account how those teachers, who brought swift destruction upon themselves, should be bought by Christ inchoately only, and in a sort, and not simply and absolutely, after the same manner, and upon the same terms that all other men, yea, the elect themselves, are bought by him.

Our English annotators, taking no notice of the former exposition of the place, as being, it seems, to them inconsiderable, give us, instead thereof, our choice of two others; but both of them calculated likewise to serve the turn, not the truth. "The Lord that bought them," *i. e.* say they, "that gave a price sufficient for them, or by whom they professed that they were redeemed, and therefore they should not have denied him." But, for the former, we have once and again razed to the ground the polluted sanctuary of that distinction, which asserteth Christ's dying sufficiently for men, and yet denieth his dying intentionally for them.* Besides, here to interpret that Christ died sufficiently for the persons spoken of, without supposing that he died intentionally also for them, is clearly to overthrow the apostle's intention in the words, and to turn his aggravation of the sin he speaks of, rather into an extenuation than otherwise. For he that shall pay that for the ease and benefit only of another, which was sufficient to have pleased and eased me also as well as him, and yet shall neglect me in such a payment, and leave me in misery, whenas he might, without the least trouble or charge to himself, above what he underwent upon another account, have relieved me, hath no cause to expect service or thanks from me, for such a payment: but I am the more excuseable if I neglect him, or refuse to own him as a friend, because he neglected me in my greatest extremity, and that when he had such a fair opportunity, of a miserable, to have made me a happy man, and might have done it without the least inconvenience to himself, more than what he voluntarily put himself upon for the sake of others, to whom he was no whit more beholden or engaged than unto me. It is a palpably importune and senseless conceit, to think that men are engaged in any bands of thankfulness or service unto Christ for dying sufficiently for them, unless he died intentionally also.

The latter exposition of the last-named authors was, that the Lord Christ is said to have bought these false teachers, because they professed themselves to have been bought by him. But, 1. Why do they not put such a gloss as this upon other places, where there is every whit as much reason to do it, as here? As when Paul saith, "For God hath not appointed us unto wrath, but to obtain salvation," 1 Thess. v. 9, &c. why do they not interpret here; "For God hath not appointed us," &c. *i. e.* we profess that God hath not appointed us, &c. So, when the same apostle saith,

* See Chap. V., p. 155; again, Chap. VII., pp. 177, 178.

“That God hath purchased the church with his own blood,” Acts xx. 28, why do they not gloss here; “God hath purchased the church with, &c. *i. e.* the church *professeth* herself thus purchased,” &c. Partiality in interpretation of Scripture is every whit as bad and unchristian, as in civil judicatures.

Secondly, The great sin by which these false teachers are said to bring swift damnation upon themselves, is said to be, their denying the Lord that bought them. If, then, they denied this Lord that bought them, how can these expositors say, that they professed themselves bought by him? If it be replied, they might formerly profess themselves bought by him, though afterwards they denied him, and the apostle may charge them with sin in their present denial of him, upon the account of their former profession; I answer, that if formerly they professed themselves bought by him, but were not indeed so bought, and afterwards coming to understand or apprehend the truth, viz. that they were not so bought, they are not at all to be blamed for denying themselves to have been bought by him, or for denying that he bought them. To deny that to be so which is not so, especially when a man verily believes and apprehends it not to be, is no man's sin. Or if it be further pleaded, in favour of the said gloss, that these false teachers might at the same time, when they professed themselves bought by Christ, deny him, viz. in a consequential way, as either by teaching such heretical doctrines, which overthrew his Godhead, manhood, &c. or else by an impious conversation; I answer, 1. That if they professed themselves bought by him, they could not lightly teach or hold forth any doctrine wherein they should deny, either his Godhead, manhood, satisfaction, or any other thing relating to him, without which he could not, in a rational way, have made such a purchase of them. Or, 2. If they did teach any such doctrine, it must be supposed that they did it unwittingly, and because they apprehended nothing in it of any inconsistency with their profession of being bought by Christ. For it is not to be thought that men will willingly and knowingly teach contradictions, or teach any opinion which they apprehend contradictory to what they daily profess to believe. Now, for a man unwittingly, and contrary to his intention and desire, to teach such a doctrine, which consequently involves, or leads unto an opinion that is dangerous and damnable, is nothing but what is incident to the best and most approved teachers, (as I could readily demonstrate by many instances,) and therefore not like to be a sin of such high provocation, as to bring swift damnation upon them. But, 3, and lastly, that the apostle doth not speak of any such denial of the Lord Christ by these false teachers, which is by works or by wickedness of life and conversation, but of doctrine, is evident enough, by the express tenor and carriage of the words themselves. “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying,” &c. which clearly showeth that

the denial of the Lord, here charged upon false teachers, stood not in works but in words, in false, heretical and damnable teachings. Therefore they are not, they cannot be here said to have been bought by Christ, because they professed themselves to have been redeemed by him.

Some, to evade that mortal stroke, which the Scripture in hand reacheth to that opinion, which denieth a possibility of perishing in those who are truly bought and redeemed by Christ, not being satisfied with any of the former come-offs, have devised this. The Lord, say they, is said to have bought these false teachers, not because he really, indeed and in truth, bought them, but because in the opinion and judgment of men he had bought them: they were looked upon as persons redeemed and bought by him. And to credit this interpretation, they allege several texts where things or persons are said to be so or so, such or such, not because they were really that which they are said to be, but only because they were this in appearance, or according to the common estimate of men. As Matt. ix. 13; John ix. 39; Matt. xiii. 12; compared with Luke viii. 18. But this colour is as faint as any of the former, and as easily washed off. And,

1. It is very questionable whether in any of these places, either things or persons receive any denomination merely from appearance or opinion of men. Many things might be argued, and that with much probability, in oppositum. But concerning the first of the places, most certain it is that there is no such notion to be found there. For that by the righteous, whom Christ saith that he came not to call to repentance, should be meant righteous only in show, or in the opinion of men, whether themselves or others, and not righteous truly and properly so called, contradicts the manifest and declared intentions of Christ's coming into the world, which are frequently avouched and found to be the calling of sinners of all sorts, kinds, and degrees unto repentance; and therefore of hypocrites also, as well as others, and of persons conceited in the highest of their own righteousness. See Matt. iii. 7, &c.; 1 Tim. i. 12—15, compared with Phil. iii. 6, &c. (to omit many other places of like import). Besides, the occasion and tendency of our Saviour's words are of pregnant evicition, that by righteous he means persons truly such, and not in conceit or opinion only. He was charged as with matter of undue deportment in eating with publicans and sinners. For his justification he pleads, that the whole have no need of a physician, but the sick; meaning, that as the calling of the physician is no ways necessary, in respect of those that are strong, healthful, and sound, but only of the sick; so neither had his coming into the world been of any such necessity, as now it was, but for sinners; and that had men been righteous and spiritually sound, there had been no need of his coming unto them. And therefore as a physician is not to be blamed for conversing with the sick, inasmuch as the nature and end of his calling requires his presence with them, and not with those that are sound; so neither was he to

be blamed for being in the company of sinners, seeing the great end and intent of his calling to the office of a Saviour was not to save or to be helpful unto such as were righteous, who upon such an account stood in no need of him, but to administer comfort and help unto sinners, who without help from him must needs perish. Now certain it is, that the righteous whom Christ compares unto the whole, who in that respect need no physician, are not men righteous in show or in opinion only, for these stand in as much or more need of the physician than others; but those that are truly and sincerely righteous. Therefore this Scripture holds no intelligence with that interpretation of the other, which is now under censure. But,

2. Be it granted for truth, that things and persons sometimes receive appellations only from an appearance of what they are called, or from the opinion of men judging them such; yet such a line of interpretation as this is not to be stretched over what Scriptures we please, nor indeed over any but where the manifest exigency of the context calls for it. Otherwise we shall entitle men to a liberty of substituting shadows and appearances only, instead of realities and substances of truth, where and when they please; and so to turn the mind and counsels of God in the Scriptures upside down. The contest of old between Hierome and Austin about Paul's reproofing Peter, Gal. ii., is of notable consideration to the business in hand. Hierome pleaded, that when Paul reproofed Peter at Antioch, he did it not seriously or in good earnest; but affirmed, that these two apostles out of a kind of prudent charity agreed to make a show of a contest between them, when as indeed there was none. But how gravely and copiously doth Austin declare against and argue down such a licentiousness of interpreting? "The Scripture," saith he, "plainly saith, that Peter was worthy reproof, or to be condemned. If then we are to take this liberty, or boldness, to say, that indeed and in truth he did not amiss, but only dissembled for the sake of those that were weak, then the apostle Paul lies, in saying that he was worthy blame or reproof. Admit this," saith this learned father, "and down falls all the authority and certainty of the Scriptures.* For if they speak that which is false in one place, who can make it good that they speak truth in another?" This is the brief of that famous dissertation between those two worthies in the Christian church. From whence it may appear of what dangerous consequence it is to expound that which the Scripture simply and plainly delivers as a truth, as spoken by way of appearance or human opinion only, when there is no apparent necessity enforcing such an exposition. And if there be some places which will bear or which call for such a figurative and catachrestical interpretation as this, they are but few; and those which are, must be discerned and distinguished from others by the manifest exigency of their respective scopes and im-

* *Mihi enim videtur exitiosissime credi aliquod in libris Sanctis esse mendacium, etc.—Aug. Epist. viii. vid. et Epist. ix. et xiv. et præcipue, Epist. xix.*

ports, the least jot or tittle of which character is not to be found in the place in hand. For,

3, and lastly, Most evident it is, as hath been formerly also observed, and as many expositors, more than enough addicted to the contra-remonstrant opinion, themselves acknowledge, that the apostle's intent here is, to set forth the most heinous and horrid indignity of the sin of these false teachers in denying their Lord, by this aggravating consideration, that they deny such a Lord who bought them. Now, if it be supposed that this Lord really, and of love and good will to them, and out of a desire to free them from misery, bought or redeemed them, the consideration is of great pregnancy and force to demonstrate horrible ingratitude and impiety in them to deny him. But if on the contrary it be supposed, that he did not buy them with any intent to free them from their misery, but only make a show of such a thing, or only do that which might occasion men to think or to believe that he did so, this manifestly easeth and qualifies the guilt of their sin in denying him; and so is manifestly repugnant to the apostle's scope. For to make a show of love only, or to do that by which other men may be invited to think that a real kindness is done for such or such a man, when as indeed there is nothing done of any such consideration, nor ever intended to be done, doth no ways oblige this man in thankfulness unto him who accommodates him upon no better terms, but is rather a just ground of a harder and worse opinion of him.

If it be replied; Yea, but these false teachers knew nothing but that they were truly and really bought by Christ, and that out of a desire of saving them; nor had they any sufficient reason to judge otherwise. Therefore their sin in denying him is no ways eased upon this account, that he did not indeed buy them with any such intent or desire, because, 1. Men are bound to judge, as they have reason to judge; and, 2. Are bound to act or practise according to their judgments; I answer,

There can be no sufficient ground for any man to believe that which is false, nor ought such a thing to be believed; at least with confidence of belief, or with any such belief, upon which he shall stand bound to engage in any material and weighty action or practice. Therefore if Christ did not really buy these false teachers, they could have no sufficient ground to believe that he did; at least to believe at any such rate of confidence, as rather to suffer the loss of any considerable good than deny it. If it be again replied, A man may stand bound to venture much upon probabilities, in many cases, though there be no certainty or truth in that which upon such probabilities he doth believe, I answer, possibly a man may indeed stand bound, in point of wisdom or prudence, in some cases to adventure much, in a simple consideration, upon probabilities only; but not in point of conscience. As for example, a merchant or other man may stand bound in point of wisdom to adventure some considerable part of his state in a way of trade

beyond the seas, upon probabilities only of a gainful return; though even in this case, upon a more exact consideration, it will appear that such a man doth not make this adventure upon any mere probability, one or more, but upon that which is certain. For the probability of a good return in this case is a certainty to him; he knows certainly, and beyond all doubt or question, that it is a thing probable or likely that he shall receive such a return, though he knows not certainly, but only probably, that he shall indeed receive it. Now the true ground upon which the merchant adventures is not the knowledge that he shall, or will gain by his adventure; for it is impossible for him to know this; but the knowledge and consideration of the likelihood of his gaining, which, as hath been said, he may, and doth know, and that certainly.

You will upon this say, it is like, The false teachers, in the Scripture in hand, had, or might have had, such a certainty as this, that the Lord Christ did really buy them; for it was very probable that he had so bought them, in regard of that illumination, external sanctification, and other gifts, whereof they were partakers; and consequently their sin in denying him was never the less upon any such account as this, that he had not indeed bought them: inasmuch as they were bound to believe that he had so bought them, and to behave themselves towards him accordingly. I answer, 1. Upon this supposition, that Christ did not indeed buy, or had not bought them, they could have no probability, no not upon their illumination, or outward gifts whatsoever, that he had, or should have so bought them; especially taking in the opinion of those against whom we manage our present discourse, viz., that Christ truly bought no more than come to be actually saved. For, 1. If those truly bought by Christ be but very few in number, comparatively with those who were passed by, and not so bought by him, then no particular man, thus far, (I mean, as he is a member of mankind, or one of the generality of men,) can have so much as a probable ground that he is one of those so bought by him. As when there are twenty, or forty blanks in a lottery, and only one prize, it is not probable or likely that he that draweth but once shall draw the prize. For it is twenty or forty to one that he shall not draw it. 2. Neither doth the receiving of illumination, or any other common gift, upon the former supposals, make it probable unto any man, that Christ truly bought him, because very many receive illumination, at least in the sense of our opposers, &c., who live wickedly; and many also who fall away from that external sanctity, wherein they walked for a season. And our Saviour himself saith, that "Many are called, but few are chosen," Matt. xx. 16; and again, that upon the "abounding of iniquity," viz., in fierce and bloody persecutors, "the love of many shall wax cold," Matt. xxiv. 12; and yet again, that "Many that are first, shall be last," Matt. xix. 30; to omit many other passages of like import. Therefore, no external or common gifts whatsoever, make

it so much as probable unto any man, that he was truly bought by Christ, there being very many thus gifted, who will not in the end be saved. But,

2. Suppose our false teachers had probable grounds, from their illumination, &c., to believe that Christ had truly bought them, yet this probability, upon the premises last argued, could be but very faint, and mingled with much jealousy and fear of the contrary; and consequently nothing so binding upon them to own and honour him in the world as a certain knowledge, free from the pain and torment of fear of the contrary, that he had so bought them, would have been. So that though it should be yielded, which yet there is no sufficient reason to do, that the interpretation which we now oppose, doth not turn up by the very roots the drift and scope of the apostle in the place and words, yet it shakes them terribly, and leaves little spirit, strength, or force in them. If the merchant judged it forty, twenty, yea, or but ten * to one odds, that in case he should venture, he should never have any return of what he ventures, he would have but slender encouragement, and so little list to follow his sea trade with his whole estate upon such terms. Whereas certainty of returns with considerable gain, would the providence of God, and condition of human affairs bear it, would multiply merchants without end; and withal render those very weak and unlike men, who, having means and opportunity to follow such an employment, should either be slothful and sit still, or else dispose of their estates in any other way, wherein little or no improvement could be expected. In like manner, a certainty of knowledge that Christ truly and really bought a man with his blood, is a high and sacred engagement upon this man to acknowledge, own, and honour him as his great and blessed Lord and benefactor, in the sight of the world; and consequently renders him the reproach and abomination of men, in case he shall be ashamed of him, or deny him: whereas a faint apprehension only of such a thing done for him, entangled and encumbered with a thousand questions, fears, and doubtings, hardly extricable, whether it was indeed done or no, makes the denial or disowning of him, if not pardonable, yet much more excusable, and of far lighter provocation and demerit, than in the other case it would be.

Thus then at last we see, that no interpretation will sit with any tolerable closeness or congruity to the words and scope of the Scripture in hand, but only that which acknowledgeth the false teachers mentioned therein, truly, really, absolutely, and completely redeemed or bought by Christ, I mean after the same manner, and upon the same terms of love on God's part, after, and upon which those were redeemed and bought by him, who in the issue and event come to be saved. As for that objection, which lies in many men's thoughts against such an interpretation as this,

* *Vix enim dicimus quisque eorum, qui Christo nomen dederunt, fidei puritatem ad extremum usque retinet: omnes fere ad corruptelas degenerant, atque à magistris licentiæ delusi, profanesunt.*—*Calvin.* in 2 Pet. ii. 2.

as viz., that if Christ truly redeemed or bought any man, he must of necessity at last be saved; we shall, God assisting, give a fair, clear, and satisfactory answer unto it, when we come to answer the arguments insisted upon, for the proof of the contrary doctrine to that which is maintained in the present discourse. But for that which some plead against the interpretation asserted, from Revel. xiv. 4, where those that are said to be redeemed or bought ἀπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, from men, are termed the first fruits unto God, and to the Lamb, and are said to follow the Lamb wheresoever he goeth, which implieth their actual salvation; the answer unto it is easy. For evident it is, from the description of the persons here spoken of, that they are such, not simply who were redeemed and bought by Christ, but who also truly believed in him, and persevered in faith and love unto the end; and consequently such, in whom the work of redemption performed by Christ obtained its ultimate and plenary efficiency and end. In which respect they are said, in a kind of emphatical manner, to be ἡγορασμένοι ἀπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, to have been redeemed, or bought, from men, or from amongst men, i. e. persons in whom the common redemption vouchsafed by Christ took place, and wrought to that great and signal differencing and distinguishing of them from other men, that whereas the grace of this redemption was buried under other men's wickedness and unbelief, and at last, in their destruction, it prevailed and magnified itself in the constant faith and holiness of these, and at last triumphed gloriously in their salvation. Whereby it came to pass, that these only seemed to have been redeemed amongst men, all others miscarrying, as if they had not been redeemed. So that there is nothing at all, scarce so much as an appearance of any thing, in this Scripture, against that interpretation of the other, for the establishing of which, way hath been made through the fall of many others.

