

voluntary desertion of the church's communion can be, especially for a season. But,

2. Suppose these two suppositions be granted to the inference makers, 1. That this phrase, "To go out from us," signifies voluntarily to forsake the society or communion of Christians; and 2. That this expression, "To be of us," signifies true and inward communion with those from whom they went out, yet will not these contributions suffice for the firm building of the said inference. The reason is, because the apostle expressly saith, that "they would have continued *with us*," not that they would have continued such as they were, in respect of the truth or essence of their faith. And if the apostle's scope in this place were to prove or affirm, that they who are once true Christians or believers, always continue such, then when he saith, "They would have continued with us," he must of necessity mean, either that they would have continued faithful, as we continue faithful; or else, that they would have continued always in our society, or in the profession of Christianity. But that neither of these senses are of any tolerable consistency, is evident by the light of this consideration, viz. that the apostle then must have known that the persons he speaks of, and who went out from them, neither were, nor ever had been, true Christians or believers, when they thus went from them. Now if he had this knowledge of them, it must be supposed, either that he had it by extraordinary revelation, but this is very improbable, and howsoever can never be proved; or else that he gained or obtained it by their departure, or going out from them. But that this could be no sufficient argument or ground to beget any such knowledge in the apostle concerning them, is evident from hence, because it may very easily, and doth very frequently come to pass, that they who are true Christians do not always continue in that Christian society, unto which they have once joined themselves, and adhered, no, nor yet in the external profession of Christianity itself. Yea, our opposers themselves frequently and without scruple teach and affirm, that even true believers themselves may, either through fear or shame, or extremity of sufferings, or the like, be brought to deny Christ, and without any danger of making shipwreck of their faith, forbear a profession-making of the name of Christ afterwards. But,

3. For the true meaning of the place, it is to be considered, that the apostle's intent in the words was to prevent or heal an offence, that weak Christians might take at that doctrine, which was taught and spread abroad, by those anti-christs, or anti-christian teachers, (spoken of in the former verse, and there said to have been many,) and that especially because they had sometimes lived and conversed with the apostles themselves in Christian churches, and had professed the same faith and doctrine with them. By reason hereof some Christians, not so considerate or judicious as others, might possibly think or conceive, that surely all things were not well with the apostles, and those Christian

societies with which they consorted; there was something not as it ought to have been, either in doctrine or manners, or both, which ministered an occasion unto these men to break communion with them, and to leave them. To this the apostle answers, partly by concession, partly by exception. First by concession, in these words, "They went out from us:" which words do not so much import their utter declining or forsaking the apostles' communion, (though there be an expression following which probably doth,) as the advantage or opportunity which they had to gain credit and respects both to their doctrine and persons, amongst professors of Christianity in the world, inasmuch as they came forth from the apostles themselves as men taught and commissioned by them to teach. The same phrase is used in this sense, and with the same import, Acts xv. 24, where the apostles write thus to the brethren of the Gentiles: "Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which *went out from us* have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying ye must be circumcised, and keep the law, to whom we gave no such" (commission, or) "commandment." So that in this clause, "they went out from us," the apostle grants, 1. That those anti-christian teachers had for a time held communion with them; and, 2. That hereby they had the greater opportunity of doing harm in the world by their false doctrine. But, 2. He answers further, by way of exception, "But they were not of us," *i. e.* whilst yet they conversed with us, they were not men of the same spirit or principles with us; we walked in the profession of the gospel with single and upright hearts, not aiming at any secular greatness, or worldly accommodations in one kind or other: these men loved this present world, and when they found that the simplicity of the gospel would not accommodate them to their minds, they brake with us, and with the truth of the gospel itself at once. By the way, when he saith, "But they were not of us," he doth not necessarily imply, or suppose, that they never had been of them, *i. e.* sincere and single-hearted in the profession of the gospel, as they were, but only that about, and at the time of their going out from them, or perhaps some while after, they were thus tainted and corrupted. The cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and these lusts of other things, which choked the seed in the thorny ground, are said to have entered in, *viz.* some while after the seed was sown and sprung up, Mark iv. 19. Nor is it said to have fallen among thorns, because there were thorns on the ground when it was sown, but because it fell on such a ground where it proved to be amongst thorns afterwards. Nor is it like, that Demas himself "loved this present world," when first he embraced Paul's company, with that affection, either for kind or degree, which he did afterwards. So that it cannot be proved from this clause, that the persons spoken of had never been sincere Christians, but only that they were not such when John spake these things concerning them. It follows, "For if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us." In

these words the apostle gives a reason of his exception, telling them to whom he writes, that this was a sign or argument that those anti-christian teachers "were not of them," in the sense declared, viz. "that they did not continue with them," *i. e.* they quitted their former intimacy and converse with the apostles, refused to steer the same course, to walk by the same principles any longer with them, which, saith he, questionless they would not have done had they been as sincerely affected towards Jesus Christ and the gospel as we. In which assertion John plainly vindicateth himself, and the Christian churches of his communion, from giving any just occasion of offence unto those men, whereby they should be any ways induced to forsake them; and resolves their unworthy departure in this kind unto their own carnal and corrupt hearts, which lusted after such fleshly accommodations and contentments, that were not to be obtained or enjoyed in a sincere profession of the gospel with the apostles, and those who were perfect in heart with them.

It follows, ἀλλ' ἵνα φανερωθῶσιν ὅτι οὐκ εἰσὶ πάντες ἐξ ἡμῶν, *i. e.*, "but that they might be made manifest that they are not all of us;" meaning, that God suffered them thus unworthily to break fellowship with us, that hereby they might all of them, one or other of those, who thus causelessly deserted us, be discovered to be men of degenerate and ignoble spirits, and not principled like unto us, the true apostles of Christ, or those that walk in uprightness of heart with us. It appertains to the just and righteous judgment of God; and withal is a dispensation of a gracious tendency and import for the honour, peace, and safety of Christian churches, and sincere Christians, that men of corrupt minds amongst them should be timely discovered.

This being the clear and undoubted scope and sense of the place, evident it is, that no inference or conclusion can be drawn from it for the countenance or establishment of the received doctrine of perseverance. All that can be made of it towards such an account as this, is, that men sincerely affected towards the Gospel, and free from that adulterous and inordinate love of this present world, which turns such multitudes aside from the way of truth, whilst they abide in this posture and frame, are seldom or never found to desert the society of faithful teachers or sound Christians; but concerning any absolute necessity of their continuing free, who either have been free, or are free at present, from the inordinate love of the world, here is not the least overture or intimation. Yea, the non-continuance of those false teachers with John, and the good Christians with him here spoken of, though it argues and imports a worldly and dangerous distemper in their hearts and spirits, yet doth it not necessarily or demonstratively imply a nullity of their faith.

Another text of Scripture, from whence the doctrine of perseverance claims countenance and credit, is that which speaketh thus: "Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin: for

his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God," 1 John iii. 9. From hence such an argument as this is levied in defence of the said doctrine: "He that sinneth not, neither can sin, cannot fall away from his faith: Whosoever is born of God, sinneth not, neither can sin. Therefore whosoever is born of God, cannot fall away from his faith."

To this I answer by distinguishing those terms, sinneth not, neither can sin, made use of in both propositions. First, by sinneth not, may be meant, committeth no act of sin, sinneth not at all. In this sense of the phrase the minor is absolutely untrue. For he that is born of God certainly sinneth in a sense, *i. e.* committeth acts, yea, many acts of sin. "In many things," saith James, "we offend all," Jam. iii. 2; meaning, even the holiest and most regenerate of all. Secondly, by sinneth not, may be meant, say some, doth not perpetrate, or commit sin with delight. But this sense I am confident cannot be justified, either from the Scripture, nor yet upon any competent ground of reason. Not to sin, doth no where in Scripture signify not to sin with delight. I acknowledge, that words and phrases are sometimes in Scripture used emphatically; in which cases, over and besides their proper significations, they consignify some peculiarity of manner, or some special circumstance relating to the thing or action expressed. But what they signify in this kind (I mean, over and besides their strict and proper signification) is not arbitrary, or left for men to make what they please, but is to be estimated by the scope of the place, and nature of the matter in hand. I easily grant, that the words under debate, sinneth not, or doth not commit sin, are emphatical in the Scripture before us. But that the emphasis lieth in any such modification, which should give them this sense, sinneth not with delight, hath no good accord with reason or with truth. For there are many born of God who do commit sin with delight; yea, the delight or pleasure which they take in many sins committed by them, is the chief if not the only reason why they commit them. Yea, it is a question, whether any man commits any sin whatsoever without delight in one kind or other.

Thirdly, By "sinneth not" is meant, say others, sinneth not deliberately, or without inward reluctance in the act of sinning. But neither hath this sense any better bottom than conjecture, and this obnoxious enough to him that will chew and not swallow; for, 1. What necessity is there that, when John saith, "He that is born of God doth not commit sin," he should mean committeth it not with deliberation, or premeditation, or without reluctance? Why may not his meaning as well be "doth not commit sin" unto death, or customarily, as other men do, or the like? 2. Certain it is, that "he that is born of God" doth, at least sometimes, "commit sin" with deliberation, yea, and, in the apostle's expression, "makes provision for the flesh," Rom. xiii. 14; *i. e.* plots and projects means and opportunities for the committing of it, and digests it, as it were, into method beforehand, that he may commit it the more artificially,

as well as wicked men: witness David in the matter of Bathsheba and Uriah, 2 Sam. xi.: witness the two patriarchs, Simeon and Levi, in the matter of the Shechemites, Gen. xxxiv.; besides examples in this kind which every day almost brings forth. 3. Neither is it true that every one that is born of God sinneth always, when he doth sin, with inward reluctancy. Doubtless, David was not divided in himself, suffered no inward conflict about the committing of those sins lately intimated, considering that, according to the general opinion of our best Protestant expositors and divines, he remained for about the space of a whole year after the committing of these sins without any sense of, or remorse for, them; and if the Lord had not sent his prophet Nathan unto him to awaken him, who knows but that he might have slept in his guilt even unto death? Besides, as concerning sins quotidiani incurtus, or sins of infirmity, as they are commonly called, which are incident to those that are born of God as well as unto others, the case is yet more evident, viz. that these, at least many of them, are committed by them without any such inward reluctancy as the exposition now opposed suggesteth, and particularly those of which they have no knowledge or sense when they commit them. 4, and lastly to this, Suppose it were granted that men born of God do not sin but with inward reluctancy, yet that this is not the sense wherein the apostle ascribes a non-sinning unto them is evident from hence, viz., because certain it is that the non-sinning here intended by him to be ascribed unto them is such which is appropriate to them, and not communicable to wicked or unregenerate men. But that men unregenerate sin, and that frequently, with inward reluctancy, is the frequent acknowledgment of these men themselves, and besides is of easy deduction and observation from Rom. i. 32; ii. 1, 5, &c.: nor is it, nor can it reasonably be, denied by our adversaries themselves.

Fourthly, When the apostle saith that "he that is born of God doth not commit sin," some understand it of committing sin unto death, or with final impenitency. This exposition, indeed, if it could be made to stand upright, would bear the weight of the controversy depending alone; but it argues much weakness for a man, in an exposition of Scripture, to determine for his own sense in a controversy or question, without giving a very substantial reason of such his exposition. Now, I can meet with no reason at all from the assertors of this exposition for the confirmation of it; but reasons against it there are these three at hand, and many more in coming: 1. The grammar or letter of the phrase breatheth not the least air of such a sense. 2. The phrase of "committing sin" is nowhere in Scripture found in such a sense, I mean, to sin with final impenitency or unto death. The authors of the exposition have not yet shown it, nor, I believe, ever will. 3. Nor doth the context or scope of the place any ways invite, much less enforce, such an exposition. The intent and drift of the apostle, from ver. 3 even to the end of the chapter, as he that doth but run the

context over may read, is not to show or argue whether the sons of God may possibly in time so degenerate as to live sinfully and die impenitently, but to evince this, that those who claim the great honour and privilege of being the children of God, cannot justify or make good this claim, neither unto others nor to themselves, but by a holy and Christian life and conversation. Now, it is one thing to argue or prove who are the sons of God at present, another whether they who are such at present must of necessity always so continue. The former is the apostle's theme in the context; the latter he is wholly silent unto. So, then, if by not sinning, the argument which we have now upon answer understands the non-committing of any of these four kinds of sin, or non-sin-ning upon any of the terms explained, the minor proposition is denied, which saith that "whosoever is born of God sinneth not;" nor doth the apostle John affirm it, as hath been clearly shown, in any such sense.