And doubtless he that shall attentively and with consideration read what Calvin himself hath commented upon the place, must needs judge him very compliant with the said interpretation. "Although," saith he, "Christ may be denied several ways, yet, in my judgment, Peter means that which is expressed in Jude, viz., when the grace of God is turned into wantonness. For Christ hath redeemed us, that he might have a people separated from all the defilements of the world, addicting itself unto holiness and innocency. Wherefore *they who, shaking off the bridle, cast themselves forward into all manner of licentiousness, are not without cause said to deny Christ, by whom they were redeemed.* So then, that the doctrine of the gospel may abide with us safe and sound, let this be always fixed in our minds, that we are redeemed by Christ, that he may be the Lord both of our lives and deaths."* In this piece

* Tametsi variis modis abnegatur Christus, eum tamen hinc, meo judicio, attingit Petrus, qui exprimitur apud Judam, nempe cum gratia Dei in lasciviam convertitur. Redemit enim nos Christus, ut populum haberet segregatum ab omnibus mundi inquinamentis, addictum Sanctitati

of commentary there are several passages which plainly declare the author's judgment to have been, at least when he wrote these things, that those are, and may be said to be redeemed by Christ, and that after the same manner that the saints themselves are redeemed, who yet may in the end perish. For, 1. In saying Christ hath redeemed us, questionless he includes himself, and all the godly, at least, that heard him or shall read these things. Now if he should mean that either himself or other godly ones were redeemed with any other kind of redemption than that spoken of in the text before him, viz., wherewith the false teachers, there mentioned, were redeemed, his commentaries should be quite besides the text.

2. He saith expressly, that "they who, shaking off the bridle, cast themselves forward, or headlong, into all manner of licentiousness, are not without cause said to deny Christ, by whom they were redeemed." Now, who are they that bring swift destruction upon themselves, but such as he here describes, and whom he supposeth to have been redeemed by Christ, and that with the same redemption whereof he had spoken immediately before, viz., wherewith himself and other godly ones had been redeemed? For to make him speak of two several kinds of redemption specifically distinct, in one and the same passage, without giving the least notice of any distinction or difference at all between them, is to suppose him to equivocate, and to make him a transgressor of the known principles and rules of writing.

3, and lastly, When he exhorts, "let this always be fixed in our minds, that we are redeemed by Christ, that he may be the Lord of," &c. He cannot be supposed to address or speak only to those that were, or are truly godly, but to all those, at least, who judge themselves such; yea, clear it is, that he speaks to all persons professing Christianity, without exception. Nor can he be supposed to invite or persuade any man to fix that in his mind, which is every whit as likely, if not much more likely, to be false than true, but only that which is most certainly and unquestionably true. Therefore he clearly supposeth, that all persons, who upon any terms or grounds whatsoever judge themselves godly, yea, that all professors of Christianity, without exception, are redeemed by Christ; and consequently, that as well those who perish as those that are saved, are redeemed by him; there being nothing more certain than that many who profess Christianity, yea, and who call themselves godly, will perish.

From henceforth then let no man put the doctrine maintained in this discourse to any such rebuke as this, that it was never held or countenanced by any divine of the order surnamed orthodox; we find the principal of this order, Calvin himself I mean, besides many others of name and note amongst them, once and again, yea, seven times over, very freely giving the right hand of fellowship unto it.

et innocentie. Qui igitur excusso freno in omnem licentiam se projiciunt, non immerito dicuntur Christum abnegare, à quo Redempti sunt. Proinde ut salva et integra evangelii doctrina apud nos maneat, hoc animis nostris infixum sit, Redemptos esse nos à Christo, ut vitæ simul et mortis nostræ sit Dominus, &c.

We have been somewhat long in our vindication of the Scripture last argued; but the restless and endless importunity of men in persuading the Scriptures to entreat their darling error kindly, together with the difficulty of the Scriptures to be so persuaded, hath compelled us. But it is very incident to men to do by the Scriptures as they do by themselves. "God," saith Solomon, "hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions," Eccles. vii. 29. So may it be truly said, that God hath made many Scriptures upright, plain, clear, obvious for sense and meaning; but men are wont to seek out many inventions to perplex or misfigure this meaning, that it may not be known to oppose their fond conceits and imaginations.

The next Scripture of the consort designed for this chapter was 2 Pet. ii. 20: "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them." Here likewise it is most irrefragably and clearly supposed, that men who have been truly sanctified and regenerated, and consequently redeemed by Christ, may yet decline so as to perish in the end. For to deny that that expression of escaping the pollution of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, doth import true sanctification, or regeneration, is to deny that the sun is up at noon-day. For if the persons here said to have "escaped the pollutions of the world, through," &c., shall not be supposed truly and inwardly sanctified, &c., but only superficially and externally, they must be supposed withal, 1. To have been all this while in the midst of that greatest "pollution of the world," and which pollutes all other things unto men, (Tit. i. 15,) unbelief. 2. To have been in the inward bent and frame of their minds and wills as much addicted to all other the pollutions hereof as at any time formerly. 3, and lastly, To have been all this while most damnable hypocrites and dissemblers. Now that the Holy Ghost should say, that unbelievers, persons inwardly full of all wickedness and filthiness, most vile hypocrites and dissemblers, have "escaped the pollutions of the world," especially "through the knowledge" (or rather acknowledgment, ἐν ἐπιγνώσει,) "of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," is to me, and I think to all other impartially considering men, the first-born of incredibilities. Can a man be said to have escaped his enemies when he still remains under their power, and is in greater danger of suffering mischiefs from them than ever before? Or is not he, who being enlightened, retains the truth in unrighteousness, remains inwardly full of malice and wickedness, only garbing himself with an hypocritical outside, or mere profession of holiness, as much or more under the power and

command of sin, as likely to perish everlastingly for sin, as ever he was; or could be before his illumination? For that, during that condition of escape, of which the Holy Ghost here speaks, from first to last, the men spoken of were inwardly full of all filthiness and wickedness, and consequently vile hypocrites and dissemblers, our adversaries themselves confess in their managing this Scripture, though as they suppose to their advantage. Evident it is, say they, that all the while they were free from the pollutions of the world, they were still dogs and swine, and if so, as inwardly vile and wicked as ever, because it is said of them, ver. 20, "But it is happened to them according to the true proverb; the dog is returned to his own vomit again, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." But of this more anon.

2. That which is here expressed to be the cause or means of their escape or deliverance from the pollutions of the world, their knowledge (or acknowledgment rather, which is somewhat more) of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, plainly evinceth it to have been such an escape, which is inward, cordial, and real, in conjunction with true sanctification, and not external, formal, or in show and pretence only. There is scarce any thing more frequent or familiar in the Scriptures than the ascribing of justification, sanctification, yea, and salvation itself to the knowledge, sometimes of God, sometimes of Christ, sometimes of both. "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant" (saith Isaiah, speaking of Christ) "justify many," Isa. liii. 11. "By his knowledge," *i. e.*, as interpreters generally, by his being known. "He calls that," saith Musculus, "the knowledge of Christ, not wherewith he himself knoweth, but whereby he is known by us."* The apostle Paul speaks of the *knowledge* of the Son of God, as one of the principal ends of that evangelical ministry which was by special grace given unto and is continued in his church, and joins it with the "perfection of the saints," Eph. iv. 12, 13; and afterwards in the same chapter, ver. 20, 22, &c., ascribes the "putting off the old man," and the "renewing in the spirit of our minds," unto it. The apostle John makes no scruple to pronounce him a liar, who shall say that he *knoweth Christ*, and yet "keepeth not his commandments," 1 John ii. 4. And again, that "whosoever sinneth" (*i. e.* lives wickedly) "hath not seen him, neither *known* him," 1 John iii. 6. That of our Saviour himself to this purpose is well known, "This is life eternal, that they *know* thee the only true God, and him whom thou hast sent, Jesus Christ," John xvii. 3. It were easy to multiply places of like import. Therefore certainly that obedience, that sanctification, that conformity in life and conversation to the word and will of God, which is begotten and raised in men by the knowledge, much more by the acknowledgment, or thorough knowledge (which the word

* *Scientiam Christi vocat, non qua ipse scit, sed qua scitur et cognoscitur a nobis.*

ἐπιγνώσις seems to import) of "the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," is cordial obedience, true and real sanctification, and conformity to the will of God.

3, and lastly, If the escape and deliverance from "the pollutions of the world" here spoken of, was not inward, real, and accompanied with true sanctification, &c., how could the persons be in danger of an after-entanglement therewith, especially of an inward entanglement, and wherewith the heart should be ensnared, which yet the Holy Ghost evidently implieth they were, ver. 14, in ascribing unto them a "heart exercised with covetousness," or of being overcome? at least, how should their conditions be rendered so much more grievous and dreadful by any such entanglement than they were under the escape, as the Holy Ghost here clearly supposeth? If the escape here mentioned, importeth not true and real sanctification, the persons escaping must of necessity be supposed, all the time of this their escape, to have been "in the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity," and particularly to have been both hypocrites and unbelievers. Now our Saviour himself supposeth hypocrites and unbelievers to be the first-born children of hell, and of "the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone for ever," in those two sayings of his, compared, viz. Matt. xxiv. 51, with Luke xii. 46. The tenor of the former is this: "The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with *hypocrites*: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Of the latter, this: "The lord of that servant will cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with *unbelievers*." If hypocrites and unbelievers be of the first and primary designation for hell and eternal destruction (which the said passages clearly import), they cannot lightly through any apostasy whatsoever contract any worse or more grievous condition than their present condition is. The truth is, that I know no apostasy, of which a hypocrite or unbeliever is properly capable, but only that which is from Belial unto Christ, or from Satan unto God.

All that the adversaries of the interpretation given, (and who will not acknowledge the escape here mentioned to imply any thing more than a mere formal and outside sanctification,) are able to plead from the words or context for themselves, is only that which hath been already touched, ver. 22, "The dog is turned to his own vomit again, and the sow," &c. From hence they conclude, that as a dog is a dog, retains the same nature whilst his vomit and he are parted which he had before: and so a sow or a swine is the self-same creature inwardly, washed and unwashed; so were the persons resembled to these creatures, the same men in the inward frame and constitution of their hearts, even whilst they had made the escape here spoken of from the "pollutions of the world," which they were before; therefore not truly sanctified or regenerate.

But how weak this allegation is, sufficiently appears by the foundation on which it is built, which is this, that parables or similitudes run upon all fours, or that all things whatsoever found in the things resembling, are applicable also to the things resembled. God, in hearing the importunate and restless cries of his saints, is compared to an unrighteous judge, who though neither fearing God nor regarding man, was notwithstanding overcome with the widow's importunity to do her justice. Now, to infer from hence, that because this unjust judge remained still unjust, even whilst he did justice to the poor widow, therefore God also, being compared to him, was unjust whilst he heard the prayers of his saints, would be an inference blasphemously ridiculous. Of no whit better calculation is that collection mentioned, wherein, because men sometimes clean, and afterwards polluted, are compared in respect of such a change, to a dog returning to his vomit, and a washed sow to her wallowing in the mire; it is argued, that therefore during their cleanness, they must needs be, inwardly and in disposition, like unto these creatures; besides, supposing the persons here spoken of to have been dogs and swine, I mean inwardly unclean and impure before the alteration here ascribed to them, the proverb of the dog returning to his vomit, &c. may in sufficient propriety of speech be applied unto them, without any supposal that under that alteration they should be dogs also. Suppose a dog should by casting up his gorge or vomit be turned into a sheep, and afterwards should by a contrary means, viz. by resuming it, become a dog again, might it not truly and properly enough be said, that this dog, though lately a sheep, is now become a dog again? But the impertinency of the plea now impleaded, may be any man's vision that will but narrowly and impartially look upon it. Yea,

Calvin himself, it seems, was so far unsatisfied with it, that he could not own the interpretation attempted by it, but crosseth over the way to the other interpretation. "This," saith he upon verse 22, "is that in brief that Peter would say, that the Gospel is physic which purgeth us with a wholesome vomit, but withal that there are many dogs, who to their destruction, resorb or resume what they have vomited up. And again, that the Gospel is a laver, which washeth away all our uncleannesses; but there are many swine, who soon after their washing tumble themselves in the mire. In the meantime, the godly are admonished to take heed of both, unless they mean to be reckoned amongst dogs and swine."* If men, like dogs, may resume that to their destruction, which they have vomited or cast up, certainly when they had thus vomited, and till such a resorbition, they were sound and in a condition of salvation. A man cannot reasonably be said to take any thing to his

* Hoc autem summam vult Petrus, Evangelium esse medicinam quæ nos salubri vomitu purgat: sed multos esse canes, qui in suam perniciem resorbent quod vomuerant. Item Evangelium esse lavacrum, quod immunditias omnes nostras abstergit: sed multos esse porcos, qui statim à lotionis in cœnum se provolvunt. Intercèa monetur pii ut sibi ab utroque caveant, nisi velint in canum et porcorum ordiue censi.

destruction who had that in him before, which was a greater and more certain means to destroy him. Nor need godly men be admonished of any thing, as like or possible to bring them into the account of dogs or swine, if such a transition be supposed to be impossible to them. Therefore, doubtless, Calvin resents much better that exposition of the place in hand, which supposeth the escape specified therein to include an inward and real sanctification, than that which resolves it into smoke and wind, I mean an external, formal, hypocritical sanctification.

Another Scripture ranged in the same division with the former, is of much the same consideration with them. "Of how much sorer punishment," said the apostle, "shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite to the Spirit of grace?" Heb. x. 29. To say that this Scripture, with the former, doth not speak of a true and real sanctification, but of that only which is outsidely, seemingly, and hypocritically such, is to claim a mere arbitrary power for interpreting the Scriptures.

For, 1. The word here translated, "sanctification," is the same with that which our Saviour useth, John xvii. 17, where in the behalf of his disciples he prayed thus unto his Father, "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is the truth." If neither reason nor religion suffereth us here to interpret that Christ prayed unto the Father to sanctify his disciples outwardly, formally, seemingly only, but really and in truth, I would gladly know which of the two, or whether both, lead us to understand any other sanctification in the place in hand.

2. No one instance, I verily believe, can be brought throughout all the Scripture, where men are said to be sanctified by Christ, by the blood of Christ, by the knowledge of Christ or the like; but that the place is to be understood of a true, sound, and saving sanctification. But places of this interpretation are many, 1 Cor. i. 2; vi. 11; Eph. v. 25, 26; Heb. xiii. 12, &c.

3. There is this reason evincing with a high hand that the Scripture before us speaketh of an inward, real, and soul sanctification, viz. that the sin of the person here said to have been sanctified, in counting the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, *i. e.* in despising or profaning it, is aggravated by this consideration, that he was sanctified by it. The carriage of the verse clearly, and above all contradiction, evinceth this. Now, then, if we shall suppose that this person had received no more good, no greater benefit by this blood of the covenant, but only to be made an hypocrite or a dissembler by it, which must be affirmed, if the sanctification here attributed unto him be only a feigned or formal sanctification; this is so far from aggravating that sin of his in despising it, that it doth very much, if not altogether, extenuate and excuse it.

Nor can it be here pretended, with reason, that it was not the fault, nor any defect in the blood of the covenant, that he was not

truly and really sanctified, but his own negligence and falseness of heart. For though it be true, that the reason why any man, especially enjoying the Gospel, proves a hypocrite, is not any deficiency in the blood there presented unto him by way of antidote, and for his cleansing, but his own negligence and unfaithfulness to his own soul, yet the sanctification spoken of in the Scripture in hand, is not attributed to the looseness or hollow-heartedness of the person in whom it was found, but to the blood of the covenant itself. Now that which is the proper and genuine effect of this blood, cannot be any hypocritical or mere outside thing; and, however, were this sanctification an hypocritical or mere outside thing, and so an occasional effect only of the blood of the covenant, yet would the consideration hereof be no just or fitting matter, whereby to aggravate the sin of him that should despise this blood. Though I may be guilty, and an offender in a high degree to remain an hypocrite or a false-hearted man, under means so efficacious and proper to make me sound and upright-hearted, as the Gospel and the blood of the covenant held forth therein are, yet the consideration of my remaining a hypocrite in this case, is no ground why I should be judged, either by myself or others, the greater sinner for despising these means. It is rather an extenuation, as hath been said, of my sin in this kind than otherwise, to consider that though this blood of the covenant be a very efficacious and proper means to make me sound-hearted and sincere, yet it is not so efficacious and powerful in this kind as actually to subdue and overcome the hypocrisy and wickedness of my soul, without mine own endeavours in concurrence with it. Therefore, certainly the apostle would never instance in a counterfeit, unsound, or imperfect sanctification, wrought or occasioned by the blood of the covenant, to aggravate the sin of such a person who should despise it, by apostatising from the profession of it. But,

4, and lastly, Suppose the Scripture in hand should be conceived to speak of an outward, formal sanctification, which consists in a civil or moral reformation of the outer man, (which yet the scope of the place will at no hand, as hath been argued, admit,) yet it sufficiently reacheth, in point of proof, that which is intended from it, viz. that Christ died for those that perish: for this sanctification, of what kind soever it be—be it shadow, or be it substance—is ascribed to “the blood of the covenant,” (*i. e.* the blood of Christ, wherein God covenanteth life and salvation unto the world upon their believing,) as the efficient cause or means of it: therefore this blood, howsoever, was shed for those that may and do perish.

If it be said, It is true it was shed for such men with such an intent on God's part as this, that they should be externally cleansed by it, and outwardly sanctified, but not that they should be really and internally sanctified, or, in fine, saved by it; I answer, 1. That the strength of this objection hath been already trodden down in this chapter. 2. I here add, that if God intended an ex-

ternal sanctification only, by the death of Christ, for the persons mentioned in the objection, then were his intentions in Christ's death, in reference to these men, rather grievous than gracious; bent upon the aggravation and increase of their condemnation, not upon the advance of their salvation; and Christ himself should come unto them, not that they "might have life more abundantly," but that they might have hell and death more abundantly; whereas most certain it is that "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world," much less to increase the condemnation of the world, "but that the world," that is, (as we formerly made good the interpretation, chap. v.) the generality of men, "might be saved." 3. And lastly, if Christ died for these men to invest them with an external sanctification, to make them outwardly holy, I would know whether, together with this outward sanctification, he did intend to procure for them by his death an inward principle answerable to it, out of which it should flow. If so, if he did intend to procure by his death an inward suitable principle for these men, out of which that outward sanctification should flow, then certainly he did intend to procure them a true and real sanctification; for what can we imagine a true and real sanctification should be more than a righteous, blameless, innocent, Christian conversation, issuing from an inward principle suitable to it? If it be said, No, Christ did not intend by his death to procure for these men any such inward principle as you speak of, but only that outward conformity to the ways and laws of Christian religion, then it will follow that Christ died with an intention to make men hypocrites, or to procure hypocrisy for men; because a fair show in outward practices and religious deportments, without an inward principle and frame of heart answerable to them, and which ariseth out of a hollow and unsanctified heart, is hypocrisy, and that in the plainest and most obvious signification of the word. Therefore, certainly, Christ did not shed his blood to purchase any such sanctification for men which some conceive to be meant in the Scripture in hand. Christ, in dying for men, intended nothing for men but that which is true, real, and saving in the nature and proper tendency of it. Intentions of making men hypocrites or Christians by halves, in one kind or other, are more fitting for Satan than for Christ. How little danger there is, or rather, what precious advantage there is for the comfort, peace, and edification of true Christian souls, in that interpretation of this place, which, by sanctification, understands a true and real sanctification, above any thing that is in the contrary, we shall, God willing, demonstrate in the next chapter.