If, by "sinneth not," the argument meaneth, walketh not ordinarily or customarily in any known way or course of sin,—maketh not, as it were, a trade or occupation of sinning, (which we have formerly proved to be the sense of the phrase *ποιῆν ἀμαρτίαν*, in the Scriptures, and more particularly in the writings of this apostle, (Chap. ix.) the said minor proposition is granted as to this clause "whosoever is born of God sinneth not." For that further clause in it, "neither can sin," this also, as to the Scripture use of the words "can" and "cannot," is very ambiguous and of doubtful signification: for, 1. A man may be said to "can," or to be able to do a thing when the thing is meet or comely for him to do; and, in opposition hereunto, when a thing is uncomely or unmeet to be done by him, it may be said of him, in Scripture phrase, that he cannot do it. "How then," saith Joseph to his mistress, "*can* I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" Gen. xxxix. 9; which is as if he had plainly said, I cannot do it. So again, "Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn," saith Christ, "as long as the bridegroom is with them?" Matt. ix. 15; meaning that it was an irrational or uncomely thing for them so to do; and in this respect, saith he, they cannot do it. Thus Exod. viii. 26, where our English translators read, "It is not meet so to do," Jerome translated it, "*Non potest ita fieri*," *i. e.* it cannot so be done. Thus also the apostle Paul, (to spare other places,) "For we *can* do nothing against the truth," &c., 2 Cor. xiii. 8; meaning that it was a most unworthy and unseemly thing for him to act in any kind against the truth or to the prejudice of the gospel; and in this respect he saith that he could not do it. See also 1 Cor. iii. 1; x. 21; xii. 21; Gal. iv. 15; Luke vi. 42; Gen. xxiv. 50; xxix. 8, &c. 2. A person may be said to "can," or to be able to do such or such a thing, when, being otherwise provided of strength sufficient, he is under a present disposition or inclination of mind and will to do it. In this sense the Lord Christ is said to "can," or to be able to "have compassion on the ignorant," Heb. v. 2; and,

in opposition hereunto, when a man wants such a disposition, especially when a contrary disposition rules in him, it may, in Scripture language, be said of him that he cannot do it. Thus it is said of the Lord Christ himself, that, being in his own country, "he *could* there do no mighty work," Mark vi. 5; meaning that he had no disposition of mind or will hereunto, and this because of the general unbelief of the people here, as one of the evangelists accounteth, for otherwise his natural or executive power of doing mighty works, was the same here which it was in other places. So he demands of the Pharisees, "How can ye, being evil, speak good things?" Matt. xii. 34; implying, that having a disposition in them contrary unto that, by which men are inclined to speak good things, they were as men unable and wanting power to speak such things. Again, speaking to the same generation of men, he demands, "Why do ye not understand my speech?" and answers his own question thus: "Even because ye *cannot* hear my word;" John viii. 43, meaning that they had a marvellous averse disposition as to the hearing or minding of it; which he plainly signifieth in the words immediately following: "Ye are of your father the devil," &c., *i. e.* you are of a devilish disposition, enemies unto God and goodness; and this renders you unable to hear, *i. e.* duly to mind and consider my words. This signification of the word "cannot," is most frequent in Scripture. See further upon this account, Gen. xxxvii. 4; Rev. ii. 2; Matt. xx. 22; Mark ix. 39; Luke xi. 7, 14, 20, &c. Thirdly, the word "cannot" sometimes notes only the difficulty of a thing to be performed. In this sense our Saviour, approving that saying of his disciples, "It is good not to marry," saith thus, "All men *cannot* receive this saying," &c., Matt. xix. 11; meaning that it was very difficult for some men to acknowledge the goodness of that saying in reference to themselves, or to refrain marrying. For that it was not, or is not, simply impossible for any man in this sense to receive the said saying, or to judge the forbearance of marriage good for him, and to forbear accordingly, is self-evident; and besides, may be inferred from these words of our Saviour following: "And there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, (*i. e.* whose heart serves him to encounter and engage against the difficulty, and shall overcome it,) let him receive it;" *i. e.* let him forbear to marry. For concerning those of whom he saith, "That they have made themselves eunuchs for," &c., evident it is, that he meaneth not by them either such, who by nature are indisposed to marriage, nor such upon whom an incapacity in this kind hath been forced (for of these he had spoken plainly in the former part of the verse;) but of such who had overruled and vanquished their inclinations and desires that way, by the weight and great import of spiritual considerations, proper to obtain a conquest of that nature. In this sense also, Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, saith concerning the prophet Amos, "that the land is not able to (or cannot) bear all his words," Amos vii. 10; *i. e.* can hardly bear them without falling foul upon

him because of them. So when our Saviour saith: "A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid," Matt. v. 14, he doth not import an absolute impossibility of the hiding of it, for doubtless there may be means found out to hide a city so situate as well as another standing in a valley, but only a difficulty thereof. See also Gen. xxxii. 12; Gen. xlv. 1; Exod. vii. 21, 24. Fourthly, the word or phrase we speak of, "cannot," sometimes imports only a present incapacity in a person for the doing of a thing when there is a remote principle or power in him notwithstanding to do it. Thus God himself saith to his prophet Ezekiel, "Thou art not sent to a people of a strange speech or of an hard language, whose words thou *canst not* understand," Ezek. iii. 6, implying that there were some people whose words he could not understand, viz. de præsenti, for the present; not but that there was a principle of reason and understanding in him, by the improvement whereof accordingly he might come in time to be very able to understand them. Thus it is said of the Egyptian magicians, "that they *could not stand* before Moses, (viz. at present) because of the boils," Exod. ix. 11; but, these notwithstanding, they were in a capacity of standing before him another time, as, viz. when they should be healed of their boils. Thus it is said, "That the children of Israel *could not* stand before their enemies," Judg. vii. 12, viz. whilst Achan's sin was unpunished amongst them; yet were they remotely capable not only of standing before their enemies, but of vanquishing, yea, and making their enemies fly before them. Fifthly, and lastly, The phrase "cannot," frequently importeth an absolute impotency or incapacity in persons in reference to the doing of such or such a thing. Thus our Saviour, speaking of his sheep, "No man (or none) *can* take them out of my hand," John x. 29; *i. e.* either hath, or ever shall have any such power whereby to take them out of my hand. And so Gamaliel to his fellows: "But if this counsel or work be of God, ye *cannot* overthrow it, &c." Acts v. 39, *i. e.* you are in no capacity at all, either present or remote, to overthrow it. It were easy to multiply instances of this signification.

Now if the clause, "cannot sin," in the argument propounded, be understood according to any of the four first significations mentioned of the word cannot, both the propositions are false; if according to the fifth and last, the major is true, but the minor false. The major proposition was this: "He that sinneth not, *neither can sin*, cannot fall away from his faith." 1. If by the denial of a power to sin in this proposition, which that clause, "neither can sin," importeth, be meant nothing else but an unmeetness or uncomeliness for a man to sin, it is a clear case that he that cannot sin may, notwithstanding such a want of power to sin, very possibly fall away from his faith." For thousands may do, yea, and do, things very unmeet and uncomely to be done by them. 2. If by a denial of the said power in the proposition, be meant a present indisposition or incapacity in a man to sin by reason of the contrary disposition of holiness prevailing in him, in this sense also, he that

cannot sin may very possibly fall away from his faith. For he, in whom a disposition of holiness is predominant at present, may very possibly by degrees, and through a frequency and custom of contrary actions, (if not by an impetuous and sudden turn also of heart within him,) divest himself of that honourable habit, and put on the vile garments of looseness and profaneness in the stead. 3. If by "cannot sin," the argument meaneth can hardly sin, or cannot sin without difficulty, which was the third signification of the word cannot, neither will this sense give any colour of truth to the said proposition. For he that can hardly sin, or not sin without difficulty, may yet possibly sin; and consequently, such an inability to sin notwithstanding, fall away from his faith. 4. If by "cannot sin," the argument imports only a present incapacity of sinning in the person, not excluding a remote capacity in him hereunto, and such as may in time, by means suitable, be reduced into act, evident it is, that the person, this inability to sin notwithstanding, may possibly fall away from his faith.

Again, 2. According to all these significations and importances of the clause "cannot sin," in the said syllogism, the other proposition also is false, which saith, that "whosoever is born of God sinneth not, neither *can sin*." For, 1. He that is born of God may very possibly do that which is uncomely and unmeet for him to do. 2. May be able to do that by the supervening or contracting of another habit upon him, which, by reason of a contrary habit prevailing upon him for a time, he cannot do. 3. He may possibly do that which only is hard or difficult for him to do. 4, and lastly, He may have a remote capacity in him of doing that in the future, and in time, and consequently may do it, which at present he is under an inability to do. Therefore it is a clear case, that there are four several significations of the word cannot, and these frequent in Scripture, wherein both the propositions, in the argument now under canvass, are false.

If the said argument understands the phrase, "cannot sin," according to the fifth and last import mentioned of the word cannot, wherein it sounds an utter and absolute incapacity or impossibility, though in this sense the major proposition be granted, viz. that he that doth not sin, nor can sin, cannot fall away from his faith, yet the minor is tardy, which saith, as we lately heard, "whosoever is born of God sinneth not, neither can sin." For he that is born of God, is in no such incapacity of sinning, of sinning I mean in the sense formerly asserted to the Scripture in hand, which amounts to an absolute impossibility for him so to sin. But because this seems to be the sense intended in the argument, and the minor proposition, in this sense, to be built upon the Scripture in hand, let us consider whether the reason which this Scripture assigns for the said assertion, "whosoever is born of God cannot sin," doth necessarily enforce such a sense thereof. The tenor of the whole verse is this, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." Here are

two propositions or assertions laid down, and a reason given of either of them respectively. The former proposition is this "Who-soever is born of God doth not commit sin." The reason hereof is, "for his seed remaineth in him." The latter proposition this, "Whosoever is born of God cannot sin." The reason hereof is, "because he is born of God." The sense and difference of the two propositions, according to what we have argued about the place hitherto, and what we judge is this, Πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος, &c. every one that hath been born of God sinneth not, *i. e.* whosoever hath by the word and Spirit of God been made partaker of the divine nature, so as to resemble God in the frame and constitution of his heart and soul, doth not under such a frame or change of heart as this make a trade or practice of sinning, or walk in any course of inordinateness in the world; yea, saith he, in the latter proposition, every such person doth not only or simply refrain sinning in such a sense, but he cannot sin, *i. e.* he hath a strong and potent disposition in him which carrieth him another way; or he hath a strong antipathy or averseness of heart and soul against all sin, especially against all such kind of sinning. Now the reason, saith the apostle, why such a person committeth not sin, in the sense explained, is because his seed, the seed of God, by or of which he was born of him, ἐν αὐτῷ μένει, remaineth in him, *i. e.* according to the frequent signification of the word μένειν, to abide or remain, in the writings of this apostle, is or hath an actual and present being or residence in him. And that in this place it doth not signify any perpetual remaining or abiding, no nor any abiding with relation to the future is evident; because the abiding of the seed here spoken of, is given as the reason why he that is born of God doth not commit sin, *i. e.* doth not at present walk in any course of known sin. Now nothing in respect of any future permanency, or continuance of being, can be looked upon as a cause of any present effect, but only in respect of the present being or residence of it. The reason why the soul moves and acts the body to-day, is not because it will move or act it to-morrow, or because it is in the body to-day upon such terms, that it will be in it to-morrow also; much less because it is an immortal substance or the like, but simply because it is now, or this day, in the body. So the reason why the angels at this day do the will of God, is not because they have such a principle of holiness or obedience vested in them which they cannot put off or lose to eternity, but because they have such a principle as we speak of, of holiness and obedience, residing in them at the present. Therefore, when John assigns the remaining of the seed of God in him that is born of him, for the reason why he doth not commit sin, certain it is, that by this remaining of the seed he means nothing else but the present residence or abode thereof in this person. And if his intent had been, either to assert or imply a perpetual residence of this seed in him that is born of God, it had been much more proper for him to have reserved it for a reason of the latter proposition, *viz.* why he that is born of God cannot sin, especially according to their

sense, who by "cannot sin," understand "can never sin," than to subjoin it as a reason of the former. For though the future continuance of a thing in being can be no reason, as hath been said, of a present effect, yet may it well be a ground or reason of the continuance of a present effect.

Now that the word μένειν, to remain or abide, frequently signifieth, especially in the writings of this apostle, only a present residence or being, whether of a person or thing, without any reference unto or implication of a future, appears by many instances. "But ye know him," saith our Saviour to his disciples, speaking of the Spirit, ὅτι παρ' ὑμῶν μένει, *i. e.* "because he remaineth (or abideth) with you, and shall be in you." Here the latter clause, "and shall be in you," will be found a mere tautology, if the other phrase "abiding with them" imports a perpetual residence or in-being. In the same chapter, verse 25, where the original hath it, παρ' ὑμῶν μένων, *i. e.* remaining or abiding with you; our English translation renders it, "being yet present with you." So where the apostle saith, "That he that loveth not his brother μένει ἐν τῷ θανάτῳ, abideth in death," 1 John iii. 14; the meaning is, that such a man is in an estate of death or condemnation, not that he will, much less of necessity must, abide for any space of time after, least of all for ever, in that estate. For then it would follow, that whoever at any time did not truly love his brother, never after became a child of God. Which saying, how insupportable it is to the greatest part of those who say they believe, yea, and do believe indeed, any man's first thoughts may sufficiently determine. It is familiar with John, saith a late writer from Cameron and Hugo Grotius, to use the word μένειν, which properly signifieth to remain, for the verb substantive to be.*

Besides, that in the place in hand, it must needs signify only a present abode or being, not a future or perpetual, is evident from hence, because such a signification of it would render a sense altogether inconsistent with the plain scope of the apostle in the context, which is to exhort Christians unto righteousness and love of the brethren. Now, it is contrary to all reason, yea, to common sense itself, to signify unto those whom we admonish, exhort, and persuade to any duty, any such thing which imports an absolute certainty or necessity of their doing it, whether they take care, or use any means for the doing it or no. And a clear case it is, that the certainty of a perpetual remaining of the seed of God in those that are born of him, imports a like certainty of their perpetual performance of the duties whereunto they exhorted.

If it be here objected and said, Yea, but the seed of which those that are born of God are begotten, is said to be an immortal or "incorruptible seed," 1 Pet. i. 23, and therefore cannot perish or decay in those who are begotten of it, or in whom it ever takes place, I answer,

* Familiare Johanni μένειν ponere simpliciter pro, esse; ut John v. 38; xv. 11; 1 Ep. ii. 6. 10; iii. 15; et 2 Ep. 2., et alibi.—Edward Leigh, Critic. Sacra, p. 259, in verbo, μένω.