In the meantime I desire the reader will please to understand this, that the interpretation asserted, and which understands the Scripture in hand of a true and real sanctification, is no slip of remonstrantism, but attested by very orthodox men, as the word now ruleth. Calvin himself writeth nothing upon the place but of good accord with it. "By a comparison of the benefits," saith

he, speaking of what men received by Moses under the law, and what Christians now under the gospel receive by Christ, "he aggravates the ingratitude of men. It is a very unworthy thing to profane the blood of Christ, which is the matter" (he means, the principal or most material cause) "of our sanctification. Yet this they do who apostatise from faith." A little after: "But he," the apostle, "takes notice of the manner how the covenant is confirmed unto us, when he saith, 'We are sanctified;' because the blood shed would profit us nothing unless we were watered" or sprinkled "therewith by the Holy Ghost. From hence cometh expiation and holiness;"* with much more to the like purpose in this commentary. Whereby evident it is, that this author, by the sanctification mentioned in the text, understands no other than that which was in himself, and which is wrought by the Spirit of God in the saints by watering or sprinkling them with the blood of Christ.

"By which he was sanctified;" *i. e.*, say our English divines, in their annotations upon the place, "by which their sins were pardoned in regard of that meritorious sufficient sanctification purchased by it;" sending us back to their note on verse 10 of this chapter, where they interpret the word "sanctified" as signifying "our being freed from the guilt of our sin, and consecrated to God's service." So that there is little question but that these also understand the place to speak of a true sanctification indeed, and which either is, or flows from justification itself. And, long before them both, Chrysostom interpreted the place as speaking of such a sanctification which appertains to a son or child of God. "God," saith he, "hath made thee a son; and wilt thou be willing to be made a servant?"†

The last of the Scriptures produced, to prove that Christ died even for those also who perish, as well as others, was Matt. xviii. 32, 34. The tenor and carriage of this is of like consideration with the three last opened: excepting only, that whereas those speak of sanctification, this speaks of justification. The passages now to be insisted on lie in the body of a parable, which is somewhat large: the reader may please to peruse the whole in the evangelist. The particulars in it for our purpose are contained in these words. "Then his Lord, after he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: shouldest not thou, also, have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee? And his Lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due to him. So, likewise, shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their

* Comparatione beneficiorum ingritudinem auget. Valdè indignum est sanguinem Christi, qui sanctificationis nostræ materia est, profanare. Hoc verò faciunt qui desciscunt à fide.—Sed modum confirmationis notat, quòd dicit nos sanctificatos: quia nihil prodesset fusus sanguis, nisi nos per Spiritum Sanctum eo irrigaremur. Unde et expiatio et sanctitas.

† 'Ἐποίησέ σε υἱόν· σὺ δὲ θέλεις γενέσθαι δούλος;

trespasses." In these words we hear of a servant to whom his lord and master had freely forgiven all that debt which he owed unto him, which, as we find in the former part of the parable, was a vast sum of ten thousand talents, fit to typify or represent that great debt of eternal sufferings, which every man owes for sins and trespasses, unto God. And yet we hear, also, that this same servant, by provoking this gracious lord and master of his by unmercifulness and cruelty to one of his fellow-servants, forfeited his former grace and mercy, which he had received from him in the forgiveness of his great debt, and that this forfeiture was taken by his lord, and he delivered by him to the tormentors, or prison-keepers, until he should pay the whole debt, *i. e.* for ever, inasmuch as he had not, nor was ever able to procure, wherewith to make such a payment. What was intended and signified by all this is clearly expressed by our Saviour, in those last words which contain the application, and are the close of the parable: "So, likewise, shall my heavenly Father," &c. From which words the clear and direct scope and intent of the parable showeth itself to be this, *viz.* to give the world to know and understand, that if men, who have obtained forgiveness of sins by the means and grace of Jesus Christ, shall so far sin against the excellency and richness of this grace, as to deal cruelly and unmercifully by men, this act of grace towards them shall be cancelled and revoked, and the debt of their sins shall return and recoil again upon them. Yea, he plainly tells his disciples themselves, (for this parable was in special manner directed unto them, as appears from the beginning of the chapter,) that they themselves must not look to be exempted from this law of the righteousness and equity of God. "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you," or even unto you, notwithstanding any privilege you may seem to have above other men, by being my disciples; he will neither deal better nor worse with you, but just as this lord did by that wretched and most unthankful servant of his, if you provoke him after the same manner, *i. e.* "if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." That great grace of forgiveness of sins, under which you now stand, will be reversed and called in again, by him that hath given it you, if you shall so far tread and trample the glory of it under your feet, as not in consideration and acknowledgment of the greatness of it, to be open and free-hearted in forgiving one another such injuries and trespasses as are done to you. This is the righteous and royal way of that God with the world, "who," as Peter saith, "without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man's work."

I shall not need, I suppose, to caution that which hath been delivered upon this account, with any such item or explication as this: that it was far from our Saviour's intent to threaten, either his apostles, or any other man, that they should incur the sore judgment mentioned, the loss of the forgiveness of sins, or be cast into the prison of hell, by every passionate or sudden heat conceived against a man upon a provocation, or offence given. If this

were so, the whole world of saints, in a manner, might cry out, as the apostles, upon occasion of another doctrine taught by Christ, sometimes did, "Who then can be saved?" But his meaning clearly was, and is, that if they should harbour or nourish thoughts or desires of revenge against any man, that should at any time offend or injure them, and remain implacable, not admitting of a clear and cordial reconciliation with him, and should live and die in this hateful and revengeful posture, that then God would deal no better with them than the lord in the parable did by that servant to whom he had forgiven a great debt, upon his unmerciful dealing by his fellow-servant, when "he delivered him to the tormentors, to be cast into prison, until he should pay the whole debt."

Nor doth any thing that hath been asserted concerning the return of the debt of sin upon any man, after forgiveness, upon occasion of cruel, unmerciful, and revengeful dealings by their brethren, bear at all upon that of the apostle: "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance," Rom. xi. 29. For the meaning hereof is not, that what God once gives he never takes away: we know there are instances in the Scripture without number to the contrary. He took away that integrity and rectitude of nature from Adam, upon his fall, which he had given him in his creation. So in the parable, he commands the "talent to be taken away from the unprofitable servant," Matt. xxv. 28, which before he had given him: yea, and threatens universally, "That from every one that hath not," viz. by way of improvement or increase, "shall be taken away even that which he hath," ver. 29, viz. by way of stock, or original donation. So that the gifts and calling of God are not in this sense without repentance. Therefore,

2. When the apostle affirms the gifts and calling of God to be without repentance, his meaning may be, 1. That he never gives any thing to any person or people whatsoever, but that he knows and considers beforehand, all the inconveniences and disaccommodations that will follow upon it, either in reference to his own glory, or to his creature, one or other, in any kind. Insomuch that whatever be the event or consequence of any of his gifts, if they were to give again, he would give them. Nor doth that expression concerning him, "And it repented the Lord that he had made man upon earth, and it grieved him at his heart," Gen. vi. 6, any way imply, but that if man had been now to make, he would have made him; or that when he did make him, he did not foresee the inconvenience which now followed upon his making of him. The phrase only imports a purpose of heart in God shortly to destroy him from off the face of the earth, for his wickedness, as he saith, immediately after, that he would do. For which kind of expression, when attributed unto God, we have accounted at large in the third chapter of this discourse.

2. The gifts and calling of God are, or may be said to be, without repentance, because, let men continue the same persons, I mean geometrically, or proportionably the same, which they were when the donation, or collation of any gift, was first made by God

unto them, he never changeth or altereth his dispensation towards them, unless it be for the better, or in order to their further good; in which case he cannot be said to repent of what he had given. But in case men shall change and alter from what they were, when God first dealt graciously and bountifully by them, especially if they shall notoriously degenerate, or cast away that principle, or through negligence or otherwise, divest and despoil themselves of that very qualification on which God, as it were, grafted his benefit or gift vouchsafed to them; in this case, though he recalls and takes away his gift, he cannot be said to repent of the giving it, because the terms upon which he gave it please him still; only the persons to whom he gave it, and who pleased him when he gave it unto them, have now rendered themselves, by their unworthiness, displeasing unto him, and incapable, by the laws and rules of his righteous dispensations, of any further enjoyment thereof. This is the case between God and such men, who having once obtained remission of sins from him by such a faith, which wrought, or was apt and ready to work by love, afterwards upon the loss or degeneration of this faith, together with the operativeness of contrary and vile principles, are divested by him of that great and glorious privilege, and fall back into their former estate of condemnation.

Therefore, from those quarters of the parable in Matthew which we have lately surveyed, perfect intelligence comes that persons, who have by means of a sound faith received remission of sins upon the account of Christ's death, may through negligence in not preserving this faith, or the sweetness and soundness of it, so far provoke their glorious benefactor, as to cause him to repeal that his act of grace towards them, and to suffer their former guilt to return, like the unclean spirit with seven worse than himself, upon them. From whence it undeniably follows, that Christ hath purchased remission of sins by his death for those, who notwithstanding, may through their own folly and wickedness perish. Chrysostom interprets the place in full consonancy with this inference or supposition. "Although," saith he, "the graces and gifts of God are without repentance, yet malice or wickedness prevailed so far as to dissolve this law. What then is there of more grievous consequence, than to remember injuries which appear to be a subverter, or destroyer, of such and so great a gift of God?"* Amongst our later expositors, Musculus, as orthodox as men can make a man, advanceth the same interpretation, making it his third observation upon the place, "that those sins which are, through the grace of God, pardoned at present, shall not be remitted in the future, unless we will forgive our brother. For it is an unjust thing," saith he, "that he should enjoy the free remitment, or forgiveness of a debt of ten thousand talents, who refuseth to forgive his brother a debt of an hundred

* Καί τοιγε ἀμεταμέλητα τοῦ Θεοῦ τὰ χαρίσματα καὶ δωρεαί. ἀλλὰ τοσοῦτον ἰσχυσεν ἡ κακία, ὡς καὶ τοῦτον λύσαι τὸν νόμον. Τί τοίνυν τοῦ μνησικακεῖν χάλειπώτερον, ἢταν δωρεάν θείαν τοσαύτην καὶ τηλικαύτην ἀνατρέπον φαίνηται;

pence.* Mr. John Ball himself nibbleth also at this exposition, even whilst, for the sake of those that sit at the table with him, he opposeth it. "As in the parable," saith he, "the Lord is said to remit to his servant a thousand talents, when he desired him, viz. inchoately, or upon condition, which was not confirmed, because he did not forgive his fellow servant; so the false prophets are bought by the blood of Christ, viz. in a sort as they believed in Christ, but not sincerely and unfeignedly."† A little after, "to these men their sins were remitted in a sort in this world," &c. If he would have brought forth his darkness of inchoately, upon condition, in a sort, into a clear and perfect light, his meaning must have been, that that remission of sins which God gives unto men in this world, he "neither confirms unto them in the hour of death, nor in the day of judgment," the author's own words a little after the former, in case they live and die under an implacableness or unmercifulness of spirit towards those who injure them. Such a sense as this is truly orthodox, whether men vote it such or no. Our English annotators, though they neither buy nor sell this interpretation in expressness of terms, yet interpretatively they buy or confirm it. "This parable," say they upon verse 35, "informs us that they shall find God severe and implacable that do not forgive their brethren, although they have been diversely and grievously injured by them." In these words they clearly suspend the gracious act of God in remission of sins, in respect of the ultimate and complete exercise of it, upon the Christian deportment and behaviour of men in forgiving one another their trespasses.

How perfectly it stands with the immutability of God, the unchangeableness of his love, the unalterableness of his counsels, and generally with all his attributes, to reverse acts or grants of favour, to re-demand debts once forgiven, &c. shall be cleared in the process of the digression following, occasioned by the contents of this chapter.

CHAPTER IX.

Containing a digression about the commonly received Doctrine of Perseverance, occasioned by several passages in the preceding chapter, wherein the benefit and comfort of that doctrine, which teacheth a possibility of the saints' declining even to destruction, is avouched and clearly evicted, above the other.

NOTWITHSTANDING the frequently experienced truth of the common saying, "pessimus consiliarius timor," fear is a very bad coun-

* Tertia observatio est, etiam ea delicta quæ jam condonata sunt per gratiam Dei, non fore remissa, si nos nolimus remittere fratri. Est enim injustum gaudere de remissis sibi talentis mille, qui nolit centum denarios fratri remittere.

† Covenant of Grace, p. 240.

sellor, yet is it very incident to the natures of men never to think themselves wiser than in their fears, nor to be more importunately wedded to any apprehensions than those which they conceive to be sovereign for the prevention of evil. With what height of confidence and unrelentingness of judgment did the Jews please themselves in their opinion of justification by works, through an apprehension that they must needs disclaim or reject Moses, and the authority of his law or writings, in case they admitted the doctrine of Paul concerning justification by faith. Whereas, this apostle expressly proves and demonstrates unto them, that this doctrine of his was so far from reflecting prejudice in the least upon Moses's law, that indeed it did establish it, *i. e.* avouch the truth and authority of it, Rom. iii. 31, and chap. iv. throughout. Yea, I verily believe that a very considerable part of those doctrines and tenets, which are at this day held by professors of Christian religion, are not maintained or held by them, so much upon any evidence or confidence they have of their truth upon those positive grounds, whether from Scripture or reason, which they commonly plead for them, as out of apprehensions and conceits that the contrary doctrines are of evil consequence, and will in one kind or other do them harm, in case they should give entertainment to them. Lactantius reports that one principal thing which entangled the heathen with idolatry, or worshipping of idols, was a certain fear or conceit that possessed them, that all their religion or devotions would be in vain, in case they saw not with their eyes something that they might worship.* Tertullian, as Austin reports, who held the soul to be corporeal or a body, held it upon the account of this fear, lest if he made not a body of it, he should make nothing at all of it.† The ancient Jews, Mr. Brightman affirmeth it, held it not meet for young men to read the book of the Canticles, out of a fear they would receive harm by it.‡ Mercer likewise relates, that the ancient wise men of this nation judged it best to restrain the common people from reading the book of Ecclesiastes, out of a conceit that it both contradicted itself, and other parts of Scripture likewise.§ Luther, it is sufficiently known, rejected the Epistle of James, out of a conceit that it contradicted the doctrine of Paul, concerning justification by faith only. And several others, both learned and good men, some the second Epistle of Peter, some other pieces only or chiefly, upon the like account of fear.

Concerning the doctrine which maintaineth a possibility of defecation in the saints themselves, or true believers, unto destruction, though I am not ignorant, but that many, both texts of Scripture and arguments otherwise, have been levied, and are wont to be

* *Verentur gentes, ne religio vana sit, si nihil videant, quod adorent.*

† *Denique Tertullianus, qui corpus esse animam credidit, non ob aliud nisi quod eam incorpoream cogitare non potuit: et ideo timuit ne nihil esset, si corpus non esset. — Aug. de Gen. ad lit. l. xii. c. 25.*

‡ *In Cantic. p. 5.*

§ *Nec vulgo legendum tradere, quòd repugnantia contineret, et aliis libris contraria. — Mercer, in Pro. viii. 9.*

brought into the field against it; yet I verily believe that that which makes professors generally so impatiently zealous in their opposition to it, is not so much any satisfaction they find either in these Scriptures or arguments for the proof of that which is contrary unto it, as their inconsiderate and tumultuary fears, lest this doctrine should bereave them of those inward accommodations of peace and comfort which they conceive themselves to be befriended with by the other. In this respect, being little less than necessitated for the securing of some passages, in the former chapter, very material for the carrying on the main design of this discourse, to engage a little about the doctrine of perseverance, I conceive it best, in my entrance hereupon, to remove this stumbling stone out of the way, and to demonstrate, not only that this doctrine hath every whit as fair and full a consistency with the peace and comfort of the saints as that contrary to it, but that of the two it is of a far better and more healthful complexion to make a nurse for them. When we have cleared the innocency and inoffensiveness of it in respect of the peace and comfort of men, and so shall have reconciled it unto their affections, it will be no great mastery, I conceive, to gain in their judgments unto it afterwards. And,

1. I must crave leave, the truth and dear interest of the precious souls of men so commanding me, to say and to affirm, that the doctrine of perseverance so much magnified amongst us, as it is commonly taught and received, is, in the nature and proper tendency of it, very obstructive, yea, and destructive unto the true peace and sound comfort of souls. For if we shall diligently inquire after the common and ordinary causes of those doubts and fears so incident to professors of religion, as also of those extreme burnings and ragings of conscience, wherewith both such persons and others are sometimes most grievously handled and tormented, we shall find them, if not universally, yet generally, and with very few cases of exception, to be these, with their fellows, negligence and slothfulness in watching over their hearts and ways, omission of known duties, formality in services, unprofitableness in their course and callings, non-proficiency in grace; and especially the frequent prevailings and breakings out of base corruptions, vile affections, noisome lusts, &c. Therefore what doctrine soever is, in the native frame and constitution of it, apt to lead men into such snares of death, to fill their consciences with the guilt of such unchristian misdemeanours as these, must needs carry a strong antipathy in it, and be full of enmity against the inward peace and comforts of their dear souls. And what doctrine lightly can there be of a more apparent and notorious tendency this way than that which promiseth unto men, and that with height of assurance, under what looseness or vile practices soever, exemption and freedom from that punishment, the fear and dread whereof is the strongest and sharpest bridle which God himself hath to put into the lips of the unruly flesh in men to restrain it from sin; yea, and which, the strength and sharpness of it notwithstanding, the flesh many times despiseth and

laughs to scorn, and disdains to be reclaimed or held in by it? And is not that doctrine of perseverance, commonly taught and believed amongst us, of this very calculation, tendency, and import?

If it be said, Yea, but they who teach the doctrine of perseverance teach withal, yea, urge and press the necessity of the use of such means, which God hath appointed to enable men to persevere; I answer, It is in vain to persuade or press men unto the use of such means in any kind, which are in themselves distasteful and displeasing unto them, when they are ascertained and secured beforehand that they shall not fail of the end howsoever, whether they use such means or no.

If it be replied, that the teachers I speak of do not promise perseverance in faith unto the end, but only unto those who shall use the means appointed by God for the obtaining of it; I answer, if this indeed be the tenor of their doctrine, mine and theirs are no more two, but one and the same. I am as willing and free as the most zealous of them in their way, to give that great pledge of heaven, the Word of the living God, unto the saints, to secure them of their standing unto the end, upon the use of the means which God hath prescribed in order thereunto. But I fear this is not the clear and simple tenor of their doctrine we now speak of: they blend it with some such additional ingredient as this, that as God requires the use of the means of perseverance at the hand of the saints, and will give it unto none but those who shall use them; yet he hath certainly, universally, and irreversibly decreed, that they shall all use them accordingly, and that he himself will interpose by the power of his Spirit, that not a man of them shall miscarry at this point. I have but a word to say to this: let them produce such a decree as this, and it shall be an end of all strife between me and them, as to this point, immediately. But how little there is to evince any such decree in all that they are wont to allege and argue to that purpose, will sufficiently appear upon the examination, whereunto we shall bring it in due time.

2. As that doctrine of perseverance whereof professors make such a treasure, is deeply necessary to the greatest part of those fears, those wringings and gripings of conscience, wherewith their peace is interrupted, and their comforts appalled and shaken, so is it exceedingly to be feared that it hath a potent and pernicious influence of causality into those frequent, daily, and most sad apostasies and declinings from ways of holiness unto looseness and profaneness, which are found amongst them. For when the flesh, or that which is corrupt, carnal, and sensual in a man, (a principle not only in being, but even vigorous more than enough in the greatest and best believers,) shall be intoxicated with such a luscious and fulsome conceit as this, that it hath goods laid up for the days of eternity, hath it not the temptation of that foolish man, as he is called, upon it, who upon a conceit that he had goods laid up for many years, encouraged his soul unto vanity; "Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry," Luke xii. 19. When a man that

stands is in any capacity of falling, is it not the only way to educe that power or capacity into act, and to cause him to fall indeed, to persuade him that he is in no possibility of falling? Agag, being full of this conceit, "Surely the bitterness of death is past," 1 Sam. xv. 32, came, as the text saith, unto Samuel delicately. When the flesh shall be taught to say, Surely the bitterness of eternal death is past, I am out of all danger, all possibility of suffering the vengeance of eternal fire, is it not a secret and bewitching encouragement unto it to wax wanton against Christ, and to feed foul upon the sinful delicacies of this present world? Not only the distinct sound, but any confused blast of such a trumpet as this, is sufficient to prepare the flesh to the battle of sense and sensuality. Nor do they seem to be much acquainted with, at least not much to consider, the genius of that principle in men we now speak of, I mean the flesh, who think there is any other means so proper, or probable to hamper it, to break the heart and strength of it, as the iron yoke of the fear and dread of the worm that never dieth.

If it be said, Yea, but it cannot be proved that any of those who decline from religious courses unto looseness, how many soever they be that thus miscarry, ever were true believers; or if such, that they continued in their declinings, without a holy recollection of themselves before the end; to this I answer,

1. Be it supposed (which yet will never be proved) that all they who fall away from a profession of faith and holiness, without rising again or returning, were never true believers, yet it cannot be denied (and it is commonly granted by men of contrary judgment) but that many of them were, or might be, in a very fair, probable, and hopeful way of obtaining true faith, of being made sound believers. Now, that doctrine whose native and proper tendency is to take men off from the means, or to turn them aside out of the ways of life and peace, or, which is the same, of sound believing, is every whit as much, if not more, anti-evangelical, as that which directly occasioneth such miscarriages in those who do truly believe; so that there is nothing gotten by that pretence howsoever. But,

2. If there be any persons under heaven who may, upon sufficient grounds, and justifiable by the word of God, be judged true believers, many of those apostates we speak of were to be judged such. All the visible lineaments of a true faith were in their faces. As far as the eye of man is able to pierce, they lived "godlily, righteously, and soberly in this present world." Doth any true believer act zealously for his God? So did they. Is any true believer fruitful in good works? So were they: yea, there were found in those we now speak of, not only such things upon the sight and knowledge whereof in men we ought to judge them true believers, but even such things further which we ought to reverence and honour, as the lovely and majestic characters of faith and holiness in their exaltation; therefore it is but an importune pretence to deny them to have been true believers. To say, that whilst they

stood, men were, indeed, bound in charity to judge them true believers, but by their declining they discovered themselves not to have been the men, is but to beg the question, and that upon very ill terms to obtain it.

3. If our Saviour's rule be authentic, "By their fruits ye shall know them," Matt. vii. 20; we did not only stand bound by the law of charity, but by the law of a righteous or district judgment itself, to judge the persons we speak of, true believers, whilst they adorned the gospel with such fruits of righteousness as were mentioned; for our Saviour doth not say, By their fruits you shall have ground to conceive or to conjecture them such or such, or to judge them in charity such or such, but "you shall know them." Now, what a man knows he is not bound to conjecture, or to judge it in a way of charity to be that which he knoweth it to be, but positively to judge and conclude of it accordingly. If, then, it be possible, as hath been said, for men, by any signs, fruits, works, expressions in one kind or other, to know true believers, which our Saviour, in the said rule and elsewhere, seemeth to suppose to be very possible, the persons we speak of may be known to have been such.

4. And lastly; if that doctrine of perseverance, in the comfort whereof men so much rejoice, entangles them with such a necessity for the defence of it as this, I mean, to judge all those to have been hypocrites, or unsound in the faith, who afterwards apostatise and decline to profaneness, it will be found, upon a true account, to be a doctrine of no such good accord with their peace or comfort as is pretended, or as they inconsiderately imagine; for what will it avail me to my peace or comfort, though I be never so fully resolved or persuaded, that in case I be a true believer I shall never fall away to perdition, if, in the meantime, I be so entangled in my judgment that I can hardly, if at all, have any sufficient or clear ground to judge when or that I am a true believer, or be otherwise occasioned strongly to suspect and doubt of the truth of my faith? Now, if I must of necessity conclude all those to have been hypocrites, or pretenders only unto true faith, who afterwards fall, and rise no more, I must needs hereby minister an occasion of a thousand fears and jealousies to myself and my own conscience touching the truth and soundness of mine own faith, lest this should be of no better kind or constitution than theirs. And being compassed about with such fears and jealousies as these, what great peace or comfort am I capable of, touching my salvation? or what is it to me whether true believers may fall away or no, when as I lie under the heavy pressure of so many doubts and debates with myself whether I be a true believer or no?

If it be replied, Yea, but I may have security and assurance enough for the truth and soundness of mine own faith, because I am perfectly conscious to the uprightness and simplicity of mine own heart, which I could not be of theirs; and therefore, though I might very possibly be mistaken touching the truth of their faith, having nothing to found my judgment in this kind upon, but only their outward

deportments ; yet, having the testimony of mine own heart and conscience, together with my outward conversation, I may here be confident, though I miscarried there. To this also I answer,

1. Far be it from me to deny but that a man may very possibly attain unto a very strong and potent assurance, and that upon grounds every way sufficient, warrantable, and good, that his faith is sound and saving, yea, and such, wherein persevering unto the end, he shall undoubtedly be actually saved. I shall not need to argue this, because it is nothing but what is owned on both sides. But,

2. I verily believe, withal, that there is not one true believer of a hundred, I might say of many thousands, who hath any such assurance as this of the truth and soundness of his faith ; such an assurance, I mean, which is built upon solid and pregnant foundations, and which are proper to bear it. My reasons are two. 1. Because, though the testimony of a man's heart and conscience touching his uprightness towards God, or the soundness of any thing that is saving in him, be comfortable and cheering, yet seldom are these properties, this comfortableness and cheeringness of it, built upon such foundations which are sufficient to warrant them, at least upon such whose sufficiency in this kind men duly apprehend : for the testimony of the conscience of a man touching any thing which is spiritually and excellently good, is of no such value, unless first it be excellently enlightened with the knowledge of the nature, properties, and condition of that of which it testifieth ; and, 2. Be in the actual contemplation, consideration, or remembrance of what it knoweth in this kind when it rendereth such testimony. Now, there are, I question not, many thousands, both of men and women in the world, who truly believe, and whose hearts are upright with God, who yet are not to any such degree enlightened about the natures and properties either of a true faith or uprightness of heart, but that the testimony which their consciences give concerning these is liable to many disputes and questions about the certainty and truth of it in the consciences themselves which give it. This is the constant and known experience of, in a manner, the whole believing world ; there being not one amongst many of the inhabitants hereof, the testimony of whose conscience touching the soundness of his faith is upon any such terms, or to any such degree, either comforting or cheering, but that he conflicts with many fears, and scruples, and doubtful apprehensions notwithstanding.

2. The comfortableness and cheeringness of the testimony which any man's conscience gives touching the soundness of his faith and the uprightness of his heart towards God, depending mainly and principally upon the uniform, regulate, and constant tenor of his life and conversation in ways of holiness ; and there being so few, even among the saints themselves, who are to any competent degree careful to walk without stumblings, and slippings, and many strains of unworthiness, hence it must needs follow that that testimony of conscience we speak of will falter and be divided in

itself; and though that which is comforting and cheering in it may be predominant, yet the consciousness and sense of irregularities in men's ways must needs detract proportionably from the same. The credit and authority of that testimony which any man's conscience gives in unto him touching the truth and soundness of his faith, must needs in a very great measure depend upon the equable flowings or issuings forth hereof in ways and works of righteousness; because when there is any considerable interruption in these, that testimony will be suspended and put to silence for the time, unless the conscience itself be under the power of some delusion. This is evident from the Scriptures themselves in many places. "Little children," saith John, "let no man deceive you: he that doth righteousness is righteous," 1 John iii. 7. This caveat, "let no man deceive you," plainly intimates that the consciences, even of Christians and true believers themselves, (for such John's "little children" here are on all hands presumed to be,) may very possibly be deceived in their estimate of a righteous man, or, which is the same, of a sound believer, and judge him to be either the one or the other, who is neither. This is chiefly spoken, and is accordingly to be understood, concerning a man's judging of himself. Whereas he adds, "he that doth righteousness is righteous," it is to be understood emphatically and exclusively; so that "he," and he only, "who doth righteousness," is to be judged a righteous man, the Scripture frequently expressing itself after the same manner. See Isa. lxvi. 2; Gal. iii. 12; John iii. 16. Now, by "doing righteousness," he doth not mean the doing of some righteous acts now and then, but a constant and uniform practice of righteousness, human frailties only excepted, which come not into this account; for in the writings of this apostle, as *ποιεῖν ἀμαρτίαν*, 1 John iii. 8, 9, usually, if not constantly, signifies, as it were, to follow a trade or course of sinning, to sin with the like frequency and dexterity that a tradesman works upon his ordinary calling or occupation: so doth *ποιεῖν δικαιοσύνην*, 1 John ii. 29; iii. 10; and so *ποιεῖν ἀλήθειαν*, 1 John i. 6; John iii. 21; and *ποιεῖν τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ*, John vii. 17; ix. 31, &c. signify a proportionable acting of righteousness, and of the truth, and of the will of God. Now, if no man can or ought, upon Scripture grounds, to be judged a righteous man or sound believer but only he who doth or worketh righteousness upon such terms as these, evident it is, that in what degree men fall short of these terms in working righteousness, the testimony of their consciences touching the soundness of their faith and uprightness of their hearts towards God must needs falter, and be encumbered with doubts and fears proportionably, unless their consciences themselves be misinformed or hardened. Therefore, what doctrine soever occasioneth men to question the sufficiency of their obedience or righteous walkings, for rendering the testimony of their consciences touching the soundness of their faith valid and worthy belief, can be of no such lovely or desirable consequence for their comfort and peace; and consequently the

doctrine of perseverance cannot, in a righteous judgment, be adjudged such: because, as hath been already argued, it still necessitateth men to give sentence against a better and more uniform righteousness than their own, (I mean, the practical righteousness of many who afterwards apostatised without returning,) as being invalid and insufficient to evince those to have been true believers in whom it was found. And if I stand bound in conscience to judge those to have been hypocrites, or pretenders only to a true faith, and not true believers indeed, whose righteousness and fruitfulness of conversation by many degrees exceeded mine, am I not strongly hereby occasioned, yea, engaged, to question the truth and soundness of mine own faith? especially considering, as hath been said, that the evidence of the truth and reality of every man's faith depends so much upon the fruitfulness and operativeness of it in ways and works of righteousness.

The premises duly considered, that doctrine of perseverance, over which the generality of professors so impotently rejoice as being of so desirable and rich a compliance with their spiritual comfort and peace, must needs appear to be a doctrine of no such import or accommodation to them, but rather a doctrine very apt and likely to entice them into a boldness and venturousness in sinning, and consequently must needs dispose them to apostasy and declining, yea, and fill their consciences many times with dread and horror, and very frequently with great jealousies, inextricable questions and disputes about the truth and soundness of their faith.

Yea, but, will the friends of the said doctrine, it is like, still say, We find it very sweet and comfortable to us; whereas the contrary doctrine, which tells us of a possibility of our final apostasy and falling away, is very sad, and full of discouragement, &c. To these things, and all that can be pretended in this kind, we answer,

1. Suppose the doctrine we speak of were never so comfortable, yet this would be no argument of the truth or goodness of it, unless the comfortableness of it be found in due consistence with the wisdom and righteousness of God. It were easy to invent twenty doctrines every whit as comfortable (nay much more comfortable) as this, in respect of the natures and imports of them, which yet will be found notoriously defective in point of truth, because they hold not any regular proportion with those attributes of God. As for example, such doctrines as these, "All men without exception shall be saved, whether they believe or not; no man shall be punished for any sin whatsoever, neither in this world, nor in that which is to come; men are as much approved of by God in the committing of the greatest sin, as in the performance of the greatest duty." Such doctrines, I say, as these, are much more sweet and comfortable in respect of their frame, constitution, and import, than that which affirms a necessity of the saints' perseverance. But as those doctrines with their fellows, are not to be commended, nor entertained for their sweet-

ness' or comfortableness' sake, having no approbation or countenance from God in his word; so neither is the common doctrine of perseverance at all to be regarded for any thing of like accommodation, I mean for any thing sweet or comfortable in it, unless the stamp of Divine authority could be shown upon it, which by no light yet extant is to be seen.

2. Though doctrines and other means of spiritual comfort are very desirable, and earnestly to be pursued and contended for, when they are regular and lawful, yet as we must be content to be at the allowance of our heavenly Father, for the accommodations and comforts of this present life, and not be our own carvers of all that comes within our reach for such a purpose, so ought we no less to rest satisfied with such grounds and means for our spiritual consolation which God hath judged meet for us, and hath himself administered unto us in his word, and not strain our fantasies or apprehensions to mould such notions and doctrines as we ourselves conceit to be commodious and serviceable to us in such a way. And as it is a high reproach unto the gracious and bountiful providence of God for men to have recourse unto the devil, or any of his unclean arts or methods, for their temporal supplies in any kind; so is it no less, if not rather much more dishonourable to him, when men shall make themselves beholding to a spirit of error for the supports or supplies of their inner man. But,

3. No such notion or doctrine, which is only comfortable and betiding peace to the flesh, *i. e.* the corrupt, base, and sensual part of a man, ought be esteemed, especially by the saints, so much as comfortable, simply and indeed, or any means of peace truly so called, but should rather be looked upon as prejudicial unto, and of an evil influence upon their whole interest in this kind. For that which is proper to strengthen the hand of the flesh, can very hardly, if at all, be serviceable unto the spirit, in the things of the peace and comfort thereof. Now that the doctrine so often named, is a grand benefactress to the flesh, a full fountain of joy and gladness unto it, hath been sufficiently proved in this chapter already. I here only add this brief demonstration further: It must needs be a doctrine speaking to the heart of the flesh, because it administereth a certain hope unto it that it shall however escape the wrath and vengeance which is to come, yea, though it disporteth itself in all manner of looseness and licentiousness in the meantime. For this is the spirit that speaks in that doctrine.

That it is no ways comforting or strengthening to the spirit, or spiritual and regenerate part of a man, but rather fulsome and importune, is evident from hence, because a man, so far as he is regenerate and spiritual, desires not, wisheth not heaven, or salvation itself, but only in ways of holiness and of honour; nor would he purchase a dispensation, though it were offered unto him, with the least hair on his head, to take his fill in the pleasures of sin

without danger. Nay, if an angel from heaven should come and offer such a dispensation as this unto him upon the terms specified, it would be as an unclean and accursed offer unto him. The holy angels, because they have no flesh, no corruption in them, though they be mutable, (as all creatures whatsoever by the unavoidable law of their creation are,) value not their happiness, or their security in their standings, at the least mite the less, because they have no liberty of sinning without danger; nor would they account such a liberty any privilege or comfort at all to them if they had it. But that they are capable or in a possibility of sinning, as well as men regenerate, though not in so near a capacity, we shall, I conceive, have opportunity to demonstrate in the sequel of the discourse. Now a man regenerate, take him so far as he is spiritual and born of God, valueth opportunities of sinning no more than an angel: nor desireth continuance in the love and favour of God, upon any other terms or conditions than such on which the Lord Christ himself, as it seems, enjoyed it. "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love: even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love," John xv. 10. So then evident it is that the new man taketh no pleasure, rejoiceth not in any such doctrine, which ensures either perseverance in faith, or continuance in the favour and love of God to it, upon any other terms, than of walking holily and humbly with him. And upon these terms, the doctrine which teacheth a possibility of the saints' declining, ensureth both the said glorious accommodations with as high a hand of security, as it.

Yea, the truth is, that the received doctrine of perseverance is so far from gratifying the spiritual part of a man, that it is to it what Peter was to Christ, when he counselled him to pity himself, Matt. xvi. 22, I mean an offence; or what those Christians were unto Paul, of whom he complained that they brake his heart with weeping, Acts xxi. 13. For it secretly whispers and suggests unto it such things, the nature and proper tendency whereof is to scatter what the spirit had gathered, to dissolve and break the strength of those holy purposes and resolutions wherewith the regenerate part hath harnessed and armed itself against temptations unto evil. When the new man in a servant of God shall (with Paul) have reasoned and resolved thus: "I will keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means when I have preached unto others, I myself should be a castaway," I Cor. ix. 27, he that shall come and insinuate thus into him, Whether thou keepest under thy body or no, whether thou bringest it into subjection, or whether thou sufferest it to wax wanton, thou shalt be in no danger, in no possibility of being a castaway, shall he not loosen the very foundation and ground-work of such a resolution, which was the sense and apprehension of the great danger of being a castaway in case his body was not kept under? Or suppose a man should argue, and conclude thus within himself, I will labour with my hands, that I may have whereof both to

subsist honestly and to do good unto others, would not such a suggestion as this to him, that he shall have that which will be abundantly sufficient for both purposes, whether he laboureth with his hands or no, be a temptation and snare upon him to retract his conclusion in that kind ?

If it be here said, Yea, but a certain knowledge and full assurance that God will never cease to love me, will bestow salvation and blessedness upon me, whatsoever my failings shall be, is an effectual motive unto my heart and soul, to cleave unto him in all love and faithfulness ; and consequently is nourishing, cheering, and strengthening even to the inner man : to this I answer,

1. That the inner, or new man in the saints, takes no pleasure at all in any such notion or persuasion as this, that it may or shall enjoy the love of God, or salvation itself, under the practice of all manner of sin and wickedness whatsoever. The very sound of these last words is harsh and uncouth unto it. Nor can it easily be persuaded, that any such persuasion is from God.