1. That seed which the Holy Ghost affirms to be, not corruptible, but incorruptible, is expressly said to be "the word of God," 1 Pet. i. 23. Now, certain it is that the word of God is not, therefore, said to be immortal or incorruptible, because it cannot be lost by those who once receive it, or in whose heart it hath been once sown, but partly because it is, in the nature and essence of it, incorruptible; in respect whereof, though all the world, who are now partakers of it, should reject and cast it out of their hearts, so that it were no where to be found under heaven, yet it would be, in the nature and essence of it, every way the same, and suffer no alteration or change hereby at all; partly, also, because it is endued with such an excellent virtue or property, that it is able to derive and confer immortality and incorruption upon those who are begotten of it; yea, and will actually derive and confer these glorious privileges upon them, if they suffer not the spirit of this heavenly birth to be extinguished and quenched in them before the season of the actual collation thereof comes: for, as that seed which is corruptible is not therefore termed corruptible, because it may be transferred or removed from the subject or soil wherein it remains at present, but because, according to the nature and elementary constitution of it, it may be corrupted, and suffer a change of being; as also, because it is naturally apt to produce and yield such bodies or things, which, according to the course of nature, are corruptible likewise; in like manner, the seed of the word of God is not therefore said to be an incorruptible seed, because it cannot be taken from or forsaken by those in whom it hath a residence for the present; but because, whether it be taken or not taken from, whether it be forsaken or not forsaken by these, it retains its proper nature, which is, to be incorruptible; for it is merely extrinsical and accidental to the word of God to be either embraced or refused, to be either retained, or let go, or lost by men; nor do any of these things make the least alteration in the nature of it, no more than the taking up or removing a corn of wheat, or of any other corruptible grain, from the ground or field wherein at present it resteth, or the letting of it there alone, altereth the nature or essential properties thereof. But,

2. It may be some question, whether by the seed of God in the Scripture in hand, said to remain in him that is born of him, be meant precisely the word of God, and not rather that which the Scripture elsewhere calls "the divine nature," which is the proper effect of the word of God, according to that of Peter; "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature," &c. 2 Pet. i. 4; together with that of the apostle James, "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth," &c. James i. 18. If you ask me, what this divine nature is, I answer, it is a certain heavenly impression made by the gospel in or upon the heart or soul of a man; or a divine principle, quality, or disposition, wrought in him by the word of God, by which he resembles God himself, and is effectually

inclined to walk and act according to those principles of righteousness and holiness, in all things appertaining unto him to do, by which God himself walketh and acteth in the world. If you ask me further, But why do I conceive that by the seed of God, in the Scripture in hand, the apostle should mean such an impression or disposition as this; I answer, Because some such thing must of necessity be meant by it, which is very spiritfult, vigorous, and active in turning the heart and soul of a man against sin. First, the metaphorical expression of seed importeth as much; I mean, somewhat that is very spirituou, full of vigour, power, and efficacy, in the kind of it. Natural philosophy and experience jointly teach that it is the nature of seed to be full of spirits, and thereby exceedingly vigorous and operative. Secondly, the effect here ascribed to it, the keeping or preserving of the man it whom it remains from sinning, which requires a principle of very great strength and power to effect, implieth the same. Now, such a principle, genius, or quality in a man as the Holy Ghost calls the divine nature, may well be conceived to be very spiritfult, and vigorously operative, according to the kind and tendency of it, in which respect it is frequently termed spirit; and consequently, to be sufficiently active and powerful to preserve its subject from sinning. Yea, our apostle, in assigning the reason of his latter assertion in this place, which is, that "he that is born of God cannot sin," the reason whereof he allegeth to be this, "because he is born of God," supposeth the seed here spoken of, whatsoever is meant by it, to be so actuous and powerful, that it doth not only actually and *de facto* preserve him in whom it remains from sinning, but also renders him impotent or unable to sin. For this reason, "because he is born of God," is the same in effect and for substance with that of the former assertion, "for his seed abideth in him;" only it doth somewhat more emphatically import, that the reason why the seed of God remaining in a man is so potently exclusive of sin in the same subject with it, is the absolute holiness, or most perfect hatred of sin, which is in God himself, of whom the person is begotten again by such his seed. As the reason why a lion hath courage, strength, and other like leonine properties, is because he came of a lion, a creature naturally endued with the same properties. But whatsoever is here meant by the seed of God, whether the word of God or the divine nature, so notioned as hath been described, evident it is, by what hath been argued, that no inseparableness of it from the present subject, nor consequently any impossibility of falling away from faith, can be inferred from any thing spoken of it, as attributed to it in this place.

There is only one objection more, as far as I am able to apprehend, that lieth with any seemingness of strength against the premises. The tenor hereof is this: If the seed of God, whatever it be, remaining in a man regenerate, worketh in him the greatest and strongest antipathy against, or alienation and abhorrency of mind and affection from sin, that can lightly be imagined, which

hath been granted all along in the traverse of the Scripture in hand, how is it possible that such a man should fall away, especially totally and finally, from his faith? It is no ways reasonable to suppose, that it is possible for a man so to fall away from his faith without sinning, no, nor yet without sinning very grievously; nor is it much more reasonable, if not as unreasonable altogether, to suppose that a man may sin, and that grievously, who hath the greatest and strongest antipathy against sin, the deepest alienation and abhorrency of mind and will from sin, that lightly can be conceived; therefore, how is it possible for him that cannot sin, even in this sense, to fall away totally or finally? I answer,

He that hath the greatest and strongest antipathy against sin that flesh and blood is capable of, yet retains that essential character or property of a creature, mutability, which supposeth a possibility, at least, of sinning; if not in sensu composito, *i. e.* whilst such an antipathy remains in its full vigour and strength, yet in sensu diviso, *i. e.* in case or when this antipathy shall abate and decline. As, though water made hot to the highest degree of heat whereof the nature of it is capable, cannot possibly cool any thing whilst it remains under such a degree of heat, yet this hinders not but that it may in time, its present heat notwithstanding, return to its natural coldness, and then cool other things: in like manner, a man may, by the spirit of grace and regeneration, be carried up to a very effectual and potent antipathy of mind and will against sin, by means whereof he is in no capacity or possibility of sinning, in the sense formerly declared, whilst it continues thus effectual and potent; but the present effectualness or potency of it, in a subject that is mutable, and successively capable of both contraries, is no sufficient argument to prove that therefore it must needs always continue effectual or potent in the same degree: and if it may abate or fall one degree, why not another? and if two, why not all, considering that all and every degree hereof is but of one and the same nature?

If it be here said, Yea, but such a strong antipathy against sin as you suppose and grant in regenerate men, is inconsistent with any such abatement or declining, and cannot reasonably be looked upon as capable of any falling, sinking, or losing so much as one degree of its strength, inasmuch as such a falling or losing as this cannot be without sin; and till there be such a declining as this in that holy principle we speak of, the person is supposed to be full of the hatred and abomination of sin. Therefore, unless he shall be supposed capable of sinning even in sensu composito, *i. e.* whilst he is yet under the greatest and most perfect hatred and abhorrency of sin, (which seems to be *dura suppositio*, and to need good proof) he must be supposed incapable of any declining at all in such his principle, and consequently much more incapable of falling away, either totally or finally. To this I answer,

1. That according to the known sense and principles of our adversaries themselves in the cause depending, faith in men regene-

rate, or the grace of regeneration itself, to what degree or perfection soever raised or advanced in the subject, may, notwithstanding, very possibly decay or decline, though not totally, or in all the parts or degrees of it, yet in some, yea, in many; yea, so far, that in appearance it may seem utterly and totally lost. If so, then every particular grace in such a person may possibly abate in the strength, and fall from the height of it; and consequently, that antipathy or hatred against sin, which is in him, how perfect soever it be, may lose ground also, and abate of its perfection. Therefore,

2. When we suppose or grant a strong antipathy against sin in those that are born of God, we do not suppose withal, either this antipathy to be unimpairable, or any such principle, which cannot decline in the strength and power of it; or that it can be impaired or decline without sin in him who suffers an impairment of it to be made in him. When we suppose the greatest antipathy against sin in a man that flesh and blood is lightly capable of, we do not hereby suppose him without the reach of temptation, or a man not subject to incogitancies, forgetfulness, and other human frailties. We may very well, and ought to, suppose Solomon to have been the wisest of men, and yet suppose him withal, even in the height and excellency of his wisdom, to have been a man capable, or under a possibility, of doing weakly or foolishly. *Nemo omnibus horis sapit.* There is no acquired habit or created principle whatsoever seated in the heart or soul of a man, that doth at any time act him or cause him to act congruously to it without the actual intention of the mind upon, and the like concurrence of the will with, the action. Again, 2. Most certain it is, that the mind of a man, being a finite faculty, cannot intend plurality of objects, actions, or occasions at once, or at one and the same time.

3. As certain it is as either of the former, that neither the mind nor will of a man are compelled or necessitated by any habit, inclination, or disposition whatsoever, always, or indeed at any time, to intend them or their motions and actings, or to concur with them herein; but are in some degree, at least, of liberty and power to turn aside from them to several other objects and occasions as they please. It is true, habits and inclinations, especially when they are much grown and rooted in the soul by frequent and long-continued actions, have a great power over men to entice and draw them into a frequent repetition of the same kind of action by which they were first introduced, and whereunto they have so long prevailed with such men to accustom themselves; and in respect of this power it is that the Scripture so frequently ascribes a kind of moral impotency unto men to act contrary to the tenor of such actions whereunto they have much accustomed themselves, yea, or to suspend or forbear them upon opportunities; and, upon the same account, represents persons as servants, as in subjection and bondage to those respective kinds of actions or courses whereunto they have voluntarily inured themselves for any considerable time.

Of this notion are such passages and sayings as these: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that whosoever committeth sin," *i. e.*, frequently and customarily, as we formerly interpreted the import of the phrase in the writings of the apostle John, chap. ix., "is the servant of sin," John viii. 34. So again, "Know ye not that to whomsoever ye give yourselves as servants to obey, his *servants* ye are whom ye obey, whether it be," &c., Rom. vi. 16. So also, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil," Jer. xiii. 23. Of like consideration is that also of our Saviour, "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit: neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit," Matt. vii. 18; to omit many others. But, 4, and lastly, When the Scripture supposeth or asserts a moral impotency in men, as in the passages now cited, with their fellows, either wholly to cease from their long-accustomed actions, or to act contrary to them, it neither supposeth nor asserts a natural, simple, or absolute impotency in respect of either: for it is the nature, property, and condition of all habits or created principles in men whatsoever, by discontinuance or long suspension of their appropriate actions, to languish and abate of their wonted strength and vigour, and in time wholly to expire. So then, it remaining still in the power of the mind and will of a man, even under the greatest captivity or subjection unto any habit, disposition, or principle whatsoever, whether sinful or holy, to suspend and discontinue, as hath been proved, their proper actings respectively by denying or withholding their concurrence with them in order towards such actions, evident it is that they have power, and may shake and weaken every such habit, disposition, or principle in themselves to what degree they desire, yea, and in time wholly enervate, dissipate, and expel them: therefore it is no *dura suppositio*, no hard supposition, to suppose that a person invested with the strongest antipathy against sin whereof he is capable, especially in the state and condition of morality, may, notwithstanding, even in *sensu composito*, *i. e.* this antipathy standing, either do that which is sinful, but especially omit or neglect the doing of that which is his duty, yea, and of great concernment likewise unto him to do.

Thus we have at last fully and clearly, we suppose, acquitted that Scripture, 1 John iii. 9, more vehemently suspected and charged than all his fellows with confederacy against that doctrine which affirms a possibility of a total and final defection in the saints.

Another Scripture hath the same imputation cast upon it for speaking only thus: "My Father which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to take them out of my Father's hand," John x. 29. From hence it is argued and conceived, that God engageth himself with his omnipotency to preserve the saints, or sheep of Christ, from either total or final apostasy, and consequently that it is impossible but that they should be preserved.

But to this place of Scripture a sufficient answer hath been given already in this chapter; where we showed, that the engagement of the mighty power of God for the protection and safeguarding of the saints, as such, or remaining such, against all adverse power whatsoever, is frequently asserted in Scripture, but no where for the compelling or necessitating of them to persevere or continue such. Nor is there the least intimation of any such thing in the text before us. And yet here I shall further add in reference unto it,

That by the tenor and carriage of the context it appears, 1. That that security for which our Saviour engageth the greatness of his Father's power unto his sheep, is promised or ascertained unto them, not in order to the effecting or procuring their final perseverance, but rather by way of reward to it. 2. That this promise of eternal safety made by Christ unto his sheep, doth not relate to their estate or condition in this present world, but to that of the world to come. "My sheep," saith he, ver. 27, "hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." In which expressions of "hearing his voice," and "following him," he intimates or includes their perseverance,* as appears by the words immediately following, ver. 28, "And I give unto them eternal life." This gift of his presupposeth the final perseverance of those to whom it is given. It follows, "and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." In these words he seems further to explain how and in what sense he calls that "life eternal" which he promiseth to confer upon them, as, viz. that by the eternalness of it, he doth not only mean such a constitution or condition of it which secureth it from perishing or dissolving, in respect or by means of any intrinsic cause, upon which account the lives they live in the flesh are perishable, but which secureth it likewise against all external means or power that may seem to threaten or endanger it. And for a further confirmation that the life which he promiseth unto his sheep, hearing his voice and following him, (viz. as was said, perseveringly,) is eternal, in the best, largest, most comprehensive, most desirable sense of the word, he subjoins the words in hand, ver. 29, "My Father which gave them me is greater," viz. in power, "than all: and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand;" as if he should have said, God himself, by whose grace they became my sheep and followed me, and whose power is abundantly sufficient for the work, will maintain and make good unto them to the uttermost that life which I shall give unto them, against all dangers, all enemies, all adversary powers whatsoever. This being the natural and clear disposition of the context, it is a plain case that here is not the least air or breathing of any engagement of the great power of God to bring about the perseverance of the saints upon those terms of infallibility or necessity which are so much contended for.

Another Scripture much entreated in the behalf of the doctrine

* *Intellige autem loqui Christum de ovibus, qua tales sunt ac manent.—Hug. Grot. in locum.*

of perseverance, is that of the evangelist John, concerning our Saviour: "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end," John xiii. 1. Out of this light some draw this darkness: Therefore, whom Christ once loves, he loves always, or unto the end. Which inference, they suppose, is further strengthened by that of the prophet: "For I am the Lord; I change not," Mal. iii. 6. I answer,

1. From the passage in John there can nothing more be concluded, in reference to the question in hand, than, by way of immediate deduction, the greatness and constancy of Christ's love towards such of his disciples who continued in their obedience and faithfulness unto him; for the evangelist, I suppose, did not intend Judas amongst those whom Christ loved unto the end; and, 2, by way of proportion, or rational consequence from this deduction, that the love of Christ is great and constant towards all those who persevere in love and faithfulness unto him. This is the constant doctrine of the Scriptures, but no ways concerns the present dispute. Yet for the passage itself, if it hath any aspect at all upon it, it is rather by way of favour and countenance to that side against which, than to that for which, it is commonly alleged. For if the love of Christ towards his disciples unto the end, necessarily supposeth or requireth the concurrent continuance of the same affection in them towards him, it plainly follows, that if men shall draw back from him, his soul will have no further pleasure or delight in them. And this indeed was the express doctrine of that man of God, who was sent to meet king Asa, and the people with him, upon the late presence of God with them against their enemies: "O Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin, hear ye me: the Lord is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will *be found* of you; but *if ye forsake him*, he will forsake you." 2 Chron. xv. 2. Which clearly supposeth, 1, a possibility of their forsaking God, who for a time are truly and really with him; 2, a certainty of God's forsaking those who forsake him.

2. It is not here said, that Christ, "having loved his own, loved them unto the end" of their lives, or days, but "to the end," viz. of his life and abode in the world; the emphatical and clear meaning of the place being thus, that to declare the exceeding greatness and marvellous constancy of his affection towards his disciples, and that whilst they were yet in the world, (and so subject to many weaknesses and infirmities, which might seem to render them less lovely unto him than those that were "made perfect," Heb. xii. 23, as the apostle speaks, through death,) he did not cease to manifest his care and love towards them, no not at such a time or season wherein the most affectionate and tender parents are wont to forget and lay aside the care and thoughts of their dearest children, as, viz. when he knew and was very sensible of a most hideous and grievous storm and tempest of death hanging over his head, and even now ready to fall upon him. At such a time as this he expressed his love to them, and care over them, as appeareth partly by that con-

descentious action of his in washing their feet, which immediately followeth in this chapter; partly by that large and serious discourse which he had with them, and made unto them, in the three following chapters; partly also by that most affectionate and heavenly prayer for them, wherein he recommended them unto his Father's love and care, chap. xvii. But that by the "end" unto which he is said to have "loved" his disciples, is not meant the end of their lives, but of his own, is the common sense of expositors. "He loved them even to the death which he suffered for them," say our English divines in their annotations upon the place; and so incessantly Calvin likewise, not to mention any more, plainly enough intimates the same sense. "Nor is it doubtful," saith he upon the place, "but that even now he bears the same affection which he retained in the very instant of death."* So that in this passage of Scripture there is neither colour nor shadow of any thing for the final perseverance of the saints, but only for the perseverance of Christ's love towards them whilst they persevere, which indeed may be substantially proved from hence, if it were any part of the question.

3. For the words of Malachi, "I am the Lord, I change not;" from which it was wont to be argued, that when God once loves a person, he never ceaseth to love him, because this must needs argue a changeableness in him, in respect of his affection; and, consequently, that the saints cannot fall away finally from his grace; I answer,

1. By the tenor of this arguing it would as well follow, that in case God should at any time withdraw his love or favour from a nation, or body of people, which he sometimes favoured or loved, he should be changed. But that no such change of dispensation as this towards one and the same people or nation, argueth any change at all in God, at least any such change which he disclaimeth as incompetent to him, is evident from those instances, without number, recorded in Scripture, of such a different dispensation of his towards sundry nations, and more especially towards the Jews, to whom sometimes he gave peace, sometimes he consumed them with wars, stirring up enemies against them; sometimes he gave them plenty, other while he exercised them with famine, and scarcity of all things: sometimes he made them the head, and sometimes again the tail of the nations round about them. Therefore, neither the changeableness nor unchangeableness of God are to be estimated or measured, either by any variety or uniformity of dispensation towards one and the same object; and, consequently, for him to express himself, as this day, towards a person, man, or woman, as if he intended to save them, or that he really intends to save them, and should on the morrow, as the alteration in the interim may be, or however may be supposed in these persons, express himself to the contrary, as that he verily

* Neque enim dubium est, quin eundem nunc quoque affectum gerat, quem in ipso mortis articulo retinuit.

intends to destroy them, would not argue or imply the least change or alteration in him. Yea, when as in one hour he conferred upon the lapsed angels the greatest happiness they were capable of, and in the next hour, perhaps sooner, their sin intervening, he cast them out of his sight into the greatest misery, this argued no change, or shadow of change or turning in God. Therefore,

2. That unchangeableness which the Scriptures, or God himself in the Scriptures asserts unto himself, is to be considered only in respect of his essence, attributes, and decrees, and not in respect of any constancy, or sameness of tenor in his dispensations towards the same creatures, whether they be changed or no. First, God is unchangeable in his essence or simple being: in respect of this nothing can be added to him, nothing can be taken from him, nothing can be altered or made otherwise, with him, in him, or about him, than now it is or was from eternity. This unchangeableness in him the prophet David contemplated, in this his address to him: "Of old thou hast laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hand. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment, as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end," Psal. cii. 25, &c. Secondly, God is unchangeable, likewise, in respect of his attributes, which are all founded in his nature, essence, or simple being; so that, for example, he is not more wise at one time and less wise at another, nor stronger at one time and weaker at another, nor better at one time and worse at another; though it is true, he may show more wisdom, or, to speak more properly, he may show his wisdom more, *i. e.* more plainly and perspicuously, as unto men, in one contrivance or providential dispensation than in another; and in this sense he may show more power, and so more goodness, at one time than at another. Yet this different expression of himself, according to the different natures and imports of his attributes respectively, doth not argue any changeableness at all in these attributes. As a man may be as strong, when he acts little or nothing with his strength, as when in any action he exerts or puts forth the uttermost of it: and so may be of as loving and sweet a disposition, when, according to the exigency of his calling and conscience, he most severely punisheth the same persons, for their misdemeanors, whom he sometimes honoured and loved, whilst he judged them virtuous, as he was whilst he yet honoured and loved them. When a judge, who is of a sweet nature and loving disposition towards all men, considered as men, especially as good men, shall, according to the laws whereunto he is sworn, and the equity of the case, award a sentence of death against one or more of them, this no ways argueth or supposeth any alteration or change in his goodness or sweetness of disposition; he may be, nay it is like he is, the same man, in respect of these lovely qualifications or endowments, even when and whilst he executes such a judiciary act of severity, which he

was before ; yea, and may still love the persons of these men whom he hath condemned to die, considered as men, as much as he did before their delinquency. In like manner, in case God shall destroy with eternal death such men or women, whom he sometimes truly loved and respected dearly, this doth not necessarily argue the least change or alteration in any attribute of his whatsoever, as either love, goodness, mercy, &c. viz. in case these persons, having been formerly faithful and obedient unto him, have since apostatised, and died impenitently. Nay, if God should not destroy such persons in such cases, or upon such a supposition, it would argue a manifest change in some of his attributes, as severity, hatred of sin, truth, &c., yea, haply, if the matter be narrowly considered, even in his love or goodness itself. For if we judge it any part or property of the love or goodness of God towards goodness and good men, to put so great and gracious a difference between them, and between wickedness and wicked men, as to reward the former with eternal glory, the latter with eternal shame and misery, and that he hath at any time expressed his love and goodness in this kind, evident it is, that in case he should at any time not punish persevering apostates, which are the wickedest of men, with eternal death, it would argue an alteration or change in those attributes of his we speak of. Therefore, to reason thus, if God should love a man to-day, and hate him to-morrow, it would argue a strange inconstancy or mutability in God, or in his love, is a very inconsiderate and weak reasoning ; for the constancy or unchangeableness of the love of God doth not stand in his constantly loving the same person or object, materially considered, but only as considered formally, *i. e.* as remaining the same morally, or in loveliness, which it was when he first loved it. Julian the professor, and Julian the apostate, are the same person or object, materially considered ; but in a formal consideration they are two, and these very different. In like manner the angels, in the integrity of their creation, and in the guilt of their transgression, are one and the same object, materially considered, but formally they differ as much as light and darkness ; and to argue, that unless God should always love the same persons, materially considered, whom he once or at any time loved, he should be mutable in his love, necessarily supposeth either that God hated the lapsed angels whilst they were yet holy, and in the glory and beauty of their creation, or else that he now loves them in their apostasy. The truth is, that should God always love the same person or persons, though morally distinguished from themselves, and of righteous become wicked and abominable, this would clearly argue a mutability in his affection, as it would in the affection of such a man, who should love good men as good men, or good men only, to-day, and wicked men to-morrow ; so that men who were sometimes loved by God may now be hated of him, without any the least change or alteration in him, or in his affection, only by means of a change and alteration in themselves. The

third and last particular wherein the unchangeableness of God is to be considered, are his decrees. These, truly stated and understood, are all absolute and unchangeable, shall and will take place and be fulfilled, against all contradictions and oppositions whatsoever. But of this formerly, Chap. iii. And that unchangeableness assumed by God himself unto himself, in the words in hand, "I am the Lord, I change not," is, I conceive, that which is found in him in respect of his decrees. The reason is, because it is assigned by him as the reason why they were not utterly destroyed. "I am the Lord; I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." In the beginning of the chapter he had declared unto him his purpose and decree of sending his only begotten Son, whom he there calls "the Messenger of the Covenant," unto them. He predicteth, verses 3, 4, the happy fruits or consequences of that his sending, in reference to their nation and posterity. To the unchangeableness of this his decree he assigns that patience which he had for a long time exercised towards them, under their great and continued provocations; whereby he implies, that if he could have been turned out of the way of his decree concerning the sending of his Son unto them in their posterity, they would have done it by the greatness of their sins; but, inasmuch as this his decree, or himself in this his decree, was unchangeable, and yet must have been changed in case they had been all destroyed, for the decree was for the sending him to their nation and posterity, hence, saith he, it comes to pass that, though your sins otherwise abundantly have deserved it, yet I have spared you from a total ruin. Therefore, in these two Scriptures last argued, there is every whit as much, or rather more, against than for the common doctrine of perseverance.

Another parcel of Scripture sought out for the service of this doctrine is that which riseth in these words; "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born amongst many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified," Rom. viii. 28—30. From this contexture of Scripture it is frequently argued to this effect, that when men once love God, and are effectually called, *i. e.* are regenerate and do believe, they are fastened to one end, as it were, of a certain chain, consisting of several decrees of God, like so many links indissolvably fastened one unto another, and hereby are infallibly and irresistibly drawn unto glory, and, consequently, cannot fall away or perish finally. To all this I answer,

1. That, inasmuch as this passage of Scripture is impressed also for the service of the doctrine of absolute personal election, we shall reserve the further consideration of it till our method hath carried us on to that subject, and for the present examine it only in relation to the point in hand; therefore,

2. Whereas it is argued from this place, that persons once regenerate are infallibly drawn and carried on to glory by a series or chain of divine acts or decrees, uninterruptedly succeeding or taking hold of one another, I answer,

That no such conclusion as this can reasonably be drawn out of these words; for the scope of the apostle in this passage is clearly this, as that ratiocinative particle, "for," in the beginning of verse 29, plainly showeth, to prove and make good that assertion of his, verse 28, viz., that "all things work together for good to those that love God." To prove this, he shows by what method, steps, and, as it were, degrees of dispensation or transaction, God will bring it to pass. "Whom he foreknows," saith he, *i. e.* pre-approves (the word, knowledge, frequently in Scripture importing approbation,) as he must needs do those that love him, these he "predestinates to be conformed to the image of his Son;" and therefore, as all things, even his deepest sufferings, wrought together for good unto him, so must they needs do unto those who are predestinated or pre-ordinated by God to a conformity with him. To give you yet, saith our apostle, a further and more particular account how God, in the secret of his councils, hath belayed things, in order to the bringing of those unto an actual "conformity with the image of his Son," (viz. in glory, as appears verse 30,) whom he hath predestinated thereunto, who are such as love him, and thereupon are approved by him, you are to understand, that "whom he hath" so "predestinated, he hath also called," *i. e.* hath purposed or decreed to call,* viz., to the knowledge of his Son or of his gospel; *i. e.* to afford a more plain and effectual discovery of him unto them than unto others whom he hath not so predestinated. By the way, this call doth not necessarily suppose a saving answer given unto it by the called, no whit more than that calling mentioned Matt. xx. 16, and Matt. xxii. 14, only it supposeth a real purpose and intent on God's part, to make it very sufficient to procure such an answer to it from those that are called. The apostle advanceth towards his proposed end, and addeth thus; "Whom he called, them he also justified:" *i. e.* according to our late explication of the word called, he hath purposed or decreed to justify, viz., in case the called obstruct him not in his way, or by their unbelief render not themselves incapable of justification by him. The clause following, the last in the period, is likewise to be understood with a like proviso or clause of exception, as viz., thus; and "whom he hath justified, them hath he also glorified," *i. e.* hath purposed or decreed to save or glorify

* *Scriptura solet dicere, multa jam esse facta, quia postea certò erant faciendà; i. e.* The Scripture is wont to speak of many things as already done, because they were to be certainly done afterwards.—*Aug. de Gen. contra Manich. c. 7.* And God, in Scripture, is oft said to have done a thing, or given a thing, when he intends or hath decreed to do it or give it; thus Josh. i. 3, he saith unto Joshua, "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you," *i. e.* do fully intend or purpose to give unto you; for as yet he had not actually given it. So also, 2 Tim. i. 9, he is said to have "given us grace in Christ Jesus before the world began," *i. e.* to have purposed or decreed to give us it. See also 1 Sam. xv. 23, 26, and xvi. 1; and Eph. i. 4; and 1 Thess. i. 10, with many others.

them, in case they retain the grace of justification conferred upon them unto the end, and do not make shipwreck of that faith upon which it was conferred.