2. Should it be granted, that a full and perfect assurance of the continuance and love of God upon all, upon any terms whatsoever, even of the greatest sin and wickedness, would be an effectual motive upon the heart and conscience of a regenerate man, to cleave in love unto God, yet would it not be a motive in this kind of any such strength or efficacy as such an assurance as this, that he shall continue in the love and favour of God for ever, in a way of righteousness and well doing, but withal shall be in danger of losing this love, in case he shall decline unto wickedness. The reason why this latter compounded motive must needs be of more efficacy to the purpose mentioned than the former, is because the latter supposeth a necessity of this cleaving in love to God for the obtaining of this great good, " the continuance for ever of the love of God towards him," which the former doth not. Now this is a general rule, that that motive is still of greater force to persuade to an action, which renders the action persuaded unto as of absolute necessity for the obtaining of some desirable end, especially when the said end is ensured withal upon the performance of the action, than that which renders this end attainable without the performance of this action. He that shall persuade me to love such or such a man by telling me, that whether I love him or no, yet he will deal lovingly and friendly by me, should not persuade me to love him by an argument or motive of so much strength, as he that should move me to the same point thus : If you love him, he will deal very lovely and friendly with you ; but if you shall neglect, or voluntarily injure him, you will find him a sore enemy. There is no action, how lovely or desirable soever in itself, but becomes so much the more desirable, by how much the greater good shall appear to depend upon it, and must needs be produced by it ; especially if it shall yet further appear, that this good cannot be produced or obtained by any other means whatsoever without it. Now then, as he who deprives a man of a greater benefit to

interest him in a lesser, doth him as real an injury or wrong as he that should take away a part of his substance from him without any consideration at all: in like manner that doctrine which shall bereave the spiritual part of a man, or a believer, of a greater and more effectual motive to the performance of a duty, only to present him with a weaker, and of less power, must in reason be judged an enemy unto the one and the other, yea as great an enemy, as such a doctrine would be, which should deny them a lesser motive in that kind, without any recompense at all.

3. If such a knowledge or assurance as the objection speaks of, were an effectual motive to persuade the heart of a man to cleave in love unto God, what reason can be given why God should not administer it, in order to such a purpose, as well to his enemies and carnal men, as unto his saints or friends? For, first, certain it is, that all men whatsoever are commanded by God to love him, or to cleave in this affection unto him. 2. As certain it is that God is not defective in the subministration of motives unto them on this behalf, no, not of those that are most proper and efficacious to persuade them thereunto. 3. As certain it is, as either of the former, that an assurance of the love of God towards them against all sin and wickedness whatsoever that they are capable of committing, is a motive every whit as taking with, as suitable and pleasing to natural and carnal men, (if yet a motive it be,) as to spiritual and holy men, to persuade them to the love of God. Therefore, if God hath not thought meet to afford such a motive as this is unto natural or carnal men, it is no ways likely that he hath afforded it unto saints; with whose hearts, as such, (I mean as they are saints,) it hath no agreement or takingness at all (as was shown formerly).*

4. And lastly; the very truth is, all things duly considered, that the consideration we now speak of, and which is specified in the objection, hath nothing at all in it of the true nature or property of a motive to persuade any man to cleave in love unto God. For whatsoever representeth God to the heart, soul, or conscience of a man, as a God in whose "sight he is good, that doth evil," Mal. ii. 17, and consequently as no God of judgment; as a God promising his love, favour, and acceptance, as well unto dogs returning unto their vomits, and to swine wallowing, after their washing, in the mire, as well as unto lambs and sheep, is no consideration which commendeth him unto his creature man, or consequently which hath any thing in it to engage him to cleave in love to him. Suppose a man were thus principled, that having once had a good opinion of any man, he would never alter his opinion of him, how desperately soever the man should degenerate from himself, as though he should become the first born amongst all the sons of Belial, turn the most bloody murderer, the most cruel oppressor, the most brutish incestuary under heaven; but under the guilt and daily practice of these and

* See pp. 235, 236, of this chapter.

such like abominations, should love this man with as much truth, reality, and sincereness of affection, only upon the account of his sometime goodness, as he doth the most virtuous and worthy person under heaven. Would such a temper or principle as this, commend him as a person so much the more worthy love and respects, in the eyes of any considering man? or would they not rather draw disparagement and contempt upon him; yea, and this from those very persons whom he shall affect and love upon such terms? Therefore, in case it were possible for me certainly to know, that how loosely, how profanely, how debauchedly soever I should behave myself, yet God will love me as entirely, as fervently, as he doth the holiest and most righteous man under heaven, it would be a very slender motive unto me to cleave in love unto him. So then it doth not yet appear by any thing that hath been mentioned or argued to the point, that the doctrine of perseverance, as it passeth up and down amongst us, is any contributor to the peace or comfort of that which is of God, but only to that which is of Satan in men, and which deserveth mortification and crucifying, instead of comfort and peace.

If it be yet further objected: But is not the doctrine of falling away a very uncomfortable doctrine, apt to beget a servile spirit in the saints, a spirit of bondage and fear; or must not they who apprehend themselves to be in continual danger of falling away and perishing, needs eat their bread in darkness, dwell with sorrows and perplexities of soul all their days? To these, and all other reasonings and demands of like import with them, I answer,

1. To be in danger of falling away, and to be under a possibility of falling away, are two very different things; at least, if we take the word danger in the common, which yet is the proper, notion and signification of it, viz. as it imports a probability or likelihood of evil to befall those that are said to be in danger. A man that is in danger, properly so called, of suffering evil, if the evil be great, cannot well enjoy himself with much comfort or peace whilst the danger continues. But he that is only in a possibility of suffering evil, especially being sufficiently provided of means whereby to prevent the coming of the evil upon him if he please, is fully capable of enjoying himself upon the richest and best terms of security that are compatible to a creature. Nor are men wont to be troubled with the lightest grudgings of fear in respect of such an evil, though very grievous in the kind and nature of it, which may very possibly befall them in case they may with ordinary care keep themselves from it. Men may very possibly fall into the fire and be burnt; into the water and be drowned; from the tops of houses or steeples, and be dashed in pieces; yet no man lives ever a whit the more uncomfortably, or under any kind of fear, because they live under a possibility of suffering these great evils. The reason of their security in this kind is, because they know that God hath given them reason and understanding sufficient to preserve themselves from them. In like manner, God having vouchsafed unto the saints

means abundantly sufficient to preserve themselves from apostasy, and consequently from perishing, so that they need not either apostatise or perish except themselves please; there is no occasion at all, much less any necessity, why they should live any whit the more uncomfortably, or abate so much as the least hair of their head in confidence of being saved, only because they are under a possibility of declining, and so of perishing. The apostle Paul acknowledgeth himself to have been under a possibility of being made a reprobate, or castaway, "Lest," said he, "having preached unto others, I myself should prove or become a castaway," 1 Cor. ix. 27. Yet at what an excellent rate and height of comfort, yea of joy unspeakable and glorious did he live? "I am persuaded," saith he, "that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord," Rom. viii. 38, 39. That which ministered unto him the ground-work of this most raised and blessed confidence, notwithstanding the possibility he was under of being made a castaway, was partly that clear and certain knowledge which he had of the unchangeable purpose of God to give salvation unto all those who should persevere in faith and holiness unto the end; partly also the like knowledge of the bounty of God towards all his saints, in vouchsafing unto them so rich and full a proportion of means as he doth, whereby to persevere accordingly. Thus then we see, that the doctrine of falling away, teaching only a possibility hereof, and so of perishing, is no doctrine of uncomfortableness, nor necessarily occasioneth the least fear in men of falling away, or of perishing.

2. Suppose, for argument's sake, the doctrine of perseverance should be subscribed unto, and that absolute assurance of salvation granted unto believers, which this doctrine pretends to give unto them; yet will not that conditional assurance which the other doctrine affords unto them, fall much short of it; yea, in most respects, some whereof have been already touched, it will be found, in order to their comfort and peace, greater than it. Put case I were a man, who very much desired to live long in the world, and God should please to grant me a lease or assurance of my life for a thousand years, only upon condition that I should not wilfully destroy myself, as either by thrusting a sword through my own bowels, or by casting myself headlong from some high tower, or by taking poison, known to be for such beforehand, with the like; would I not upon the matter be as well satisfied with such a conditional leave or grant as this, as with one that should be absolute, and wherein my life should be assured unto me against all possible attempts to be made by myself to destroy it? Doubtless, if it were simply long life which I desired, the former grant would be as satisfactory unto me as the latter. Indeed, if besides the security of my life, and of the continuance of it for such a term, I should wantonly or vain-gloriously desire to show desperate tricks, without fear or danger, as to

take lions by the beards, or bears by the paws, to tread upon cockatrices, to wash in cauldrons of boiling lead, or the like, then the latter grant would accommodate me better than the former. In like manner, if it be simply and singly the salvation of my soul which I desire, and the certainty or assurance hereof, such a conditional promise made unto me by God as this, that saved I shall certainly be, if I will but quit myself like a man, abstain from foolish lusts, and not with the dog return again to my vomit, or with the swine that hath been washed to my wallowing in the mire, such a promise, I say, as this, is security in abundance unto me in that behalf. But if my desire be over and above the saving of my soul to live loosely and profanely, to disport myself in all manner of sin and wickedness, to affront the heavens, and bid defiance to the Almighty, and laugh Jesus Christ and his gospel in the face to scorn, or the like, without running the hazard of losing my soul, then I confess only such a grant or promise of salvation from God, as the doctrine of absolute perseverance demands, would satisfy and content me, and furnish me with that assurance which I desire. So that the most express and evident truth is, that there is nothing more in that assurance of salvation which the doctrine of absolute perseverance pretends unto, than in that which the doctrine of falling away, or of conditional perseverance indulgeth unto the saints, but only a liberty or fearlessness of sinning. And whether men may not be of a free, ingenuous, and son-like spirit, without a liberty or boldness of sinning; yea, whether such a liberty as this will consist with that spirit, I freely refer to the determination of any man, who hath been never so little baptized into the spirit, whereby the saints cry, Abba, Father.

3. That doctrine which is efficacious and proper to cut off, and prevent all those occasions and miscarriages, from which troubles of conscience, doubtings of salvation, fears of perishing, &c. do most frequently, if not always arise, must needs be a doctrine of a far better comportance with the peace and comfort of men, than that which is apt to multiply or to give being to such occasions. Now, 1. That the unclean issues of lust and corruption in the lives and ways of men, are the springs and fountains that commonly send forth the bitter waters of inward troubles, fears, and perplexities of soul, hath been already argued in this chapter; and besides, is nothing but what the daily experience of too many sealetth unto for truth. 2. It hath been likewise brought forth into a clear light, that the doctrine of absolute perseverance is of as pregnant and dangerous a calculation as a doctrine lightly can be, to cause the lives and ways of men to abound with those unclean issues we speak of. Therefore, 3, and lastly, I here add, That the contrary doctrine, I mean of conditional perseverance, is of a kindly temper, of a most absolute choice, and proper constitution, to prevent the breaking out of such issues, to abate the courage, and to break the heart of those corruptions in men, which otherwise would be very unruly, and hardly bear restraint, and consequently is a faithful and

severe guardian to and over the peace and comforts of men. For teaching on the one hand, certainty of perseverance, and of salvation thereupon, upon a conscientious use of those means which God hath prescribed in order thereunto, I mean for the enabling of men to persevere, it mightily cheereth, fortifieth, and strengtheneth the spirit in men who desireth, as hath been proved, neither perseverance, nor salvation itself, upon any other terms than these, and rejoiceth above measure, that upon these they may, and shall most assuredly be had; and on the other hand, by teaching that by looseness, profaneness, negligence, in the use of means, &c. there may be an apostatising to perdition, it sorely rebukes the flesh, or corruption in a man, and puts a sharp bit and bridle into their lips. "A bridle," saith Solomon, "for the ass, and a rod for the fool's back," Prov. xxvi. 3. The terrible rod of hell fire, is for the back of that great fool, the flesh, or that which is irrational and unruly in men, without the shaking and sound whereof it will hardly learn subjection.

If it be objected; Yea, but experience shows that the contrary doctrine, that which maintains unconditional perseverance, is more effectual to subdue corruption in men than the other, inasmuch as many who maintain the doctrine of falling away are known to be loose, and of sinful addiction in several kinds, to be no friends to the power of religion, &c., whereas men of greatest holiness and strictest conversation are known to be of the contrary judgment; to this also I answer,

1. The experience asserted in the objection is not so unquestionable in point of truth, but that if the assertors were put home upon the proof, they would, I fear, account more in presumption than in reasonableness of argument. For if persons of the one judgment and of the other were duly compared together, I verily believe there would be found every whit as full a proportion of men truly conscientious and religious amongst those whose judgments stand, and have stood, for a possibility of falling away in the saints, as on the other side. But through a foolish and unsavoury kind of partiality, we are apt on all hands, according to the proverb, to count all our own geese for swans, and other men's swans geese. 'Certain I am, that if the writings of men of the one judgment and of the other be compared together, and an estimate made from hence of the religious worth and holiness of the authors respectively, those who oppose the common doctrine of perseverance need count it no robbery to make themselves every ways equal in this honour with their opposers. The truth is, if it be lawful for me to utter what I really apprehend and judge in the case, I do not find the spirit of holiness to breathe with that authority, heat, or excellency of power in the writings of the latter, which I am very sensible of in the writings of the former. These call for righteousness, holiness, and all manner of Christian conversation with every whit as high a hand as the other, and add nothing to check, obstruct, or enfeeble the authority of their demands in this kind; whereas the other,

though they be sore many times in their exhortations and conjurements unto holiness, yet otherwhile render both these, and themselves in them, contemptible, by avouching such principles, which cut the very sinews and strength of such their exhortations, and fully balance all the weight of those motives by which they seek to bind them upon the consciences of men. And for numbers of men truly holy and conscientious, doubtless the primitive Christians, for three hundred years together and upwards, next after the times of the apostles, will fully balance, with an abundant surplussage, both for numbers and truth of godliness, all those in the reformed churches, who since Calvin's days have adhered to the common doctrine of perseverance. And that the churches of Christ more generally, during the said space of three hundred years and more, next after the apostles, held a possibility of a total and final defection, even in true and sound believers, is so clear from the records yet extant of those times, that men who shall please to acquaint themselves with them, cannot, without much opposition from their consciences, deny it. We shall, God willing, give some light of proof to this assertion in the 15th chapter of this discourse.

2. Concerning the persons signally, I suppose, aimed at for the confirmation of the said experiment on the right hand, as Calvin, Musculus, P. Martyr, Bucer, with other protestant divines of like note and name with them; together with such of our English ministers and other professors amongst us, who stood up with the greatest zeal in opposing ceremony and superstition, episcopal tyranny, and popish innovations, being generally reputed men very exemplary, and particular in their ways and conversations, my answer is, 1. That it is a mere mistake to conclude or think that these, especially the former, were so thorough or settled in their judgments for the doctrine of absolute perseverance, as to have no thoughts within them, coming and going the contrary way. He that shall narrowly and impartially peruse their writings, will, I verily believe, find in them every whit as much said for conditional as for absolute perseverance. I shall, God willing, give a very competent account of this my faith before the end of this discourse; and shall fully prove by several express testimonies from some of the leading men, and greatest masters among them, that they had a very good mind, at least at times, to be of that opinion which affirmeth a possibility of defection in the saints even to the losing of the soul. And for the latter, I mean the English ministers, and those mentioned with them, there is the like consideration of these also. The works of such of them as have written, bewray them to have had both the nations we speak of in their womb; in which works or writings of theirs, if they speak one word for a necessity of perseverance in the saints, it is ten to one but they speak another for a possibility of such a defection, which is never accompanied with repentance. For those godly ministers now upon the stage, who are looked upon as rigid patrons and assertors of the received doc-

trine of perseverance, the truth is, that whatsoever they are in the letter of their conclusion they are in the spirit of their principles and premises, builders up of that faith which destroys the faith of that doctrine; most of their sermons, which any ways relate unto that subject, having, Janus-like, two faces, with the one of which they countenance this doctrine, and with the other that which is contrary unto it: so that the experience pretended in the objection of so many pious men embracing the doctrine of perseverance is but a mere presumption; the men, generally, are divided in their own judgments about the point. True it is, our English ministers and professors more generally profess themselves for the doctrine of perseverance, and cry out upon the doctrine of falling away as Arminian; but, as it fell to Esau's lot, through divine dispensation, to be first born, and so to have the precedence of Jacob in worldly honours, in respect of time, though at last his "mountain and his heritage was laid waste" for ever, Mal. i. 3, 4; so it seemed good to the providence of God, that, of the doctrinal twins we speak of, striving together in the wombs of the minds and judgments of those men now under consideration, that of perseverance should first lift up its head in the world and be applauded; making no question, withal, but that the time is a coming, yea, and is even at the door, when this doctrine must decrease, and the contrary to it increase, and be exalted in the judgments, and tongues, and writings of men. The main providential occasion, I conceive, which hath caused the doctrine of perseverance to flourish hitherto like a green bay tree in this land, as it hath done, was the permission of Mr. Perkins's judgment to be overruled on this hand by those texts of Scripture, some or all of them, together with those reasons which are commonly at this day insisted upon for the proof of this doctrine. The great worth of the man otherwise, commended his opinion unto many far above the worth thereof. And it being so incident unto men "*malle credere quam judicare*,"* rather to believe than judge; and again, to believe persons reputed singularly pious and learned rather than others; it may very well be conceived how, by the authority and repute of this worthy instrument of God in his generation, this land should come to be so generally leavened as it is, not so much, indeed, with the opinion itself of which we speak, as with the profession of it. Before his days this doctrine found no such general applause or entertainment amongst conscientious persons in this land; and many of the learned martyrs in Queen Mary's days leaned another way, who likewise dissented from him in several other tenets about the Arminian controversies. And when I consider what grudgings there are of the contrary opinion (I mean of that which avoucheth a possibility of falling away) in the judgments of the most conscientious ministers amongst us, though the stream of their professions runs in opposition hereunto, and withal, what principles they clearly and frequently hold forth, especially in the

* *Omnes malum credere, quam judicare.—Sen.*

applicatory parts of their sermons; I am easily induced to believe that, as by the authority of one man, or some few, the profession of such a judgment came in upon them and surprised them, so, likewise, they want nothing in order to the profession of a change of their judgments in the point, but only the authority and countenance of some one or some few men of like popular acceptance, to go before them. 2. Suppose it should be granted that the godly persons minded in the objection as holding the doctrine of perseverance, were perfectly whole and entire, and not divided, as hath been said, in their judgments thereupon, yet would it no way follow from hence that therefore this doctrine was any way accessory to that godliness whereof they gave so good an account in their lives and conversations. These men, I presume, held many principles of Christian religion, which taught them to "live godly, righteously, and soberly in this present world;" so that if they did live according to all these worthy and commendable strains of Christianity, yet is there no necessity of entitling the doctrine of perseverance held by them, either in whole or in part, thereunto.

3. Concerning the persons chiefly intended in the objection for the confirmation of the experience therein averred, on the left hand, who, I suppose, were the worst of our late bishops, such as Romanized and tyrannized most amongst them, together with their clergy creatures and favourites, who were generally inclined to the doctrine of falling away, and withal, took more liberty in their lives than men truly religious ought to have done; my answer is, 1. That, as was said concerning the godliness of the other, that it did not necessarily flow from the doctrine of perseverance, either as held or professed by them, so neither did that looseness or unworthiness in any kind, which was found in these, necessarily, no, nor so much as probably, arise from that opinion concerning the possibility of a total and final defection of the saints professed by them. They held other principles more than enough, sufficient to teach them all that irregularness and unrighteousness of conversation which can with truth be charged on them; so that neither the good nor the bad, neither the godly nor the ungodly deportments of persons professing such or such particular doctrines, principles, or opinions, are any demonstrative, no, nor yet so much as any dialectical or probable arguments, either of truth or error in them. The scribes and pharisees were full of all hypocrisy and unrighteousness, yet did they hold and teach many doctrines that were sound, insomuch that the Lord Christ himself commanded his own disciples to observe and do whatsoever they taught as necessary to be observed, Matt. xxiii. 3. And if the soundness or rottenness of opinions should be estimated by the goodness or badness of the lives of any parcel or number of persons professing them, as well the opinion of atheism, which denies the being of any God, as the opinion of polytheism, which affirms a plurality of gods, must be esteemed better and more sound than that which maintaineth the being of one God, and of one only; for certain it is, that there

have been many heathens, professors some of the one and some of the other of those opinions, who have quitted themselves upon far better terms of honour and approbation in their lives than many Christians, professors of the last opinion, have done. It is the observation of a great learned man of this nation, "Atheism did never perturb states; for it makes men wary of themselves, as looking no further; and we see the times inclined to atheism, as the time of Augustus Cæsar, and our own times in some countries, were and are civil times."* 2. There is, I suppose, a plain reason to be given why that generation of men now under discourse (the popish gang of bishops, with the clergy adoring them for preferment-sake) should, in order to the promoting of their secular interest, take up the doctrine which opposeth the common received doctrine of perseverance; together with those other doctrines, commonly, but I know not how properly or deservedly, called Arminian. It is sufficiently known that the men we speak of were professed enemies to the most religiously zealous party of the ministers in the land, with their adherents, then commonly termed Puritans, whom they both hated and feared, as a generation of men by whom, rather than any other, they apprehended themselves in danger of being dethroned. *Nec eos fefellit opinio.* Upon this account they judged it a very material point of their interest to suppress and keep under this faction, as they termed them. In order hereunto they studied and cast about, how to weaken their interest and repute with the generality of the people, or at least with all those that were intelligent, and in that respect considerable. To this end, wisely considering that nothing was like to prejudice them more in their esteem with such men, than to detect them of error and unsoundness in their doctrine, and perceiving withal, as with half an eye they might, being so fully disengaged, as they were, from all high thoughts of those who held them, that they were not in any doctrines besides, which they were generally known to hold and teach, more obnoxious to such a detection, than in those which they held and taught in opposition to the remonstrants: hereupon they politically fell to profess and teach remonstrantism, that so they might have the more frequent occasion and opportunity to lay open the nakedness of the Puritan doctrine before the people, and to show the inconsistency of it with the Scriptures, as also with many the most manifest principles; as well of reason as religion besides. Therefore should it be granted that, in the general, there is much in the unworthiness of men, who profess such or such a doctrine or opinion, to render the one or the other suspected, yet in the particular case before us there is nothing at all: because the persons we spoke of did not embrace or take up the opinion or doctrine mentioned, out of any natural compliance they resented in it with their lusts, or any their undue practices, (for such it had none,) but out of a poli-

tique only: and, as Austin sometimes said, it is no disparagement to the sheep, that the wolf sometimes puts on and wears her clothing.

3. And, lastly, it is generally known, that the cathedral generation of men throughout Christendom were generally great admirers of the old learning, as some call it: I mean, the writings and tenets of the fathers, and of Austin more especially; and that they frequently made shield and buckler of their authority, to defend themselves against the pens and opinions of later writers, whom their manner was, according to the exigency of their interest, at least as they conceived, to slight and vilify, in comparison of the other. Now the judgments of the fathers, more generally, and of Austin more particularly, as we shall show in the procedure of our present discourse, stood for the possibility of the saints' defection, both total and final; wherein, it seems, the greater part of our modern reformed divines have departed from them.

Whereas some, to prejudice the minds and affections of men against the doctrine of a possible defection in the saints, with the rest commonly found in the same retinue, cast out such sayings as these, that they never knew any, who fell in with these opinions, but they declined in religion, and in the end came to nothing, they do but spread a snare in the way of the simple: any considering man will laugh such pretences to scorn. Such an allegation as this much sembleth the superstitious advice of those who dissuade the marriages of cousins german, upon the account of this observation of theirs, that such have never prospered. It is very possible that they may have observed and known some miscarriage, disaster, or less desirable success in one or two of these conjunctions, amongst some of their acquaintance and friends: but what is there in this to create prejudice in the least in the judgment of any well ballasted and considering man, against the whole species of such marriages, more than there is in the frequent miscarriages that are found in all kinds of marriages whatsoever, to disaffect the minds of men against all these also? If a man should inquire a little after matters of this nature in the world, he shall soon find or hear of many instances of poor persons marrying, who prospered not, of rich persons marrying, who prospered as little; of nobles marrying, whose married condition was little blest from heaven; of princes marrying, to the great affliction or ruin of themselves, &c. Is it now reasonable to infer, from such observations or instances as these, that therefore neither poor men nor rich men, nor nobles nor princes, shall do well or wisely to marry? The allegation in the objection in hand, is of no whit a better genius than such a collection as this. For what though many who have closed in their judgments, or rather made profession of such a closure, with the opinions there mentioned, have lost their savour, withered in their zeal, and put away a good conscience from them; ought or can this, in the judgments of reasonable men, reflect any whit more prejudice upon the said doctrines, than the frequent and

daily apostasies and declinings that are made under and from the contrary, yea, under and from the Protestant religion itself; yea, that which is somewhat more, under and from Christianity itself, ought in reason to disparage all these? We have a common proverb, that one swallow makes not a summer; and to say, that one woodcock makes not a winter, would in time make a proverb of as much truth.

But though enough hath been said to evince and maintain the innocency of the doctrine under protection, in respect of any violation of, or intrenchment upon the inward peace and comfort of the saints, yea, and more, I am certain, than can with good reason be gainsaid; yet prejudice, I know, is restless, and thoughts of any long standing in the minds of men hardly removed. Therefore it is like, notwithstanding all that hath been argued hitherto, some will still object, and say we cannot yet be satisfied, but that your doctrine of falling away must needs be very uncomfortable, and of sad importance to the saints: because, though there be but a possibility only of their falling away, yet, considering their manifold and great weaknesses and aptness to sin, they must needs be in continual fears, lest this possibility should be reduced into act. And, therefore, there is nothing that can bless them with any security or peace in this kind, but the knowledge and belief of some such fixed and unchangeable decree of God as this, that, however, they shall never fall away to perdition. Nor is there the same consideration of a saint's refraining from sin, and of a man's forbearing to destroy his natural life by wilful precipitation, poisoning himself, or the like: because the inclination which is in men to preserve their natural lives and beings, and so to refrain all things manifestly destructive to them, is potent, vigorous, and active: whereas the inclination to abstain from sin, which is in the saints, is comparatively weak, much incumbered, and broken by the flesh, the frequent motions and temptations thereof, &c. To these things, and whatsoever may be further pretended in the same kind, I answer,

1. Though that disposition which is in the saints to forbear sin, be neither so free, nor so full of energy and power, as the natural inclination in men to preserve their natural beings; yet, 1. Even this inclination itself is not so entire, or so strong, but that it is liable to temptation also, and subject to be encountered, yea, and sometimes is overcome, as in those who, under great pangs and agonies of discontent, lay violent hands upon themselves. Therefore there is no such great disproportion between the one inclination and the other, as the objection supposeth. But,

2. Be it granted, that the propension in the saints to abstain from sin, simply, and in the general, is nothing so energetical or powerful as the natural desire in men to preserve their natural lives; yet possibly it may be, yea, probably it is, every whit as potent and operative in reference to some sins, and particularly to those which are likely to occasion or produce final apostasy.

For though there be in every sin whatsoever a natural tendency, according to the kind and degree of it, towards apostasy, even that which is final, as there is in every light prick with a pin in a man's finger, towards the dissolution of the natural life; yet as no man is disturbed in his peace and comfort touching the continuance of his health and life, by a drop or two of blood drawn from his finger by the scratch of a pin; so neither is there any reasonable ground, or occasion, why upon the commission of every sin a saint should be struck into a passion of fear of falling away, unless he hath an assurance from heaven that he shall not fall away. They are not sins of infirmity, or sins "quotidiani incursum," as Austin somewhere calls them, *i. e.* sins of a daily incursion, but only such sins "quæ vastant conscientiam," as the schoolmen's phrase is, *i. e.* that lay waste the conscience, which have any dangerous affinity with falling away. Now I suppose that in respect of such sins as these, the inclination of the saints may well be as strong and free towards a non-commission, or refrainment, as the natural inclination in men is towards a self-preservation.

3. Whether that inclination or disposition in the saints, which we now speak of, be actually, and in the generality of them according to their present conditions, commensurable in strength, power, and every other desirable property, with the inclination in men to preserve their natural beings by the forbearance of all acts whatsoever, apparently destructive to them or no, most certain it is, that God hath vouchsafed unto them a sufficiency of means, yea, means in abundance, to make them every ways commensurable hereunto, yea, to raise them to a higher pitch or degree of strength and power than so; yea, and further hath made them (the saints themselves I mean) every ways capable (all their infirmities and weaknesses considered and allowed for) of the use of these means even to the actual producing of such a glorious and blessed effect as that. So that if the said inclination in them be not every ways as serviceable unto them in securing them against all fears of acting in any way apparently destructive to their great spiritual interest, the saving of their souls, as the other inclination in men is unto them, to secure them from fears of doing any thing knowingly, to the unavoidable loss of their lives, the fault is merely and absolutely in themselves; and this not through any infirmity or weakness, which is natural to them, and so inseparable, but through a gross, rank, and stupid carelessness and sloth. If thus, then is not the doctrine of falling away any ways prejudicial to the peace and comfort of the saints, in respect of itself, but merely accidentally and occasionally, *viz.* as the saints will voluntarily, and without any necessity either from within, or from without, compelling them, break out into such extravagances of sin, which, that doctrine being true, may justly fill them with fears of falling away and perishing. But let me say this too (which here is not to be omitted) that even the assertors themselves of the common doctrine of perseverance do affirm and teach, that their doctrine

itself notwithstanding, the saints under such extravagances of sin, as we speak of, can have no comfort, peace, or assurance of salvation, and consequently no assurance of persevering in faith unto the end. Therefore by their own confessions and tenor of discourse, there is no such great difference between the two doctrines, in reference to the peace or comfort of the saints; the one (I mean that of perseverance) leaving them obnoxious unto fears and doubts as well as the other, yea, if sentence were given between them according to truth, that of perseverance must be adjudged, not only to leave the saints under a possibility or capacity of discomfiture and fear, (which indeed the other doth,) but under a sore temptation also, as we have formerly proved, of tormenting themselves with such fears, which the other doth not.

If it be demanded, But what are the means which God hath given (as I say) so abundantly unto the saints, to make themselves as free, as strong in inclination to avoid things apparently destructive to their spiritual peace and salvation of their souls, as naturally men are to forbear all such actions which are apparently destructive to their natural lives, so that they need not be any whit more afraid of losing their souls through their own actings, than men are, or need to be, of destroying their natural lives upon the same terms? I answer,

1. There is nothing which endangereth the salvation of the soul but sin; yea, there is nothing that causeth this danger to any much considerable or formidable degree, but only such sins which are notoriously manifest unto the saints, if not by the light of nature, yet by the light of grace and of the Scriptures; manifest, I mean, not only or simply as or that they are sins, but manifest also according to that relation wherein we now speak of them, *i. e.* as and that they are sins threatening as it were with a loud voice destruction to their souls.

2. He hath given them eyes wherewith, and light whereby, clearly and evidently to see and know, that it is not more rational or manlike for men to refrain all such actions, which they know they cannot perform but to the present and unavoidable destruction of their natural lives, than it is to forbear all sinful acts whatsoever, and especially all such which are apparently destructive to their souls.

3. God hath not only given them the eyes, and the light we speak of, wherewith, and whereby clearly to see and understand the things mentioned, but hath further endued them with a faculty of consideration, wherewith to reflect upon and review, to weigh and ponder, as oft as they please, what they see, understand, and know in this kind. Now whatsoever a man is capable, 1. Of seeing and knowing; 2. Of pondering and considering, he is capable of raising or working an inclination in himself towards it, answerable in strength, vigour, and power, to any degree of goodness or desirableness which he is able to apprehend therein. For what is an inclination towards any thing, as suppose towards an

act or course and frequency of actions, but a propension and leaning, as it were, of the heart and soul towards it? And how comes the heart or soul of a man to propend or lean towards any thing but by apprehending and considering somewhat that is, seemingly at least, if not really also, good for him therein? And the greater the good is that is apprehended herein, and the clearer, the more raised and multiplied the apprehension is, the greater proportionably, the fuller of strength, vigour, and power must the propension and inclination of the heart and soul needs be thereunto. So that if, 1. There be worth and goodness sufficient in any object whatsoever to bear it; and, 2. If a man be in a capacity of discovering and apprehending this good clearly; and, 3. Be in a like capacity of revising or considering this his vision as oft as he pleaseth, certainly he is in a capacity and at liberty to work himself to what strength or degree of desire and inclination towards it he pleaseth. Now, evident and certain it is to every man, or else easily may be, 1. That there is more good in abstaining from things, either eminently dangerous or apparently destructive to his soul, than in forbearing things apparently destructive to his natural being. 2. As evident it is that every man is capable of attaining, or coming to the certain knowledge of, and of clearly apprehending this excess of good to him in the former above the latter. 3. Neither is it a thing less evident than either of the former, that every man is as capable of ruminating or re-apprehending the said excess of good as much and as oft as he pleaseth, as he is simply of apprehending it. All which supposed as undeniably true, it follows with a high hand, and above all contradiction, that the saints may, and have means and opportunities fair and full for the purpose, plant an inclination or disposition in themselves to refrain all manner of sins apparently dangerous and destructive to the safety of their souls, fuller of energy, vigour, life, strength, power, than that natural inclination in them which teacheth them to refrain all actions which they know must needs be accompanied with the destruction of their natural beings. Therefore, if they be more, yea, or so much, afraid of destroying their lives voluntarily and knowingly, as by casting themselves into the fire, or the water, or the like, than they are of falling away through sin, the fault or reason hereof, is not at all in that doctrine which affirms and informs them that there is a possibility that they may fall away, but in themselves, and in their voluntary negligence: they have means and opportunities, as we have proved, in abundance, to render themselves every whit as secure; yea, and more secure, touching the latter, as they are, or reasonably can be, concerning the former. The possibility they live under of destroying their natural lives with their own hands doth not occasion the least trouble or fear of death in them in such a way: nor needs the possibility they lie under of falling away, being grounded only upon a possibility of their own voluntary actings, occasion the least

disturbance, uncomfortableness, or fear in their spirits, that they shall fall away. Therefore,

2. To the main objection in hand, I answer further: concerning the manifold weaknesses of the saints, their aptness to sin, &c., these indeed are sufficient and proper to cause them to fear, but not the fear of falling away from God or from his grace, but that fear which the Scripture is wont to oppose to highmindedness. "Be not highminded, but fear," Rom. xi. 20. This fear is nothing else but a humble reflection upon a man's own weakness and insufficiency to stand in his own strength, which necessarily draweth along with it a humble dependence upon God for strength whereby to stand, together with an acknowledgment of strength received from him when and whilst he doth stand. This is evident from that of the apostle: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," *i. e.* with humility, with a sense and acknowledgment of no sufficiency as from yourselves for so important a work; "for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure," Phil. ii. 12, 13; *i. e.* you are debtors unto him both for every disposition you find in yourselves to act, and likewise for every action wherein you do act, in order to your salvation. But of this passage of Scripture more hereafter, God willing. In the meantime, certain it is that the infirmities and weaknesses of the saints, through which they are apt to sin, do not require any such decree in God which includeth in it an impossibility of their falling away, to render them secure from or against such falling: for as the lighter crosses and discontents which men daily meet with in their household affairs, conversings with men, and dealings in the world, bring them into no danger or fear of making away themselves or destroying their own lives, though there be no absolute decree of God to secure them in this behalf, the natural desire of self-preservation which God hath planted in them, easily overruling, by the power and strength of it, all notions or dispositions towards self-destroying which are wont to arise from such occasions. In like manner, the strength of that inclination or desire which is or ought to be, and very possibly, as hath been proved, might be in the saints to save their souls, and consequently to preserve themselves from apostasy, is sufficient, without any such decree of God as was mentioned, to secure them both from all danger and from all fear of apostatising to destruction, notwithstanding all weaknesses or infirmities that they are subject unto. The truth is, that the infirmities and weaknesses of the saints, as such, are so far from being any necessary or just ground of fear unto them that they shall fall away; that the sense and acknowledgment of them are most clear, pregnant, and effectual antidotes and preservatives against falling away: for he that is inwardly and truly sensible of his own weakness and inability to stand, will, especially being a saint or believer, most certainly depend upon him for strength who is both able and willing to supply and furnish him upon such terms.

3. And lastly, upon the former account, and for a close of this chapter, I answer, that if the doctrine of falling away be so uncomfortable unto the saints as the objection pretends, the truth is, as we have in the premises of this chapter made it appear, they are not much relieved at this point by the received doctrine of perseverance; for this doctrine, as hath been shown, scarce suffereth any man to believe upon any rational, competent, or sufficient grounds that he is a true saint or believer, yea, and doth little less than tempt him to such things which are exceeding apt and likely to fill him with fears and questionings touching the truth of his faith. And what great comfort can it then be unto him to hear or believe that true believers cannot fall away or perish? whereas the other doctrine leaveth them a good latitude of competent ground whereon to judge themselves true saints and true believers: nor doth it deprive them of sufficient ground on which to secure themselves both against the danger and against all fear of danger of apostatising or falling away to perdition. This doctrine, therefore, of the two, is questionless of the more benevolous aspect and influence upon the peace and comforts of the saints.