That these decrees or purposed acts of God here specified are to be understood in their successive dependences, with such a condition or proviso, respectively, as those mentioned, and not absolutely, peremptorily, or without condition, appears,

1. By the like phrase or manner of expression frequent in the Scripture elsewhere; I mean, where such purposes or decrees of God the respective executions whereof are suspended upon such and such conditions, are notwithstanding simply and positively, and without any mention of condition expressed and asserted. "Wherefore," saith the man of God sent unto Eli, "the Lord God of Israel saith, I *said* indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, shall walk before me," meaning in the office and dignity of the priesthood, "for ever; but now the Lord saith, Be it far from me: for," &c., 1 Sam. ii. 30. "I *said* indeed," *i. e.* I verily purposed or decreed, or I promised according to my real purpose or decree. Understand either of purpose or promise, it comes much to one, a promise always including or presupposing a purpose answerable to it. (See Chap. xi.) When God made the promise, and so declared his purpose accordingly, that Eli and his father's house should walk before him for ever, he expressed no condition as required to the execution or performance of it; yet here it plainly appears that there was a condition understood, *viz.* the regular and worthy walking of Eli and his father's house in that office. In the same kind of dialect Samuel speaketh to Saul: "Thou hast done foolishly, thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which he commanded thee; for now the Lord" (*stabiliverat*) "had established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever: but now thy kingdom shall not continue," &c. 1 Sam. xiii. 13. "The Lord had established," *i. e.* had verily purposed or decreed to have established it for ever, *viz.* in case thou and thy posterity had walked obediently with him; not that his purpose itself, considered as an act or conception of the mind of God, depended upon this or upon any other condition whatsoever, (all God's purposes and decrees, without exception, are in such a respect absolute and independent, as hath been said formerly,) but that the actual establishment of his kingdom according to such a purpose depended hereupon. Thus God's purpose of preserving the lives of all that were with Paul in the ship, is expressed unto him in positive and absolute terms: "And lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee," Acts xxvii. 24; yet evident it is, afterwards, that there was a condition tacitly included in this purpose or decree, *viz.* the continuance or stay of the mariners in the ship until the rest had opportunity to shift for themselves as well as they: "Except these abide in the ship," saith Paul to the centurion and soldiers, "ye cannot be saved," ver. 31. In like manner, God's purpose or decree concerning the destruction of Nineveh

within forty days was signified unto Jonah in a positive and assertive tenor of words: "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be destroyed," Jonah iii. 4; yet it is well known that God purposed not the execution of this his purpose, but only in case of the obduration and impenitency of the inhabitants thereof. And most frequently the purpose and decree of God concerning the punishment of wicked and ungodly men, is expressed by the Holy Ghost absolutely and assertively, without the least mention of any condition of relaxation or reversal, (see Matt. iii. 10; v. 19; Mark xvi. 16; 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10; John iii. 36, &c.) yet from other passages of Scripture it is fully evident that this decree of his is conditional in such a sense which imports a non-execution of the punishment herein decreed, upon the repentance of the persons against whom the decree is bent. In like manner, though the purpose and decree of God for the justification of those who are called, and so for the glorifying of those that shall be justified, be, in the Scripture in hand, delivered in an absolute and unconditionate form of words, yet is it no ways necessary to suppose (the most familiar, frequent, and accustomed expression of Scripture in such cases exempting us from any such necessity), that therefore these decrees must needs bring forth against all possible interveniencies whatsoever, so that, for example, he that is called by the word and Spirit of God, must needs be justified whether he truly believeth or no; and he that is justified, must needs be glorified, whether he persevereth or no.

If it be objected and said, Yea, but he that is called, in the sense here meant, must needs believe, and consequently be justified; and so he that is justified must needs persevere, and so be glorified. I answer, that whether either the one or the other of these assertions be so or no, it must be judged of by other Scriptures; certain it is, by what hath been argued concerning the frequent usage of the Scripture in point of expression, that it cannot be concluded or determined by the Scripture in hand.

If it be yet further objected concerning all the places mentioned, wherein the conditional decrees of God, commonly so called, are positively and without condition expressed, that the conditions respectively included in them, and left to be understood in such expressions, are plainly enough mentioned in Scripture elsewhere; whereas no such conditions as I would obtrude upon the decrees of God so positively and peremptorily expressed, as we have heard, in the Scripture in hand, can be proved from any other Scripture to relate or appertain unto them,—to this I also answer, 1. That by the tenor of this objection it is granted that the peremptoriness and absoluteness of the said decrees cannot be inferred from the Scripture now under debate, but that recourse must be had to other places for the proof hereof: therefore no perseverance of saints is concludable from this Scripture. 2. For other Scriptures, we have already in part, and shall, God so pleasing, further show in due time, that none of those which are counted pillars of such a doctrine have any communion at all with it. Nay, 3, and lastly, we

shall, I doubt not, be able to show that there are other Scriptures from which the conditions specified as relating to the said decrees, may be undeniably evinced to relate unto them accordingly. In the meantime, that the decrees or purposed acts of God expressed in the Scripture in hand, as viz. his justifying those that are called, and so his glorifying those that are justified, have no such peremptory or essential connexion between them, but that the former, in reference to particular persons, may be put in execution, and take place, without the latter, I demonstrate,

2. By this reason. If the apostle should frame this series or chain of divine acts, with an intent to show or teach the uninterruptedness of it in what case or cases soever, he should fight against his general and main scope or design in that part of this chapter which lieth from about verse 17 to the end; which clearly is this, to exhort, strengthen, and encourage them to constancy and perseverance in suffering afflictions. For to suggest any such thing unto them as that being called and justified, nothing could possibly interpose to hinder them from being glorified, was to furnish them with a plain motive or ground on which to neglect his exhortation in that kind. For who will be persuaded to suffer tribulation, or things grievous to be endured, for the obtaining of that which they have sufficient assurance given that they shall obtain, whether they suffer such things or no? Therefore certainly the apostle did not intend here to teach or imply the certainty of perseverance in those which are once justified unto salvation, against all carriages and miscarriages of these persons whatsoever.

3, and lastly, I demonstrate the same thing yet further, by this consideration. If God should justify all without exception whom he calleth, and that against all bars of wickedness and unbelief possible to be laid in his way by those who are called, then might ungodly and unbelieving persons inherit the kingdom of God and of Christ. But the Scripture speaks aloud the impossibility, or, however, the non-futurity hereof. Ergo, The reason of the connexion in the major proposition is evident, it being a known truth that persons justified are in a condition or present capacity of inheriting the kingdom of God.

If it be objected that the said connexion is tardy in this, that it supposeth that which ought not to be supposed, viz. that persons called by God, in the sense of the word "calling" here meant, may lay such bars of wickedness or unbelief in the way which shall hinder God from justifying them; I answer, Judas, Demas, Simon Magus, and others were called, and yet they laid such bars as we speak of in the way, and by which their justification, at least their final justification, was obstructed and prevented. If it be replied, But these were not called by God, in the sense of the apostle's "called," in the place under question; I answer, 1. It hath not yet been proved by any man, nor, I believe, ever will be, that the calling here spoken of imports any such act or work of God, whereby the called are irresistibly necessitated savingly to believe.* If it

* Οὐ γὰρ ἀναγκασμένη γέγονεν ἡ κλήσις, οὐδὲ βεβιασμένη.—Chrysost. in locum.

imports no such thing as this, what hinders but that the persons mentioned might have been called with or by that very kind of calling which is here spoken of? 2. Suppose it should be granted that the calling here spoken of is that kind of calling which is always accompanied with a saving answer of faith, yet neither doth this prove but that even such called ones may obstruct and prevent, by wickedness and unbelief, their final justification, and consequently their glorification. If so, then the chain of divine acts or decrees here framed by the apostle, is not indissoluble in any such sense which imports an infallible and universal exertion or execution of the latter, wheresoever the former hath taken place. That Judas was called with such a calling as this, is Chrysostom's collection from Matt. xix. 28, from whom Peter Martyr knows not well how to dissent in the point;* and how probable, at least, it is that the other two mentioned, Simon Magus, and especially Demas, were partakers of the like calling with him, may be considered in due time. But that they all three, with wickedness and unbelief, barred up the way against their final justification is, I suppose, every man's hypothesis and grant, or conjecture, at least.

But some, it may be, will yet further object against the interpretation given, and plead, 1. That the connexion between these two links of this chain, predestination to a conformity with Christ, and calling, is simply and absolutely indissoluble, so that, for example, whosoever is thus predestinated by God, never fails of being called by him. 2. That it is altogether unlikely, that in one and the same series or concatenation of Divine actions, there should not be the same fixedness or certainty of coherence between all the particulars, so that, for example, there should be as much certainty that he that is called, shall be justified; and again, that he that is justified shall be glorified, as there is that he that is predestinated shall be called. To this I answer,

1. By a demurrer upon the former of these pleas, which was, that the connexion between the predestination of God mentioned and his calling, is uninterrupted by any interveniency whatsoever. Somewhat doubtful to me it is, whether a person, who by means of the love of God, which is in him at present, falls under his decree of predestination, and consequently by virtue of this decree is predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ, may not possibly before the time appointed by God for his calling be changed in that his affection, and consequently pass from under that decree of predestination, and fall under another decree of God opposite thereunto, and so never come to be called. But,

2. To the latter of the said pleas, I answer, by denying the unlikelihood therein asserted. For in one and the same concatenation of Divine acts, the aspect and manner or kind of dependence between act and act, may vary according to their different natures, or the different tenor of God's decrees concerning them. As for example. God may decree to create or give being unto a man;

* Vid. Pet. Martyr. loc. class 8, cap. 13, sect. 4.

again, he may decree to give unto this man a sufficiency of means and power, whereby to maintain himself in this being given unto him. Again yet further, he may decree to give unto this man not only a sufficiency of means and power, to make good his possession of that being thus given him, but further, to improve his present being first given unto him into a better and more desirable being. Fourthly, He may yet further decree to promote and advance the condition of this his creature, man, above the line of his first being. In this subordinate concatenation of Divine acts, all decreed by him, there is not the same aspect or relation, I mean in point of necessity and contingency, between every former act and that which followeth. As for instance; the second act of the four now mentioned may, partly by reason of the tenor of the decree by which it was decreed by God, partly by reason of the nature of it, I mean in reference to some Divine projection or end, have an absolute and uninterrupted dependence upon, or connexion with, the first; so that in case God creates a man, he is absolutely and against all interviencies whatsoever resolved to confer upon him that sufficiency of power which was mentioned, neither man himself, angel, or devil could prevent or hinder God from conferring such an endowment upon man, being created by him. But it doth not follow from hence that there must needs be the like aspect of necessity between this second act and the third; or between the third and the fourth. For though God as well decreed the third act as the second, viz. to bestow upon his creature, man, a sufficiency of power and means whereby to improve his first being into a better, yet he did not decree it, *i. e.* the doing of it, simply and absolutely, but only provisionally, and upon the supposal of such an interviency, one or more, which very possibly might not have intervened, as viz. either the fall of this creature, man, by sin, and the gift of Jesus Christ upon it to die for his redemption; or else the continuance of man for a time in the honour of his creation, and entireness of his obedience unto God. First, that the fall of man was contingent, there being no cause either within him or without him necessitating him hereunto, is unquestionable; that the foreknowledge of it by God did no ways prejudice or hinder the contingency of it hath been formerly shown. 2. That the gift of Jesus Christ to die for the redemption of man depended in this sense upon his fall, viz. so as that he should not have been given in such a way, or upon such terms, I mean to die, had not man fallen, is, I suppose, the sense and apprehension of every man. 3, and lastly, That that act of God, in giving unto man power, means, and opportunity to better himself in point of condition, above the line of his creation, or first being, depends (his fall supposed, which was contingent also, as was lately said) upon the gift of Jesus Christ, so as never to have taken place in case he had not been so given, is sufficiently evident without proof. So that evident it is, that this act of God hath only an accidental or contingent dependence upon, or coherence with, the former; whereas this former hath an essential and necessary con-

nexion with the first, as hath been shown. There is the same consideration of the relation between the third and fourth, or last of these acts. For God, upon his decree to grant unto his creature man a sufficiency of means and opportunity to promote, in his way, viz. by higher services and greater acts of obedience, his happiness above the condition of his creation or first being, might and did decree also himself to promote (in his way, viz. by the engagement of his power) his creature's happiness accordingly. But this latter act of his, though decreed by him, doth not import an absolute necessity of performance by him, but only a conditional and contingent; the tenor of that decree of his wherein this act is decreed being thus: In case my creature man shall quit himself in any measure worthy that grace which I shall give unto him, in and through my Son Christ, I will make him greater in happiness than he was in the state of his creation. So that it is as clear as the light at noon-day, that in one and the same series or subordination of Divine acts, there may be a different habitude in point of dependence between act and act, so that one of these acts may infallibly, necessarily, and universally follow and be exerted upon another, precedent to it in the subordination; and yet another of these acts follow the next predecessor to it in the series, but contingently, and consequently admit of many suspensions and interruptions. Therefore there is nothing in the last objection against that exposition of the Scripture in hand which hath been asserted, both the feet upon which it stands being weak and lame.

There is yet another objection, colourable, I suppose, in some men's eyes, against the said interpretation. The substance of it this: If the links of that chain of Divine acts described in this passage of Scripture may be severed or broken, by the miscarriages or unworthiness of the saints in any kind, then had the apostle no sufficient reason to build the saints so high upon it in confidence, exultations, and triumphs, as he doth in the verses immediately following: "What shall we say to these things? If God be on our side, who can be against us?" And the reason is, because the saints are children of many infirmities and of much unworthiness, apt to sin against God every moment. Therefore, if their peace and salvation depend upon their own regular and worthy walkings with God, they are in a condition of no good security to be saved; and what ground then have they to rejoice and triumph at any such rate as the apostle seems here to invite and encourage them unto? To this I answer, that the heart of this objection was broken in the last preceding chapter, where we showed, upon several considerations and grounds, that the saints have cause in abundance to rejoice, yea, and to triumph, under the hope and expectation of salvation, notwithstanding any possibility they are subject unto of declining or perishing. The reader, I presume, will be satisfied in this point, upon a serious perusal of what is there written, from page 239 to the end of the chapter. I here add,

1. That the friends and favourers themselves of the common

interpretation of the place in hand, and which contradicteth the exposition given, generally grant and teach that the saints themselves cannot have any peace or comfort in their faith, or assurance of salvation, whilst they walk profanely, loosely, or unfaithfully with God. So that these men themselves do suspend the peace and comfort, and, much more, the joy and triumph, of the faith of the saints upon their Christian behaviour, and regular walkings with God. Therefore, judging the exposition given, upon such an account as this, they condemn themselves, and their own doctrines.

2. The assurance of the continuance of God's love to them, and of his care over them, whilst they in any measure walk worthy of it, is a regular and due foundation unto the saints of every whit as great a confidence, exultation, and triumph, as the apostle, in the words mentioned, entitles them unto. Yea,

3. The very particular and express ground upon which he buildeth up himself and the saints with him, in such a triumphant confidence as we heard, is this: the sense or assurance of God's love towards them, (meaning, whilst they walk with him as becometh saints, because being out of this posture they can neither have sense nor assurance of his love, as our adversaries themselves acknowledge and teach, as we lately heard,) not any assurance of the continuance of his love to them, how profane, wicked, or abominable soever they can or shall be. "What shall we say then to these things? If God be with us, who can be against us?" Therefore,

4, and lastly, Such a supposition or doctrine as this, that they that are at present justified may possibly sin themselves out of the grace of justification, and so never come to be glorified, is, upon due consideration, no bridle at all to check the holy and humble confidence or boastings of the saints in God, or in the Lord Jesus Christ: they may, in the face and presence of such a doctrine, though acknowledged and admitted for truth, lift up themselves upon the wings of a blessed security unto heaven, and rejoice that joy which is unspeakable and glorious. But of these things we spake liberally in the last chapter.