CHAPTER X.

A continuation of the former digression; wherein the texts of Scripture commonly alleged to prove the impossibility of saints' declining unto death, are taken into consideration, and discharged from that service.

BEING occasioned, and, after a sort, necessitated, for the securing of some passages of interpretation, (chap. viii.) being of main concernment to the principal cause undertaken in this discourse, to engage home in the question about perseverance, I should, according to ordinary method, and that hitherto observed in the traverse of the main doctrine, first, have argued my sense and judgment in the question *κατασκευαστικῶς*, assertively; and then *ἀνασκευαστικῶς*, *i. e.* by answering such objections, whether from Scripture or otherwise, which are wont to be levied by men of contrary judgment in opposition thereunto. But finding by experience that weaker men, through too much fulness and abundance, in their own sense, in matters of controversy, and this chiefly by means of some texts of Scripture running still, and working in their heads, which in sound of words, and surface of letter, seem to stand by them in their sense and notion, are under a very great disadvantage, either for minding or understanding such things which are spoken unto them for their information in the truth; I thought it best, for their relief in this case, to invert that method in the present dispute; and first to endeavour to take from them those weapons, whether of Scripture

or argument, wherein they trust; and afterwards present them with such other Scriptures and grounds which are able, pregnant, and proper, to build them up, and establish them in the truth.

We shall not tie ourselves to any rule, or prescript of order, in bringing those Scriptures upon the theatre of our discourse, which men of differing judgment in the cause in hand are wont to plead in defence thereof, themselves, as far as I have observed, observing none; but shall produce them one by one, as God shall please to bring them to mind, unless, haply, two or more of them, by reason of affinity or likeness in phrase or import, may commodiously enough be handled together. Most of the places compelled to serve in this warfare I find situate in the New Testament. The first that cometh to hand is that of our Saviour unto Peter, "And upon this Rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it," Matt. xvi. 18. From hence it is argued, that those that are once built by faith upon the Rock, Christ, or upon the truth of the gospel, are not in danger, or in a possibility of being prevailed against, viz., to destruction, by all the powers of darkness whatsoever. I answer,

1. That this promissory assertion of Christ, "the gates of hell shall not prevail," &c., doth not necessarily respect every individual and single person who *de presenti* is a member of his church, so as to secure him of his salvation, against all possible sins, or ways of sinning, whereunto he may or can be drawn by Satan; but may well be understood of the church in general, *i. e.* considered as a body of men, separate and distinguished from the world. Now the church, in this sense, may be said to stand, and be secured against all the power and attempts of the devil, though not only some, but even all the particular saints, of which this body consists at present, should be prevailed against by Satan to destruction. Because the ratio formalis, or essence of the church, in this sense, doth not consist in the persons of those who do at present believe, and so are members of it; for then it would follow, that in case these should die, or when they shall die, Christ should have no church at all upon the earth, inasmuch as nothing can be without the essence of it; but in the successive generation of those who, in their respective times, believe, whether they be fewer or whether they be more, whether they be such and such persons, or whether others. As suppose there be not now one drop of that water in the channel of the river of Thames, as it is like there is not, which was in it seven years since, yet is it one and the same river which it was then: and so put the case there be not one person now alive in any of the companies in London of which they respectively consisted forty years since, yet are they the self same companies which they were then. So, then, the saying of Christ, that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against his church," may stand clear and firm, though many particular members thereof should be overcome. Therefore there is nothing in this Scripture to evince that universal

perseverance of all saints which is commonly taught and received amongst us.

2. When our Saviour promiseth that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against his church," his meaning, questionless, is this, that death, or the grave, which may very properly be called "the gates of hell," because they that go, or are sent to hell, enter by them thereinto, or else that hell itself "shall not prevail," *i. e.* shall not have a full or final conquest over those that shall die, built upon the rock he speaks of, by faith, as, by reason of their most formidable strength, they are like to have over all other men. According to this interpretation, his meaning only is, that those that shall continue firmly built upon him by faith shall in time be rescued and delivered out of the hand of all adverse powers, yea, from death and the grave themselves, the most formidable of all others.

This exposition fully accords with what Chrysostom hath upon the place. "If," saith he, paraphrasing the words of Christ, "they shall not prevail against it, ('my church,') much more shall they not prevail against me. Therefore, be not troubled when thou shalt hear that I shall be betrayed and crucified.)* These words clearly imply, that by "the prevailing of the gates of hell," the author understands the final prevailing of death or the grave; and not the prevailing of Satan by subtlety or temptations in one kind or other.

Amongst our late Protestant divines, Cameron, who commonly strikes as happy a stroke in opening the Scriptures which he undertakes as any man, doth not only deliver, but with a high hand asserts, argues, and evinceth this interpretation. "This then," saith he, "seems to have been the mind of Christ in this place: Let those who believe, lie for a time dead, let death have dominion over them, let death exercise his right (or execute his law) upon them, hold them fast shut up in the grave, as in a prison, bound with bands or fetters, yet shall he not always have his will over them; he may or shall do much against them, but shall never have a full conquest over them.† This exposition he confirms, 1, by instancing several other places of Scripture, as Job xxxviii. 17; Psa. ix. 13; cvii. 18; in all which, by "the gates of hell," or of death, is clearly meant the grave. To which he adds, Psa. xviii. 16, and cxvi. 3, as places of affinity with these. 2. By showing that the word *ᾗδης*, here translated hell, is never in Scripture, except once, used to signify hell, properly so called, *i. e.* the place or state of the damned, but constantly, either the grave, or the state and condition of those that are dead. 3. By minding us that *ᾗδης* and *θάνατος*, the grave and death, are elsewhere termed the enemies of the church, yea, the last enemies, as 1 Cor. xv. 26; to which he

* *Εἰ δὲ ἐκείνης οὐκ ἀντισχύσῃσι, πολλῶ μᾶλλον ἐμοῦ· ὥστε μὴ θορυβηθῆς, ἐπειδὴν μελλῆς ἀκούειν, ὅτι παραδοθήσῃσι, καὶ σταυρωθήσῃσι.*

† *Hæc ergo Christi hoc in loco mens fuisse videtur: Jaceant fideles ad tempus demortui, mors in illos dominetur, exercent jus suum, in sepulchro (veluti in carcere) eos teneat conclusos et vinculis quasi constrictos, haud tamen usque et usque obtinebit: valebit quidem certè, at non prævalebit, ἰσχύσει μὲν, οὐ γὰρ μὲν κατισχύσει.*

adds, the consideration of their being "cast into the lake of fire," Rev. xx. 14. 4. And lastly, by particular arguments against every other interpretation offered by expositors.

Musculus, though by the gates of hell he understands as well the policy as power and strength of the devil, yet by the relative particle *ἀντί*, it, he doth not understand the church, but the rock, or foundation of doctrine on which the church is built.* So that his sense of the place seems to be this: that that doctrine on which the church is built is so firm and strong, that all the policy and power of Satan, though joining together, shall never be able to prevail against it, so as either to evict it of falsehood, or otherwise to destroy and cast it out of the world. None of all their interpretations suppose any such thing deducible from the place as this, that those who are once believers, or members of the church of Christ, shall never be seduced by Satan to destruction. The place speaks nothing of Satan, much less of his subtlety, policy, or power to seduce the church; but supposing the exceeding great and formidable strength of death and the grave, asserteth the glorious and final conquest of his church over them notwithstanding. So that this passage of Scripture perfectly sembleth with these and the like: "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die," John xi. 25. And again: "And this is the Father's will that hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day," John vi. 39. See also John v. 25, 28, 29, &c.

That which is pleaded by some for such a sense of the place, which carries the doctrine of perseverance in it, is weak and valueless. Whatsoever, say these, opposeth the building of the church upon the rock, or the constant adhering of it unto Christ, is meant by the gates of hell prevailing. For, in these words, "and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it," Christ must needs be supposed to remove whatsoever is contrary to that which he had asserted in those, "And upon this rock will I build my church." But the politic and subtle temptations of Satan to seduce believers, are opposite to the building of the church upon the rock, and to the constant adhering of it unto Christ. Therefore, by the gates of hell not prevailing against the church, must needs be meant the defeature or non-prevailing of the stratagems or counsels of Satan against believers; and consequently, their persevering unto the end. For to this I answer,

1. By denying the major proposition in the argument. For that which Christ takes away in this clause, "And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it," is not whatsoever opposeth the building of his church upon the rock, but whatsoever opposeth the happiness of it being so built, and adhering constantly and perse-

* *Mihi videtur certius, ut ad Petram, id est, Ecclesie fundamentum referamus: non quod dubitem de Ecclesie soliditate, sed quod ea sit ex petra, super quam edificata est, quæ tam est robusta, &c.*

veringly unto him. For the pronoun relative *αὐτῆς*, it, doth not relate to the verb *οἰκοδομήσω*, I will build, but to the substantive *ἐκκλησίαν*, church.

2. Whereas, in the said proposition, Christ's building of his church, is expounded by the constant adhering of his church unto him, that which is the principal thing in question is taken for granted: which is very inargumentative. For the matter in question is, whether the church of Christ, in all the members of it once built upon the rock, must, or doth necessarily so adhere to him.

3, and lastly, The said exposition renders a sense very preposterous and importune. For upon this account, Christ should speak at no better rate of reason than thus: "The gates of hell shall not prevail," *i. e.* the subtlety, policy, and machinations of Satan shall not be able to seduce those that are "built upon the rock," *i. e.* that constantly adhere unto Christ. Which amounts to no more than if he should have said, the devil shall not be able to make those inconstant who shall be and remain constant, or to cause those who shall firmly adhere unto Christ, not to adhere firmly to him. Which strain of discourse, whether it becomes him who spake as never man spake, I leave unto sober men to judge.

Another argument urged by some against the interpretation given is this: If by the "prevailing of the gates of hell," be meant nothing else but the eternal condemnation of, or perpetual prevailing of death against the church, then Christ here promiseth nothing, but only in the behalf of those that are dead; and consequently nothing but what may stand with a total defection of his church on earth. But this seems to be contrary to his intention in the place, ergo. I answer,

1. It is no inconvenience to suppose or grant that Christ in this place, and in the promise here mentioned, doth not insure the perpetual continuance or residence of a church on earth, no more than he doth in many promises which are yet of very high and blessed importance in their respective kinds. In that great evangelical promise, "Whosoever believes shall be saved," there is nothing but what may possibly stand with an universal defection of a church on earth; yet is the promise great and precious. It were easy to instance many others of like nature. But,

2. As in the promise last mentioned, though there be nothing which necessarily includes an uninterrupted succession of believers in the world, yet is there that which exceeding much conduceth towards the propagation and raising of such a succession as, *viz.* a promissory proposal of the greatest reward that is unto whosoever shall believe, even no less than that of eternal life; so may it be said concerning this promise of Christ, "And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Here is enough said, if men would but consider and quit themselves like men, to replenish the earth with a generation of believers like unto the waters of a river, which fail not. Therefore,

3, and lastly, It is not truly said that this promise, "And the

gates of hell shall not," &c., in the sense asserted, relates only to those that are dead. The truth is, that if we speak properly, neither this nor any other promise whatsoever relates only, if at all, unto the dead, or is made only on the behalf of the dead: the dead, in propriety of speech, are utterly incapable of promises, though not of performances of promises. But clearly this, and all other promises, are made to the living, and for their accommodation and comfort, though for the letter and reality of the performance of them they are not to be partakers hereof, until they have undergone the state and condition of death. It is just matter of joy unspeakable and glorious to him that is yet living to know and consider, that though he dieth, yet death shall not have any such dominion over him but what he shall shake off, and that with a blessed advantage and conquest, in due time. But this exception against the exposition asserted, is but like a mote in the sun, which darkeneth not at all the rays of light thereof, but only gains, by being here, a discovery of itself to be a thing inconsiderable and next to nothing.

Another passage of Scripture "compelled to bear the cross," of the same service with the former, is that, Matt. xxiv. 24, "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall [or should] deceive the very elect." From hence it is inferred, that the deceiving or seducement of those who truly believe is a thing impossible. But whether the drawing of such conclusions as this from such Scriptures as that be not a drawing of darkness out of light, the considerations ensuing will be competent enough to determine.

1. In their notion who try to fetch the water of perseverance out of the flint of the Scripture mentioned, the word "elect" doth not signify saints, or true believers, but such as they suppose to have been, in a personal consideration, chosen by God from eternity out of the great body of mankind, with an intent to save them against all possible interveniencies or oppositions whatsoever. Now that such as these, at least before their calling, are as liable to be deceived or seduced as other men, is their own confession, without fear; and the apostle Paul, to whom, questionless, they will not deny the grace of their election, acknowledgeth himself, with Titus, to have sometimes been foolish, disobedient, and deceived, Tit. iii. 3. Yea,

2. It is frequently confessed by the same party, that such "elect" as they mean, and we lately described, may, even after they are called and have believed, by the just and wise sufferance of God, fall into heresy, and this in fundamental points; yea, and into that fearful sin of an abnegation and abjuration of Christ and Christian religion. If so, then certainly there is no impossibility of their seduction. Yea, the great patrons of the doctrine of perseverance, which managed the conference at the Hague about these questions, anno 1611, acknowledged, that even "true believers may fall so far as that the church, according to the command of Christ, shall be compelled to testify [against them] that they

cannot [bear or] tolerate them in their outward communion, and that they shall have no part in the kingdom of Christ, except they repent" [or be converted.]* Doubtless they who, having once truly believed, become afterwards incapable of having part in the kingdom of Christ without conversion or repentance, give a loud testimony that there is no impossibility for true saints or true believers to be deceived, and that to the highest and most dangerous pitch of all.

If it be here said, Yea, but the Scripture in hand is to be understood of a final deceiving, or of a being deceived unto destruction; and thus (it is there supposed that) the elect cannot possibly be deceived, I answer,

1. This is to presume, not to argue or believe; for there is not the least ground, or so much as the smallest sand, in either the words or context, whereon to build such an interpretation as this.

2. The abettors of this interpretation are wont to prove from the words not only an impossibility that the saints should finally be deceived, but also that they should be deceived totally, *i. e.* so as to be at any time wholly destitute or bereft of that faith which is justifying and saving.

3, and lastly, The same men suppose, that if the saints may fall away totally at any time, they may fall away finally also. If it be said, that they cannot fall away totally; I answer, if so, then one of these three things must needs follow; either, 1. That true, saving, and justifying faith may stand, not only with heresy, and this in fundamental articles of Christian religion, but even with an express abnegation and abjuration of Christ himself with his religion; or else, 2. That their opinion is false who affirm that true believers may possibly fall, both into such heresy and such abnegation; or, 3, and lastly, That they who do fall both into the one or the other, are not seduced or deceived. This last is manifestly false: the second is the sense and confession of our adversaries themselves, *viz.* that true believers may fall into such heresy and abnegation. For the first, if saving faith may stand with such heresy and abnegation of Christ as is there spoken of, how will that of Christ himself stand, "Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven?" *Matt. x. 32.* To reply here, and say that it is to be understood of a final denial, will not at all salve the sore; for there is the same consideration of a denial of Christ, as to the ejecting of a man out of his favour, whether it be final, and in the end of a man's days, or whether it be in the middle of them. Nor hath Christ any whit more reason to be offended with him that denieth him at one time than with him who denieth him at another, if there be nothing but merely time to make the difference. It is true, he that denieth Christ in the middle of his days, and so casteth himself out of his favour, may possibly recover

* *Deinde respondemus ad minorem, fieri posse ut vere fideles eo prolabantur, ut ecclesia ex mandato Christi cogatur pronunciare se in externa sua communione tolerare non posse, neque eos partem in regno Christi habituros, nisi resipiscant.—Collat. Hag., p. 399.*

his favour again by repentance, and a renewed confession of him before men, which he that denieth him at the instant of death cannot; but, as for the nature and demerit of the sin, and, consequently, in order to the just judgment of Christ upon it, it is the same in both cases. But,

3. Further to demonstrate the nullity of the aforesaid deduction from the place in hand, it is to be known and considered that this phrase or expression, *εἰ δυνατόν*, "if it be possible," doth not always, if at any time, import the impossibility of a thing, but only the difficulty of a thing on the one hand, and the exquisite diligence and endeavours of those on the other hand, in respect of such difficulty, who attempt it. Thus, the evangelist Luke, speaking of Paul, saith, that "he hasted, *εἰ δυνατόν αὐτῷ*, if it were possible for him to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost," Acts xx. 16. The light of the sun at noon-day is not more clear, than that "if it be possible" doth not here signify or imply an impossibility; for then the meaning must be, that Paul made all the haste he could to do that which was impossible for him to do. To say, that Paul might be ignorant whether his being at Jerusalem by Pentecost was possible or no, and that he only resolved to make trial of the truth herein to the uttermost, is to asperse this great apostle with a ridiculous imputation of ignorance, yea, of such ignorance which is not lightly incident to men of the shallowest capacities; for who, almost, can be so ignorant as not to know whether it be a thing simply impossible to make such or such a port by such or such a time, or no? It is true, wise men may be ignorant whether they shall, with their best diligence and despatch, be able to make it within the time they desire, and thus far I can grant that Paul might be ignorant; but that he should be ignorant of so broad and vast a difference as lieth between a possibility and impossibility of the thing, I must borrow some other man's fancy to conceive. However, let the apostle suffer the disparagement of such an ignorance as this, yet neither will this evince an impossibility of his being at Jerusalem by Pentecost to be here implied by this phrase, *εἰ δυνατόν*, "if it be possible," but only some doubtfulness or difficulty in the thing, together with his utmost endeavour to compass it notwithstanding. In the like sense the same clause is used, Rom. xii. 8: *Εἰ δυνατόν*, "If it be possible, as much as in you lieth, have peace with all men." If we shall suppose that "if it be possible" here supposeth an impossibility, the sense of the sentence must run thus: "As much as in you lieth," do that which you cannot do, or which is impossible for you to do; which is a sound that Paul's trumpet was never like to make. Excepting the parallel place in Mark, the phrase is but twice more, to my present remembrance, used in the New Testament, viz., Matt. xxvi. 39, and Gal. iv. 15, in neither of which places can it reasonably be supposed to import an impossibility. But,

4. Touching the place in hand, that here it only imports a difficulty, as hath been said, of deceiving the elect, *i. e.* believers, to-

gether with the most raised and vehement intentions or desires in the false prophets to effect it notwithstanding, appears yet more plainly from the evangelist Mark, who records the same passage thus: "For false Christs and false prophets shall arise, and shall show signs and wonders, *πρὸς τὸ ἀποπλανᾶν, to seduce*, if it were possible, the very elect," Mark xiii. 22, *i. e.* with an intent, raised out of great and strong desires, to draw off believers themselves from adhering unto the true Christ and Messiah, born of the Virgin, and to follow and embrace them in his stead. Yea, it is no ways like, but that they had a far greater desire to practise their seducing arts upon these, and to draw these after them, than any other sort of men;* because these had set up and upheld such a competitor with them in the world, who was like to carry away the world from them, unless they could prevail with his followers to disown and disclaim him. The great difficulty which was in the primitive times, and whilst these false Christs† rose up one after another in the world, to work off believers from the true Christ, appears in part by that proverbial saying in Galen, "A man may sooner unteach men Christianity;" or, teach men away from Christ. And Austin somewhere reports that a man, repairing to Apollo's oracle to inquire what course he should take to draw off his wife from Christianity, received this answer, "that he might more easily either write letters in a swift stream, or fly in the air." But notwithstanding the difficulty of the thing, that yet sometimes it was done appears from that passage of Tertullian. "For, saying," saith he, speaking of Christ, "that many should come, and show signs, and do great wonders, *yea, and turn away the elect* themselves, and that all this notwithstanding they were not to be received, he plainly shows that a faith built upon signs and wonders is rash and inconsiderate, and such as is easy for false Christs" (to attempt or procure).