Some may yet possibly imagine that they discover a ground of confutation of all that hath been said upon the context of Scripture yet in hand, ver. 29, in those words: "That he might be the first-born amongst many brethren." For from hence they may reason thus: If this be God's end or design in "predestinating" those "whom he knew before" (or pre-approved) to be conformed to the image of his Son, (in glory,) that he might be the first-born amongst many brethren," (*i. e.* might have the honour of bringing many into part and fellowship with himself in his own blessedness and glory,) then must all they who are thus predestinated of necessity attain or come to enjoy such a conformity with him; otherwise God shall be frustrated in his design, and Jesus Christ be defeated and disappointed of that excellent honour which his Father projected for him. For if one, or some, thus predestinated, may miscarry, and never come to enjoy an actual conformity unto him in his glory,

why may not others of them miscarry likewise, and consequently all; and so the great counsel or project of God for the honour of his Son Jesus Christ be laid in the dust? To this I answer,

1. Suppose that Jesus Christ should have no brethren conformable unto him in glory, yet would it not follow from hence, that the counsel or design of God to make him "the first-born among many brethren," should be made void or miscarry. For the counsel or design of God in this behalf, stood mainly and principally in this, viz. in casting this honour upon Jesus Christ, that he should be a person every ways fitted and accomplished, should act and do, or be ready and willing to act and do every such thing, whereby many of his brethren, (*i. e.* of the children of men,) if they were not most shamefully and grossly neglective of themselves, and their own greatest concernments, might come to partake with him in his great blessedness and glory. And in case men should prove thus neglective of themselves, and so as voluntarily to deprive themselves of that great salvation, which Jesus Christ out of his great love, and with the sore travail of his soul, hath prepared and made ready for them, yea, and invited and called, yea, and pressed upon them to accept at his hand, yet the honour and glory of a signal benefactor and great Saviour shall remain entire unto him; nor is there the least colour or pretence why he should suffer the least disparagement or prejudice in the thoughts either of men or angels, because of the wilful folly and madness of men to forsake their own mercies and destroy themselves. Himself owned and built upon this consideration, when he spake thus by the mouth of one of his greatest prophets: "Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength," Isa. xlix. 5. In the former verse he speaks thus in his representer: "Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God." And immediately before the said words, thus: "And now saith the Lord that formed me from the womb to be his servant, *to bring Jacob again to him*, Though Israel be not gathered, yet," &c.; clearly implying, that though God's intent and counsel was to form Christ from the womb for this end and purpose, viz. "to bring Jacob again to him," and so to save and make him blessed, yet would it be no disparagement unto Christ, nor any miscarriage or defeature of the counsel of God herein, though Jacob should not upon this account be brought again to him, or be made blessed by Christ. The reason is, because when it is said, that God formed Christ from the womb "to bring Jacob again to him," the meaning is not, that he formed him with any such intent, out of any such end or design, "to bring Jacob again to him" by head and shoulders, as we use to say, or by a strong and irresistible hand; but "to bring Jacob again," &c., *i. e.* that he might be represented and preached unto Jacob as such a person, who had atoned their sins, made their peace with God by his blood, and

had purchased grace and favour and every good thing for them at his hand, in case they would repent and turn again to him: and further, that he might by his Spirit, especially in the ministry of his prophets, administer unto them inward strength and frequent excitements, abundantly sufficient to have brought them to a due consideration and embracement of these great things of their peace. In this sense, and in no other, Christ was formed by God from the womb, "to bring Jacob again to him;" and thus it appears also, how and in what respect God was not disappointed of his end, purpose, or intention in his forming of Christ, nor Christ himself any ways disparaged, notwithstanding Jacob was not actually converted or brought again to him. The apostle Paul likewise upon the same consideration saith of himself, and other the apostles and faithful ministers of the gospel, thus: "For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish," 2 Cor. ii. 15. Whereby it appears, that howsoever God's real intent and design in sending Christ into the world was (according to the frequent testimony of Scripture) the salvation, and not the perishing or condemnation of men, yet he was no more defeated or disappointed of his design herein, by the perishing than by the salvation of men; otherwise Christ, in the faithful ministry of the Gospel, would not be a sweet savour, *i. e.* matter of high contentment and satisfaction unto him, as well in those who perish through unbelief, as in those who are saved by believing. For who can be pleased, or much satisfied, with or under disappointments? Therefore God's intent of saving the world by Jesus Christ, is not so to be conceived or understood, as if he intended to save men by him upon any terms, or under any consideration whatsoever, or without all provisos, limitations, or exceptions; but thus, he intended to save the world by him, *i. e.* to put the world into a capacity of salvation, and to afford unto the sons and daughters of men means and opportunities in abundance, whereby to repent and believe, and consequently to be saved. So that whensoever Christ is faithfully and effectually preached unto men, in order to their salvation, God obtains his end and intent concerning their salvation, whether they come to be saved or no, *i. e.* whether they repent and believe, or remain impenitent in unbelief.

2. For the phrase, or manner of expression, "that he might be the first-born amongst many brethren," I desire to give notice once for all, (for there may be frequent use of the observation in these controversies,) that it is frequent in Scripture to express a thing after the manner of an event, or consequent that will or shall come to pass, or follow upon such or such an occasion or means, someways likely to produce it, which yet frequently comes not to pass, but only is intended or desired; nay, the contrary whereof many times follows and comes to pass instead thereof. According to this dialect of speech Moses expresseth himself unto the people thus: "And the man that will do presumptuously, and not hearken unto the priest, or unto the judge, even that man

shall die: and thou shalt put away the evil from Israel: and all" (or, that all) "the people shall hear," (or may hear) "and fear, and do no more presumptuously," Deut. xvii. 12, 13. This hearing, fearing, and restraining of the people from doing presumptuously, are mentioned, if we respect the precise form of the words, as if they were such events which would always follow and come to pass upon the occasion or means specified, viz. the inflicting of death upon the delinquent spoken of. Yet Moses's intent was not to affirm this, which had been an untruth to affirm, (such events as these many times failing, if at any time obtained,) but to show what God's intent was in commanding such severe executions to be done in such cases, or rather perhaps to show what fruits might reasonably be expected from such just severity. So again in the same chapter, speaking of the king whom they should set over them, and the book of the law, "And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them," Deut. xvii. 19. These words, "that he may learn," &c., do not import the event, or effect that would certainly follow upon the duty or course prescribed, but either what God's intentions were in prescribing such a course, or what such a course was proper and likely to effect. Many other places there are of like character and import: amongst which that in present debate is to be numbered. God predestinates these and these, or rather such and such, "to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born," &c. These words, "that he might be the first-born," &c. do not necessarily import any event or effect which should certainly come to pass, or be produced by that act of God's predestination, but only such an event as was intended by God (in such a sense as intentions are appropriable unto him) in that act of his, or which would probably follow thereupon.

It may yet further be demanded, by way of objection against any explication whatsoever of the passage in hand, which makes the golden chain of Divine acts therein dissolvable in any link or part of it, in what case or cases soever, If either they who are predestinated may not be called, or they that are called may not be justified, or they that are justified not be glorified, how can the apostle's proof stand, that "all things work together for good to those who love God," which, as yourself acknowledged, is the doctrine or conclusion, the demonstration of the truth whereof the apostle intends by the producing of this golden chain of Divine acts, taking hold, in a clear subordination, one upon another? Can "all things" be said to "work together for good" to him who never comes to be glorified, but to be everlastingly condemned? To this I answer,

That this doctrine or saying of the apostle, "All things work together for good unto those who love God," is to be understood with the like explication, or grain of spiritual salt, wherewith these two,

and a thousand more sentences in the Scriptures are to be seasoned; "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned," Mark xvi. 16. The meaning of this latter saying, to proceed a notioribus ad magis ignota, "He that believeth not shall be damned," is not this; he that now, or at present, believeth not, let him do all he will or can, let him believe a thousand times over hereafter, shall notwithstanding be damned; this, I say, is not our Saviour's meaning in that clause: his meaning is clearly enough this; "He that believeth not," viz. and continueth an unbeliever to his dying day, "shall be damned;" but it doth not follow from hence, that he that is a present unbeliever must of necessity live and die in unbelief, and so be damned; so that there is a sense wherein it is as true that he that believeth not may and shall be saved, viz. if he repents of his unbelief, and returns to his vomit no more. So, to search now into the former saying, when our Saviour saith, "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved," his meaning is not, that he who at present believeth, and hath been or shall be baptized, shall be saved, let him do what he will or can, let him turn apostate, make shipwreck of his faith, renounce his baptism, and the like; but, "he that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved," *i. e.* he that believeth, and continueth a believer, or shall be found a believer, and a man standing fast by his baptism, and holding out his profession with constancy unto the end, shall be saved. Our Saviour's clear intent in these sayings was to show and assert, in the former, the blessed interest of faith in conjunction with a Christian profession, as, viz. that it gives unto men a title and rightfulness of claim to salvation; in the latter, the dreadful danger and formidable property of unbelief, as, viz. that it exposeth the person in whom it abides to the vengeance of hell-fire. But, as it was no part of his intent to assert any inseparableness of unbelief from the subject thereof in the latter clause; so neither did he any way intend to assert any such property unto faith in the former. In like manner, when the apostle layeth down this doctrine, "All things work together for good unto those that love God," his meaning is not, either to assert the unquenchableness or unremovableness of this affection from its present subject, or to imply that whosoever is at present a lover of God is in any such possession of that privilege he speaks of, I mean, of having "all things to work together for good unto him," that, in case his love to God languisheth and dieth, and a contrary affection succeeds in the place thereof, he can or shall never be cast out of it; but his entire and clear intent, in that position or saying of his, is to show that the love of God, in what subject or person soever it resides, and whilst it there resides, doth, by virtue of the gracious decree or will of God in that behalf, invest him with this privilege, viz. to have all occurrences of things relating to him, even afflictions and persecutions themselves, benefactors unto him. To make this good, he shows what God hath fully purposed or decreed to do for such men, or, which is the same, what he hath predestinated such men

unto, as, viz. to a conformity with or to the image of his own Son, the Lord Christ, *i. e.* to make them glorious and blessed in such a way or upon such terms as Jesus Christ himself, who was the greatest lover of God that ever was, is now become glorious; unto whose glorification all things that happened unto him in this present world, and more especially his sufferings, jointly contributed and wrought. And, for further satisfaction, how, by what means and degrees God actually brings these persons, viz. continuing still lovers of him, to this conformity with Christ in his glory, he adds, "Moreover, whom he did" thus "predestinate, them he also called," *i. e.* as was formerly interpreted, he purposed to call, viz. to the knowledge of his Son as the Saviour of the world, and calleth them accordingly; in which respect they are said to be persons "called according to his purpose," verse 28; and "whom he called, them he also justified," *i. e.* purposed to justify, and justifieth accordingly; "and whom he justified, them also he glorified," *i. e.* purposed to glorify, or, to bring to an actual conformity with Christ in his glory, and glorifieth them accordingly. Why the purpose or intended actings of God are expressed in Scripture rather in the preterperfect tense than either in the present or future, is accounted elsewhere in this Discourse. But in all these gradations mentioned of the counsel of God concerning the bringing of those that love him unto a conformity with Christ in his glory, the same subject, formally considered, *i. e.* those that love him as such, is to be understood; so that in case the subject be changed under or between any of the said gradations, and he, for example, who loved God, being yet only predestinated by God to be conformed unto Christ in glory, and not called, or being called and not yet justified, or being justified and not yet glorified, shall, either before his calling, though predestinated, or before his justification, though called, or before his glorification, though justified, be alienated in his affection from God, and having loved him, shall cease to love him, and suffer an hatred of God secretly to grow upon him, it is not to be conceived that God, notwithstanding such a change in him, should advance or carry him on by the remaining steps or gradations unto glory, but that, wherever this heavenly affection of his love to God shall expire and leave him, there the counsel of God, also, concerning his glorification, should leave him, and nothing be further done or acted by him in order thereunto, unless, haply, he returns unto his former affection. The apostle's intent, in the passage in hand, was to declare the series and tenor of God's counsels for the glorious benefit and good of those who should love him, not of those who should cease to love him, or apostatise from their affection towards him; nor yet to teach, imply, or insinuate in the least, the undecayableness or unquenchableness of this affection in men. But enough for the clearing of this place.

I shall only propound and answer one Scripture more upon the account we are now drawing up, which is frequently argued with great importunity for the doctrine of perseverance. The tenor of the place is this, "And I will give them one heart and one way,

that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good, but I will put my fear into their hearts, that they shall not depart from me," Jer. xxxi. 39, 40. In these words, say our antagonists in the present controversy, is manifestly contained an absolute promise of perseverance made by God unto his church. To this I answer, that it can no ways be proved, nor is it any ways probable, that the grace of perseverance should be here absolutely promised unto saints or believers. For,

1. Evident it is from the whole tenor of the chapter, that the words contain a special promise made particularly to the Jews.

2. As evident it is, upon the same account, that the promise here mentioned, was not made only to the saints or sound believers amongst the Jews, who were but few, but to the whole body, or generality of them. Peruse the latter part of the chapter, from about verse 30, to the end.

3. It is yet upon the same account as evident as either of the former, that this promise was made unto this nation of the Jews, when and whilst they were, or at least considered as now being, in the iron furnace of the Babylonian captivity. "Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath, and I will bring them again unto this place," &c. ver. 37.

4. From these words now cited, so immediately preceding the passages offered to debate, it clearly appears that the promise in these passages relates unto, and concerns their reduction and return from, and out of that captivity, into their own land. Therefore,

5. It cannot be a promise of absolute and final perseverance in grace unto the end of their lives respectively. For, 1. The promise was made unto the body or generality of this people, even unto all those that God had driven into all countries in his anger and fury, and not only unto the saints or true believers amongst them, unless we shall say that they were only the holy persons amongst them that were thus driven by him. The promise then respects as well the unfaithful as the true believers in this nation; and so cannot be a promise of perseverance in grace unto these. 2. The promise here exhibited, was a promise appropriated and fitted to the present state and condition of the Jews, who were now scattered up and down the world, and in a sad captivity, at least were thus considered in this promise as was lately said, in which respect it must needs be conceived to contain somewhat peculiar to that their condition. Now the promise of perseverance in grace, according to the doctrine of our adversaries, was a standing promise amongst them, and so had been from the first, equally respecting them, or the elect amongst them, in every estate and condition. 3. The promise of perseverance in grace, according to the same principles, includes in it, or supposeth such an interposure of God by his Spirit and grace, which shall and will, and must needs, infallibly

produce the effect of perseverance in all those to whom it is made, *i. e.* true believers; whereas, evident it is from the prophet Ezekiel, that this promise notwithstanding, the Jews might rebel against and apostatise from God. The whole passage in Ezekiel is this: "Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord God, although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come. Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord God, I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel. And they shall come thither, and they shall take away all the detestable things thereof, and all the abominations thereof from thence. And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you, and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God," Ezek. xi. 17, 18, &c. There is nothing more clear than that the promise contained in these words, is for substance and import the same with that in consideration from the prophet Jeremy. Yet here it follows, "But as for them, whose heart walketh after the heart of their detestable things and their abominations, I will recompense their way upon their own head, saith the Lord God," verse 21. Which evidently supposeth, that notwithstanding the former promise, pretended to be a promise, either in whole or in part, of persevering in grace, yet they to whom it is made may walk after the heart of detestable things; *i. e.* so practise detestable things as to promote their interest, and cause them to be practised by others, and that to their own ruin and destruction. For that this threatening, "But as for them," &c. concerns the same persons or nation to whom the precedent promises were made, the carriage of the context makes out of question, and besides, is the general sense of interpreters upon the place; yea, and Calvin himself understands it of the Israelites.* So that no absolute perseverance can with reason be supposed to be contained in the said promise. 4. and lastly, If absolute perseverance should be here promised, there is no time or season can be imagined wherein the promise should have been fulfilled by God. If it be said, that it hath always been fulfilled in the elect and faithful, I answer, 1. That it hath been already proved that it was made to the main body and community of the Jewish nation, and not only to the elect or faithful amongst them. And therefore, if it should be fulfilled in these only, it should be fulfilled but by half, and indeed not to that proportion; and consequently, if propriety of speech be admitted, not fulfilled at all. 2. If this be all the fulfilling of it, it was as much fulfilled during, and under the captivity, yea, and before it, as at any time afterwards. For, in the sense of those against

* Nec aliud vult Propheta, quam Deum fore vindicem, si cor suum sequantur Israelitæ, ut ambulent in suis spurcitiis et abominationibus.

whom we now argue, the elect and faithful always persevered in grace unto the end.

If it be yet demanded, But do not those words, "I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for ever;" as also those, "I will put my fear into their hearts, that they shall not depart from me," plainly imply their final perseverance? I answer;

1. That these words, "that they shall not depart from me," savour too much of the translation; the original would rather have them thus, "that they *may* not depart from me," as the translators also themselves render words of the same character in the former verse. "And I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for ever." And thus both Arias Montanus,* and Junius and Tremellius also render them.

2. The words thus read do not necessarily import the actual event or taking place of the effect intended by God in the promise, and his performance thereof, but only his intention itself in both these, together with the sufficiency and aptness of what he promiseth, for the producing of such an effect in them. As when our Saviour expressed himself thus unto the Jews, "But these things I say, that ye might be saved," John v. 34; he did not suppose that they either would or should be infallibly saved, by means of what he spake, for a few verses after, speaking still to the same persons, he saith, "And ye will not come to me that ye might have life;" but he declared, that the real desire and intent of his heart and soul, in speaking to them as he did, was, that they might be saved; and withal, that the words which he spake to them were such as by the due minding and hearkening whereunto they might and should have been saved. There is the same consideration of what God said unto Adam: "Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?" Gen. iii. 11. It cannot be inferred from hence that Adam did not eat of this tree, for we all too well know that he did eat thereof, but only that the intent and scope of God's commandment unto him concerning this tree was, that he should not eat thereof. See what was lately and more largely observed touching such expressions as these, page 302 of this chapter.

3. The certainty of the continuance of the external and civil prosperity of the Jewish nation, might much more colourably be concluded from sundry passages in this promissory contexture of Scripture than the certainty of their perseverance in grace from those mentioned. For here God promiseth that he will do thus and thus by them, "for the good of them and of their children after them," verse 39. And again, that he "will make an everlasting covenant with them, that he will not turn away from them to do them good; that he will rejoice over them to do them good, and will plant them in that their land assuredly, with his whole heart and with

* Et timorem meum dabo in corde eorum pro non recedere desuper me: in the margin; ut non recedant a me.—*Arius Mon.* Which latter words the other two borrow from this author for their translation.

his whole soul," verses 40, 41. And yet we know, that all these promises and engagements on God's part notwithstanding, God since the making of them, hath turned away from them, and that in greater displeasure than ever before; yea, and that, as the apostle saith, "his wrath is come upon them to the uttermost," 1 Thess. ii. 16; and they are accordingly at this day the most contemptible and miserable nation under heaven. This plainly showeth that all these promises were conditional, though no condition appears in mention, and the performance of them intentionally suspended upon their good behaviour and obedience to him that made them. See more upon this account in the premises. If then the temporal promises running along in the same current of discourse with spiritual, and much more assertively expressed than these, were conditional, and have suffered a non-performance through a non-performance of the condition intended; why may we not suppose the spiritual promises also to be subject to the same law? Nay certainly,

4. Had the spiritual promises been merely positive and unconditional, the temporal would have been such also, at least they had not been obnoxious to a non-performance. For had God actually, and with effect, given them one heart and one way, so that they had actually feared him for ever, or put his fear in their hearts upon any such terms, that they had not departed from him, questionless all the temporal promises had brought forth; God would not have turned away from them to do them good, and their children after them, but would have rejoiced over them to do them good, would have planted them in their land, &c.

5. That expression in the said passages, "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them," plainly supposeth that the whole texture of promises therein was but conditional, it being the nature and property of a covenant never to engage one party alone, but both, or all comprised in it; and when one party refuseth to make good the terms imposed thereby upon him, to disoblige and free the other. Therefore,

6, and lastly, The true and clear intent and meaning of the spiritual promises made unto the people of the Jews, now in captivity, in the Scripture in hand, and particularly of the expressions last objected, is this: "I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for ever; and will put my fear into their hearts, that they shall not (or may not) depart from me," *i. e.* I will deal so above measure graciously and bountifully with them, as well in matters relating to their spiritual condition, as in things which concern their outward condition, that if they be not prodigiously refractory, stubborn, and unthankful, I will overcome their evil with my goodness, will cause them to own me for their God; and will reduce them as one man to a loving and loyal frame and temper of heart towards me, that they shall willingly, and with a full and free purpose of heart, fear and serve me for ever. To secure this interpretation,

1. That is to be remembered which hath been offered to consi-

deration already, viz., That it is the frequent and familiar dialect of Scripture, to ascribe the doing of things, or the effects themselves, unto those, whether God or men, who either minister occasion, or afford proper or likely means or endeavours for the doing of them, whether ever they be actually effected or no. A pleasant number of instances in this kind you shall find drawn together elsewhere. Repetitions are needless where primitives are at hand. According to this kind of expression, God may be said to give men one heart and one way, that, &c., and so to put his fear into their hearts, that, &c., when he vouchsafeth and exhibiteth such motives, means, and opportunities unto them, which are efficacious and proper to work them to such a frame and disposition of heart and soul, out of which men are wont firmly to resolve, to love, serve, and obey him for ever, whether they be actually wrought or brought hereunto or no. In this sense it is easy to conceive when and how the said promises were performed or fulfilled, as, viz. to a good degree in, upon, and soon after that famous deliverance out of their seventy years' captivity, God hereby, as by many other signal mercies vouchsafed unto them soon after their return, about the repairing of their city and temple, as likewise by the effectual ministry of several great prophets raised up amongst them from time to time, mightily engaging them all to devote themselves unto him and his service for ever: but more fully and gloriously, when the great Messiah was sent unto them in the flesh, by whose unparalleled holiness in life and conversation, together with his frequent and wonderful miracles, and especially by his doctrine, so full of heavenly authority, light, and power, they were not only compelled into such an heart, and such a way, wherewith, and wherein, to have feared (*i. e.*, to have religiously served and obeyed) him for ever. Insomuch, that proving such apostates, as they wilfully became, under such transcendent means as they had, to have rendered them the best and most faithful people under heaven unto their God, they declared themselves to be the most stiff-necked and rebellious generation of men in all the world; and were judged by God accordingly. Take any other sense of the promises or words now in question, especially that which is so much contended for, and which imports a final perseverance in grace to be wrought in this people by the irresistible hand of God; and it will be impossible for any man to find so much as by probable conjecture, when, or how, they should ever be fulfilled. To say, that they might, even in that sense, which I so much oppose, be fulfilled constantly in the elect of this people, is to say that which reason will gainsay. For, 1. An absolute or unconditioned promise, made to a great number of men, cannot be said to be fulfilled, when the thing promised is exhibited only to some few of them. Now the promises under debate were clearly made to the whole body or nation of the Jews, (as we have formerly proved from the express context,) and not to the elect only amongst them. 2. According to their judgments, who plead the fulfilling of them in this sense,

the persons for whose sakes and comfort they were made, the elect, might, yea, must needs have had every whit as much comfort without them, as they could have with or by them. For they knew, before the making of any of these promises to them, that, being elect, and once in a state of grace, they should persevere therein unto the end. And thus these great and signal promises of God shall be rendered void, and mere impertinences unto those, for whose sake only they are supposed to have been made. 3, and lastly, to say they were fulfilled in the elect, in the sense gainsaid, is to beg the question, instead of digging for it.

2. The Scriptures many times assert the futurity, or coming to pass of things not yet in being, not only when the coming of them to pass is certain, or certainly known unto God, but upon a probability only, or likelihood of their coming to pass, in respect of means used, or to be used, for the bringing of them to pass. Upon this account, God himself is represented by our Saviour in his parable of the vineyard, as speaking thus, in the person of the lord of the vineyard, "They will reverence my son," Matt. xii. 6, in case I shall vouchsafe to send him unto them. And yet the event showed that they were so far from reverencing him, that when he came to them, "they took him, and slew him, and cast him out of the vineyard." So when he saith, upon occasion of the punishment, which he commandeth to be inflicted upon the man that should "do presumptuously, that all the people shall hear, and fear, and do no more presumptuously," Deut. xvii. 12, 13. He doth not speak it out of any certainty of knowledge in him, that it would, or should, actually so come to pass, (for many, doubtless, of this people did not so fear, as to forbear doing presumptuously, notwithstanding the exemplariness of such a punishment,) but because the severe and thorough execution of justice in this kind, was a proper and probable means to restrain all sorts of persons amongst them from the like sins. See page 302 of this chapter. In this notion and idiom of Scripture, also, God may say, "I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever," not out of a certainty of knowledge, or determination in himself, that any such heart, or way, should actually, and with effect, be given unto them, which would infallibly produce such an effect in them, as is here specified; but because he was purposed so to entreat them, and to afford such excellent administrations of his grace and Spirit unto them, which should be very pregnant, proper, and efficacious, to create such an heart in them, and to put them into such a way, that they should never have declined from his worship and service, whilst the sun and moon endure. This answer, I acknowledge, is of much affinity with the former. Therefore,

3, and lastly, that no such sense was intended by God in the words or promises yet under consideration, which imports any certainty of a final perseverance in grace, in those to whom they are spoken and made, fully appears from all those prophetic passages

and predictions in the Old Testament, which are many in number, and very plain and pregnant in import, wherein that sad breach, which afterwards happened between God and this people, to whom these promises were made, and which amounted even to a rejection of them from being any longer a people unto him, is foretold by him. For that God should absolutely promise such an heart unto a people, which should infallibly cause them to fear him for ever, and not to depart from him; and yet withal prophesy the great and general apostasy of this people from him, and their rejection, upon that account, by him, doubtless lieth not within the verge of any man's belief, who takes any competent care what he believeth. I trust, the Scripture now last opened, will from henceforth be put to no more trouble, about any contribution of aid towards the maintenance of the doctrine of absolute perseverance.

Some other Scriptures possibly there may be, besides those inquired into in this chapter, wherein some may imagine the treasure of such a perseverance to be hid; but these which we have strictly examined upon the matter, have still been counted the pillars of that doctrine; and yet, as we have seen, are no supporters of it. Nor do I question, but that by those unquestionable principles and rules of interpretation, by which the mind of God in the Scriptures discussed in this chapter, hath been brought into a clear light, all seeming compliance that way in others also, may be reduced: and so the wisdom, which hath been revealed from heaven, perfectly acquitted from all interposure by way of countenance on the behalf of the commonly-taught doctrine of perseverance. Two texts I call to mind at present which are sometimes called in to the assistance of the doctrine of perseverance hitherto opposed, and have not received answer in this chapter. The former is Matt. vii. 18; the latter, Rom. xi. 29. But for this latter, it hath been sufficiently handled upon another account, Chap. viii. page 224. As to the former, we shall, I conceive, have occasion to speak in the second part of this discourse. We now proceed to the examination of such arguments and grounds otherwise, upon which the said doctrine, in some men's eyes, stands impregnable.

CHAPTER XI.

A further continuation of the former digression, wherein the arguments and grounds commonly alleged in defence of the received doctrine of Perseverance, are detected of insufficiency, proved, and declared null.