5. If the phrase, *εἰ δυνατόν*, if it be possible, shall here be conceived to import an absolute impossibility, the necessity, efficacy, and power of the Lord Christ's prediction, and caution, will fall to the ground. For he who would have those to whom he speaketh certainly to believe that they are elect, and again, to believe also that it is a thing impossible for the elect to be seduced by any means whatsoever, certainly hath no necessity, scarce the lightest occasion or pretence that can be imagined, to caution these men against seducers. And what can be more ridiculous, than in a most grave, serious, and solemn manner, to admonish a man to take heed of that, which yet withal we do assure him is impossible should befall him? Yea,

6. According to the known principles of those with whom we have now to do, whether the apostles to whom Christ speaketh in the words in hand, knew themselves to be elect, or no, yea, or

* *Θᾶρτόν τις τοῦ ἀπὸ Χριστοῦ μεταδιδάξει.*

† Siquidem edicens multos venturos signa facturos, et virtutes magnas edituros, aversionem etiam electorum, nec ideo tamen admittendos, temerariam signorum et virtutum fidem ostendit, ut apud pseudo-Christos facillimam.—*Tert. adversus Marcionem*, l. iii. c. 3.

whether they were elect, or no, there could be no great necessity or occasion why Christ should thus solemnly arm them against seducers. If they were elect, the sense of these men is, that whether they had been thus armed or no, they could not have fallen in the day of battle; as, on the other hand, in case they were not elected, that neither this nor any other armour, or cautionary provision whatsoever, could be able to make them stand or keep them alive.

That which is commonly pleaded at such turnings as this, is very light and impertinent. "God," say our antagonists, "as he willeth the end, so also he willeth and enjoineth the means for the accomplishment of the end. So in the particular in hand; Christ, as he willeth the non-seduction of the elect, so he willeth also that they should beware of seducers, as a means tending to that end." For to this we answer,

1. Though it be very true that God, who willeth the end, willeth and prescribeth the means also, viz. when he declares the end not to be otherwise attainable, than in and by the use of such means as he prescribeth in order hereunto; yet when he hath irreversibly decreed that the end shall certainly be obtained, or that he will interpose by a high and irresistible hand for the effecting of it, and withal hath declared either the one or the other, or both of these his decrees unto the world, it is now no ways consistent with his wisdom to enjoin men the use of any means for the obtaining of this end, especially under the penalty or threatening of a non-obtaining it. Nor can any instance be produced from the Scripture, where any means have been directed or enjoined by him upon such terms. As for that, which some allege from Acts xxvii. 22, compared with 31, it no ways reacheth the business. For evident it is from that, verse 31, where Paul saith to the centurion and soldiers, "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved;" that that promissory encouragement which he delivers unto them, verse 22, upon what was said unto him in vision by God, verse 24, viz. "that there should be no loss of any man's life amongst them," was but conditional, and not absolute; and consequently, that the saving of their lives did depend upon their continuing in the ship, and that so, that had they not continued here they had perished, the promise of God made unto Paul concerning their safety notwithstanding. Which clearly proves this promise of God to have been conditional, and the meaning of it only this, "there shall be no loss of any man's life amongst you," viz. if you will follow the counsel of God for your preservation, and not destroy your lives yourselves by rejecting it. There is nothing more frequent in Scripture than hypothetical promises in categorical forms; I mean, than conditional promises delivered in positive or absolute terms. But hereof we shall have frequent occasion to take knowledge in the present discourse.

2. Though God, who willeth the end, willeth and appointeth means for the obtaining the end, upon the terms expressed, yet we cannot suppose that he exhorteth and presseth men to use means in order to the obtaining of such or such an end, which himself

gives assurance unto them that they shall obtain, whether they use the means or no. For it being the hope and desire of obtaining the end which render the means, otherwise unpleasant and unacceptable, desirable unto men; evident it is, that he who gives assurance unto them of obtaining the end howsoever, *i. e.* whether they use the means or no, destroyeth the energy and force of any such exhortation, wherein the use of the means shall be recommended unto them, or they persuaded thereunto. He that shall ensure me that whether I run or no, I shall be crowned, and shall afterwards exhort me to run that I may be crowned, shall doubtless pull down that with his promise, which he seeks to build up by his exhortation.

If it be replied and said; But God assureth no man that he shall not be deceived or seduced, but only in and by the use of means that he may not be seduced; I answer, if so, then God hath made no peremptory decree concerning the non-seducement of the elect, nor other, than with which the seducement of them may very possibly stand. For that which depends upon any deliberate or elective act of the will of man, cannot be said to be positively, peremptorily, or absolutely decreed by God; nor is it any other, in the nature and condition of it, than what may very possibly not be. Now certain it is, that the use of means to prevent seduction in the elect, is such an act, or series of actions, which depends upon the deliberate act of their will; at least so far, that it can never take place or be, without a deliberate concurrency hereof.

If it be yet further said; Though the use of means to prevent seduction in the elect, depends upon the deliberate motions and actings of their wills thus far, that it cannot take place, or be performed without them; yet may it have such a relation unto, or dependence upon, the absolute will or decree of God, which shall give certainty and infallibility of being unto it notwithstanding. For God is able so to interpose by his excellency of power in all the deliberations of men, as to carry and fix the issues and determinations of them which way, and upon what he pleaseth. To this I answer: that the question is not what God is able by the excellency of his power to do in this kind, but what he is pleased to do, or what he hath decreed to do out of the counsel and liberty of his will. And that which we affirm and plead in the cause depending, is not that God is not able to determine the wills of the elect to the use of means proper and sufficient to prevent their being deceived, but that he hath no where declared himself willing or resolved to do it; and consequently, that it is an *ὑπὲρ ὃ γέγραπται*, a conceit above what is written, to think that he doth it. Therefore, until it be proved, either from the Scriptures, or by the light of some solid demonstration otherwise, that God hath absolutely decreed the non-seduction of the elect, we still speak of a seduction to destruction, or which is the same, upon our adversaries' grant and plea lately mentioned, the determination of their wills to the use of means necessary to secure them against seduction, we judge ourselves free in conscience

to deny the pretended impossibility of the saints' deception or seduction.'

Another Scripture much discoursed in the behalf of the common doctrine of perseverance is, "Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation," 1 Peter i. 5. From hence it is frequently concluded, that they who once truly believe, and are regenerate, (verse 3,) are kept by the engagement of the mighty power of God from falling away to destruction. I answer,

1. That it is not here said, that regenerate men are kept simply and absolutely by the power of God unto salvation, but that they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation; which plainly implieth, that the power of God here spoken of, engageth for no man's preservation or safe-guarding unto salvation, but by the mediation of faith, or any whit longer than their faith shall continue. Now, here being nothing said or implied touching the certainty of the continuance of the faith of the saints unto the end, nor concerning any engagement of the power of God for the perpetuation thereof, evident it is that nothing can be concluded from hence for the establishment of the said doctrine of perseverance. But, 2. For the clear sense and importance of the place it is this, that men once begotten by God to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, have, or may have, the greatest security, which the infinite power of God can afford, that persevering in that faith, from whence this hope issueth, unto the end, they shall be saved. The place, according to this interpretation, runs parallel in sense and import with these and their fellows:—"But he that shall endure to the end shall be saved," Matt. xxiv. 13, viz. against all opposition and contradiction of impediments whatsoever. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life," Rev. ii. 10. So with that lately opened, "Upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it," Matt. xvi. 18; to which you may add, John x. 18, 19; Eph. i. 19, with many others.

This exposition perfectly accords with Bullinger's commentary upon the place. "In the meantime," saith he, "let this suffice us, that eternal happiness is in safety for us, or to us, which no either man or devil, can intercept or deprive us of, unless faith fails us, wherewith, neglecting the things which mortal men so much seek after, let us wholly depend upon heaven."* In the clause, "modo ne nos deficiat fides," so that faith fail us not, he clearly supposeth, 1. A possibility that our present faith may fail us. 2. That in case it shall fail us we may perish, notwithstanding any thing here delivered by the apostle concerning our being kept by the power of God unto salvation.

If against this interpretation it shall be objected that it greatly depresseth, and in a manner quencheth the spirit of the consolation,

* Nobis interim sit satis quòd æterna felicitas nobis est in tuto, quam nullus hominum aut dæmonum possit interciperè, modò ne eos, [nos,] deficiat fides, quâ, neglectis rebus mortalium, toti pendeamus à cælo.

clearly intended by the Holy Ghost to be administered unto the saints in the words; and that it makes very little for their comfort, to hear of their being kept unto salvation by God, or by his power, in case this keeping depends upon their continuance in faith, especially if this also be uncertain and depending upon themselves, their diligence and care to procure it; I answer,

1. That the heart of this objection was broken in the former chapter, where we showed that in matters of greatest consequence, and most desirable in things appertaining to this life, yea, as to life itself, the most timorous and cautious men neither wish nor desire any greater security than to have what they desire assured unto them upon their own willingness and care, either for the procurement or the continued enjoyment of it. The most impotent lover of life under heaven, and he that lives in the greatest bondage in the world through fear of death, would both of them be highly satisfied, if God would but vouchsafe such a promise as this unto them, that so long as they should desire the continuance of their lives, and take heed of destroying them themselves by unnatural or desperate courses, as by casting themselves into the fire, into the water, down from high towers, &c. he would secure them against all other interveniences, or means of dissolution whatsoever. In like manner, it is and ought to be so esteemed by the saints, a consolation rich and glorious that God hath undertaken and engaged himself by the greatness of his power to preserve them against all enemies, and threatening obstacles and oppositions whatsoever for his heavenly kingdom, only upon condition that they shall not willingly, wilfully, desperately destroy themselves, or render themselves incapable of such his preservation, by apostatising from that faith in his Son Jesus Christ, which he by his especial grace hath planted in them, and by which they stand at present in favour and acceptance with him.

2. Though God hath not simply and absolutely undertaken for their perseverance or continuation of their faith unto the end, nor upon any such terms, but that if they will be brutishly and desperately careless of so high a concernment to themselves as a blessed eternity is, they may make defection from it, and turn proselytes to hell; yet hath he laid a rich foundation for their perseverance, in those many precious promises and encouragements, which he hath given unto those who shall persevere, as also in those most severe and dreadful threatenings, bent against the faces of all apostates and backsliders, together with those frequent promises or declarations which he hath made to continue, yea, and to enlarge, upon occasion, the inward contributions of his Spirit, the motions, excitements, and directions thereof, in order to the plentiful enabling of his saints to persevere, until they shall willingly and wilfully turn their backs upon them, and reject them. Upon the account of all these gracious promises and declarations made by God unto his saints for or towards the effectual accomplishment of their perseverance, the apostle Paul frequently encourageth them

to the hope and expectation of it. "But the Lord is faithful, who shall establish you, and keep you from evil," 2 Thess. iii. 3. "Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Cor. i. 8. God, according to the common dialect and notion of Scripture language, is said to establish, confirm, and keep men from evil, when he doth that which is of a proper tendency, and sufficient thereunto, whether the effects or ends themselves of establishment, confirmation, &c., be actually obtained or no, for there is nothing more frequent or familiar in Scripture than to ascribe the effects themselves, sometimes unto God, sometimes unto men, only upon their respective actings or doings of such things which are of a natural, proper, and direct tendency to produce them, whether they be actually and de facto produced or no. Thus our Saviour chargeth him, who shall put away his wife for any other cause than fornication, with causing her to commit fornication; whether the woman thus put away committeth fornication or no, Matt. v. 32; viz., because in that act of putting her away upon such terms, he doth that which hath a proper and direct tendency to cause her to commit this sin. For it is not necessary to suppose that every woman thus divorced or put away, committeth, or will commit fornication. But whether she doth or no, the sin of him that put her away is one and the same; he, in our Saviour's dialect, caused her to commit fornication. Thus, also, he who eats to the offence of a weak brother, is charged by the apostle with "Destroying him with his meat, for whom Christ died," Rom. xiv. 15, 20, *i. e.* with doing that which is apt and proper to occasion his destruction, whether he be actually destroyed or no. In this idiom, likewise, of speaking, God expressly saith, that he had purged Jerusalem, and yet in the same place saith, also, that Jerusalem, notwithstanding, was not purged. "In thy filthiness is lewdness," *i. e.* notorious and desperate obstinacy, "because I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee," Ezek. xxiv. 13. God is said to have purged Jerusalem, because he vouchsafed proper and sufficient means unto her for her purging, as the ministry of his word and Spirit, frequent admonitions, exhortations, expostulations, promises, threatenings, &c., by his prophets, however Jerusalem by her rebellious obstinacy, hindered and obstructed the thorough and kindly working of these means, by reason whereof the desirable effect of her purging was not obtained. In such a sense and phrase as this, the goodness of God is said to lead such men to repentance, who yet are so far from repenting, that "after their hardness, and impenitent heart, they treasure up wrath unto themselves against the day of wrath," &c., Rom. ii. 4, 5; meaning, that the goodness of God in his patience and long sufferance towards wicked and ungodly men, ministereth many occasions and opportunities unto them, by the advantage whereof they might easily be drawn to repent, did they not willingly indulge

themselves in that hardness of heart which, in the fruits of it, tends to nothing but to the treasuring up of wrath to themselves, &c. In the same construction, Christ is styled "The Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world," John i. 29; and so to be "The propitiation for the sins of the whole world," 1 John ii. 2; not as if, or because the sin of the world is actually or completely taken away by him, or so, that this whole sin either is, or at any time must needs be pardoned, or actually taken away in all the fruits; consequences, or effects of it, because he is said to have taken it away; but because he hath done and suffered that which hath a glorious efficacy and tendency in it, to or towards such a taking of it away; so that if it be not actually and completely taken away, the cause of it is somewhere else to be sought, and found, as viz., in the sinners, or men themselves, and not in him. In this sense, likewise, he is said to be "The propitiation for the sins of the whole world," not because the sins of the whole world are actually, completely, or with successfulness in the event propitiated or atoned by him, but because that sacrifice of himself, which he hath offered in order to a propitiating or atoning the sins of the whole world, is so pregnant and full of a propitiatory efficacy and virtue, and withal is so propounded and held forth by God unto the whole world, that if any man's sin remains actually unpropitiated, or unpardoned, it is through his own voluntary neglect of this sacrifice, and not from any intention on God's part, that his sin should not be atoned or propitiated by this sacrifice, as well as any other man's. It were easy to multiply examples of that propriety of expression now under observation, from the Scriptures. And I desire the rather that it may be carefully minded and remembered, because I verily believe that the non-advertency of it by men of learning and worth, with some few others of like consideration (whereof we may give notice in time) hath mainly occasioned the dividing of their thoughts and judgments from the doctrine of universal redemption. We shall be invited, I suppose, before the conclusion of this discourse, to recruit the reader's memory with a re-mention of this notion of Scripture dialect. In the meantime we clearly see by the light of it, how God may be said to establish, to confirm unto the end, to keep men from evil, though men neither be actually, nor in the event established, confirmed, or kept from evil; and this without any prejudice or disparagement in the least, either unto the grace or goodness of God, or to his power, or effectualness of working in this behalf.

The next Scripture which we shall undertake to right, against those who have done it the injury of fathering the common doctrine of perseverance upon it, is this: "They went out from us, but they were not of us: for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us," 1 John ii.

19. From hence this inference is drawn up; that they who are of the saints, *i. e.* of the number of those who are real and true saints, will always continue in this number, and never apostatise. But for answer,

1. This inference presumeth many things, for which neither it, nor any the authors of it, will ever be able to give any good security of proof; as, *viz.* 1. That this phrase, "They were not of us," imports that they never were true believers. This certainly can never be proved, because there is another sense, and this every whit as proper to the words, and more commodious for the context and scope of the place, which may be given of them, as we shall see anon. 2. That this expression, "They were of us," signifies that they were true believers: of the uncertainty of this supposition, we shall give the like account. 3. That these words, "They went out from us," signify their final desertion or abdication of the apostles' communion, or their total and final renunciation of Christ, his church, and gospel. This supposition hath no bottom at all, or colour for it. 4. That this clause, "They would no doubt have continued with us," signifieth they would have continued in the same faith wherein we persevere and continue. Nor is there any competent reason to enforce this sense of these words, because neither doth the grammatical tenor of them require it, and much less the scope of the passage, (of which in due time.) 5. The said inference supposeth that John certainly knew that all those who for the present remained in his communion were true believers. For if they were not true believers, they that were gone out from them, in the sense contended for, might be said to be of them, *i. e.* persons in the same condition with them. But how improbable this is, (I mean, that John should infallibly know that all those who as yet continued with them were true believers,) I refer to consideration. 6. The inference under contest yet further supposeth, that John certainly knew that they who were now gone out from them neither were now, nor ever before, true believers; yea, and that he certainly knew this, by their departure or going out from them. 7. And, lastly, it presumeth yet further, that all true believers do always abide in the external communion of the church; and that when men do not so abide, they plainly declare hereby, that they never were true believers: which is not only a manifest untruth, but expressly contrary to the doctrine itself of those men who assert the inference. For they teach, as we heard before, "That even true believers may fall so foul and so far, that the church, according to the command of Christ, may be constrained to testify that she cannot tolerate them in her external communion, nor that ever they shall have any part or portion in the kingdom of Christ, unless they repent." Doubtless to be cast out of the church, according to the institution and command of Christ, who commands no such thing, but upon very heinous and highly unchristian misdemeanors, is of every whit as sad an importance, as a