WE shall begin with that which is the first-born of the strength of our adversaries in this kind. "That," say they, "which God hath promised in his word is certain, and shall take place, against all opposition and contradiction whatsoever. But God hath promised in his word that all true believers shall both totally and

finally persevere; therefore all such shall certainly so persevere, against whatsoever may or shall at any time oppose their persevering." To this I answer,

1. By explaining the major proposition, "What God hath promised in his word is certain, and shall take place," &c., viz. in such a sense, and upon such terms, as God would be understood in his promise. But what God promiseth in one sense is not certain of performance in another: as for example; God promised the preservation of the lives of all that were with Paul in the ship; but his intent and meaning in this promise was not this preservation against whatsoever might possibly be done by those in the ship against it, or to hinder it; but with this proviso or condition, that they in the ship should hearken unto him, and follow his advice, in order to their preservation; as is evident from those words of Paul himself, to whom this promise was made, "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be safe," Acts xxvii. 31; so that had the centurion and rest in the ship suffered the mariners to have left the ship, whilst it was yet at sea, there had been no failing in promise with God though they had all been drowned. In like manner, though Christ promised to his twelve apostles, Judas being yet one of the twelve, that "in the regeneration," *i. e.* the resurrection or restoration of the world, "they should sit upon twelve thrones, and judge the twelve tribes of Israel," Matt. xix. 28, yet he is not to be judged a promise-breaker, though Judas never comes to sit upon one of these thrones. And in case the rest of the twelve had declined from that integrity of heart under which that promise was made unto them, as Judas did, neither would it have argued any breach of promise in Christ to have advanced others upon these thrones instead of them; the reason whereof is elsewhere noted from Peter Martyr, whose doctrine it is, that "the promises of God are wont to be made with respect had to the present estate and condition of things with men."* His meaning is, as appears by the tenor of the adjacent discourse, that all God's promises made unto men, being or considered as being under such and such qualifications, are not to be understood as any otherwise intended by him to be performed unto them, than as abiding, and whilst they shall abide, in the same qualifications. As for example; what promises soever God makes unto believers, with respect had to their faith or as they are believers, are not to be looked upon as performable, or obliging the Maker of them unto them, in case they shall relapse into their former unbelief: but of this we spake plentifully in our last chapter and elsewhere. The major proposition thus explained and understood, we admit, whatsoever God promiseth is certain, &c., viz. according to the true intent and meaning of the promise.

The minor, also, relieved with an orthodox and sober explication, as likewise the conclusion itself and whole argument, is

* Promissiones itaque illæ Dei pro statu præsentis rerum sunt intelligendæ.—*P. Mar. loc. class. 3. c. 13, sect. 4.*

blameless, and thinketh no evil against the doctrine now under vindication; for in this sense it is most true that God hath promised that all true believers shall persevere; *i. e.* that all true believers, formally considered, *i. e.* as such, and abiding such, shall persevere, *viz.* in his grace and favour. But this, I presume, is not the sense of the argument-makers: their meaning is, that God hath promised that all true believers shall persevere thus believing, or in the truth of their faith, against all interveniences whatsoever; and that he will so interpose with his grace and power that none of them shall ever make shipwreck of their faith, upon what quicksands of lust and sensuality soever they shall strike, against what rocks of obduration and impenitency soever they shall dash. In this sense their proposition, I confess, is sore against us, but their proofs are weak and contemptible; nor will any of the Scriptures from which they claim countenance and confirmation own the cause, or comport with them therein. Some, of the fairest appearance and greatest hope that way, we examined narrowly in the next preceding chapter, and found them in heart much estranged from them; as, *viz.* Jer. xxxii. 38—40; Matt. xvi. 18; John x. 9, with some others. I acknowledge that there are several others, besides those there discharged, chosen by men of that judgment to serve in the same warfare; but they are all of the same mind with their fellows, who, as we have heard, detract that service. Most of these are promises anciently made unto the Jewish nation in the Old Testament, all, or most of them, of like import with that Jer. xxxii. 39, &c., largely opened towards the end of the former chapter, and are to be measured with the same line of interpretation. Nor can it ever be so much as competently proved that they were made with appropriation unto saints, or unto true believers, but unto the body and generality of that people or nation which we mentioned. The particulars are these: "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee," Isa. liv. 10. So again; "As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord, My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever," Isa. lix. 21. And again; "And I will betroth thee unto me for ever, yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercy: I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness," &c. Hos. ii. 19, 20.

For the first of these places, evident it is that there is nothing asserted, or promised by God therein, but only his faithfulness in his promises, and the sure and certain performance of his covenant. But that the tenor or substance of this covenant should be, that they who once truly believe should be by him infallibly; and by a strong hand, against all interposals of sin, wickedness, back-

sliding, rebellion whatsoever, preserved in such a faith, is not so much as by any word, syllable, iota, or tittle, here intimated. Yea, that it is contrary to the nature of a covenant to impose articles and conditions upon one party only, and to leave the other free, was lately shown; and particularly that God required terms of those with whom he made or was about to make the covenant here spoken of, is evident from verse 3 of the following chapter: "Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live: and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David;" the plain meaning whereof clearly is, that, upon condition of their obedience and faithfulness unto him, he would engage himself to be a God and glorious benefactor unto them for ever, and that the breach should never be on his side.

Concerning the second place, "As for me, this is my covenant with them," &c. 1. It may as well be conceived to hold forth a charge or injunction of obedience unto the people, as a promise from God of any thing. And Mr. Calvin himself upon the place, acknowledgeth that some translate the words in the imperative mood, "Let not my words depart," and granteth withal, that the future tense will bear an imperative construction. According to this sense, the meaning of those words, "This is my covenant with them," is this, That covenant of perpetual grace and mercy which I make with them, requireth this of them, in order to the performance of it on my part, that they quench not my Spirit which I shall put into them, nor forsake my word that I shall teach them. Or,

2. If we look upon the passage as promissory, there is little reason to judge it as promising the gift or grace of perseverance unto true believers, whatever their deportment shall be. For, as for conditional promises unto believers of perseverance in faith unto the end, as, viz. upon their Christian and good behaviour, diligence, &c., I question not but that the Scripture abounds with them; and that the promise contained in this verse (if there be any such thing in it) be it a promise of perseverance in faith, or of whatever besides, is none other I mean than conditional, cannot reasonably be gainsaid, or the contrary proved. Nay,

3. Those words in the beginning of the verse, "As for me," which Junius translates, "De me autem," *i. e.* but as much as concerns me, seem to import the promise ensuing to be conditional, and that God is ready, willing, and resolved, for his part, to deal worthily and bountifully with them, even according to all that which followeth, always provided that they the other party keep covenant with him, and do what he requires of them. But,

4. Be it granted, that the words in debate are promissive, and that whether with condition, or without condition, yet nothing can be more clear than this, that they are or were directed and spoken, not (as was said concerning the former passage) to saints or true believers only, but to the whole posterity of Jacob, or nation of the Jews. The apostle Paul questionless understood them thus

directed and meant, as appears Rom. xi. 26, where he applies the promise contained in the words immediately preceding (with a little expository variation of them, after the New Testament manner) to this whole nation. "And so," saith he, "all Israel shall be saved, as it is written, There shall come out of Sion a deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins." Meaning, that when the time cometh, that upon the repentance of this nation he shall pardon that great and grievous apostasy and rebellion under the guilt whereof they have lain for many generations, he will give salvation unto them all, *i. e.* freedom from all their present miseries and calamities, by the hand of a great Redeemer, or Deliverer, who "shall come out of Sion," (*i. e.* whose descent shall be of themselves; or who "shall come out of Sion," *i. e.* out of heaven, typified by Mount Sion, and which may be called Sion mystical;) and he "shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob;" ungodliness, *i. e.* (in that dialect so frequent in Scripture, wherein sin is put for the punishment of sin, as righteousness also for the reward of righteousness,) the punishment of that signal ungodliness from the house of Jacob (the Jews), for which they have suffered the heavy displeasure of God so long. Or thus: he "shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob;" *i. e.* partly by means of that wonderful deliverance which he shall bring unto them, partly by other gracious administrations of his towards and amongst them, he shall preserve them, or turn them away, (for to "turn away ungodliness from Jacob," is, I suppose, by an hypallage, put for turning away Jacob from ungodliness,) from the ungodliness of that unthankfulness and backsliding whereunto they and their forefathers have been so extremely subject from the beginning. Now then, the verse and words immediately preceding being promissory, and that to the whole nation, it is no ways like, but that the verse and words following being promissory also, and every ways as appropriable and applicable to the whole nation as they, should be every whit as comprehensive or extensive in respect of their object as they. Nor are there wanting amongst our best reformed expositors, who thus understand them: let Musculus be consulted upon the place.

5. Whether the said promise be conceived to respect, either the whole nation of the Jews, or only true believers amongst them, it no ways so much as sembles a promise of final perseverance unto either. Evident it is, that this promise exhibiteth and holdeth forth some new grace or favour, like unto which God had not vouchsafed any formerly, either unto the persons to whom the said promise is now made, or to any other. The very character and tenor of the promise importeth this clearly. Let it be compared either with any former promise in the Scripture, one or more, or with any dispensation of God towards any person or people, and there will be found no comportment between them. Nor for the grace or favour of final perseverance, it is nothing, at least in the

opinion of our adversaries, but what is common to all true believers, and what God hath conferred upon one and other of this generation of men from the beginning of the world.

6, and lastly, It is very improper, and doth not look like one of the wise dispensations of God, to make a serious and solemn promise unto men of that, which they might and ought to expect of course, yea, and which they might with as much comfort and security have promised unto themselves as he. For, according to those principles which we now oppose, every true believer may and ought to expect the grace of final perseverance from God as a matter of course, and of common and unalterable dispensation, yea, and shall sin if he doth it not.

If you ask, But if the promise now in discourse be not a promise of final perseverance, what is the matter or substance of it, or what doth God promise in it? Let *Musculus*, a learned and orthodox expositor, answer you. "God," saith he, in this promise, "speaks of the Spirit and word of the New Testament: both of which he did put upon" (or into) "his people" (meaning the Jews) "in the beginning of the dispensation of the gospel; nor hath he taken them away hitherto, however blindness may seem to have wholly possessed Israel. For there are some of this nation that are continually converted unto Christ, in whom the continuation of the Spirit and word of God may" (or will) "take place, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in, and so all Israel shall be saved."* So that he placeth the substance of the promise in this, that the nation of the Jews shall never, from the days of Christ in the flesh, be wholly, altogether, or in all the members of it, destitute of the Spirit and word of Christ. This exposition supposeth nothing in the promise for the business of final perseverance. Notwithstanding I conceive that God here rather promiseth this, viz. that he will advance the dispensations of his grace and goodness towards and amongst this people, to such an excellency and height, that, if they prove not extremely unworthy and neglective above measure of their own happiness, they shall have of the Spirit and word of God abundantly amongst them, and consequently abundance of peace and happiness for ever. The promise thus understood began to operate and work, and was performed in part in and upon their deliverance from that seventy years' captivity; wrought yet more effectually at the coming of the Messiah unto them in the flesh; but the full and signal accomplishment of it remaineth yet behind, and shall take place when the Redeemer "shall come out of Sion" unto them, and their Messiah visit them the second time.

For the third and last of the three places mentioned, "And I will

* *Loquitur omnino de Spiritu et verbo Novi Testamenti: posuit utrumque super populum suum initio dispensationis evangelii: nec ademit hactenus, quantumvis cæcitas Israellem prorsus occupasse videatur. Etenim perpetuò sunt, qui ex eo populo ad Christum accedant, et Spiritus hujus ac verbi continuationem eò usque producant, donec tandem in fine, ingressâ plenitudine Gentium, omnis Israel salvus fiat.—Muscul. in Isa. lix. 21.*

betroth thee unto me for ever," &c., it is much of the same consideration with the former, nor hath any whit more in it to support the common doctrine of perseverance than they. For, 1. The promise of the betrothing here specified, is made unto the entire body and nation of the Jews, as well unbelievers as believers, as appears by the carriage of the chapter throughout. 2. It is conditional, and the performance of it, I mean of the betrothing mentioned in it, suspended upon the repentance of this people, especially of their idolatry, and return to the true and pure worship of God, as appears verses 14, 16, 17, &c., which plainly showeth that it was made as well, nay, rather to those that were wicked and idolatrous amongst this people than unto others, as being administered and held forth unto them chiefly for this end, to woo them away from their idols unto God. 3. Nor can it be proved that this promise so properly or directly intends the collation of spiritual or heavenly good things unto them, as temporal; yea, the situation of it between temporal promises immediately both behind it and before it, persuades the contrary. Read the context, from verse 18, to the end of the chapter. Therefore, 4, and lastly, The true intent and purpose of this place and promise, "And I will betroth thee," &c., is as if he should have said, When I shall by my word and Spirit, and other gracious administrations, wherein I shall appear to this people, so far prevail with them and overcome them, as to cause them to cast away their idols, and turn with their whole heart unto me, I will express myself so, with so much love and affection unto them, that they shall not lightly, neither they, nor their children after them, go a whoring from me any more, but remain united unto me in a mutual, chaste, conjugal affection for ever. "I will betroth them unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercy;" *q. d.* I will engage and attempt to insure, both them and their affections unto me, by all variety of ways and means that are proper and likely to bring such a thing to pass; as, 1. By showing myself just and righteous unto them by keeping my promise, concerning their deliverance out of captivity at the end of seventy years; I will not fail them herein, no, not to a day or hour. 2. By punishing and judging their enemies, and destroying those that led them captive, and held them in bondage and subjection. 3. By heaping the fruits of my love and kindness upon them otherwise, as in giving them peace, plenty, health, honour, &c. in abundance. 4, and lastly, By dealing mercifully with them, in pardoning their sins and infirmities, which they will commit daily against me; I will not be extreme to mark what they shall do amiss, whilst their hearts shall remain perfect with me. "I will even betroth them unto me in faithfulness," *i. e.* by these and all other ways and means likely to endear myself unto them, and to assure them and their affections unto myself for ever, I will really and effectually essay and try to do it. An air of this interpretation of the place breathes in the annotations of our English divines themselves upon it, who paraphrase it thus, "I will betroth thee, I will re-establish my covenant of

grace with thee, not only to observe that faith which is required in all covenants, but also to forgive thee thy sins, and not to take notice of thy unworthiness." But according to the sense and exposition of the place given, which cannot reasonably be gainsaid, the promise therein is not absolute as to the effect of such a desponsation of this people, which should stand for ever, but only as to the means, yet these very efficacious and proper, to be used by God for the producing such an effect. And thus Tarnovius, a late and learned expositor of the reformed religion, understands it, "I will betroth thee unto me, whom," saith he, "thou formerly despisedst and shamefully forsookest, and *as much as in me lieth*, whose gifts are without repentance, Rom. xi. 29, this betrothing shall stand firm for ever, nor shall this spiritual conjunction between us ever be dissolved as formerly," &c.* Those words, "quod ad me," *i. e.* as far as in me lieth, or as far as concerneth me, plainly show that this author looked upon the promise of betrothing, especially as to the perpetuity of it, but as conditional; and such, which through the unfaithfulness and unworthiness of the party to be betrothed, might possibly never bring forth such a betrothment. We have once and again, if not a third time also, given notice formerly, that the using of means, endeavours, or attempts to bring things to pass, are very commonly in Scripture expressed by the effects themselves. So that all things considered, it is a little strange to me that learned and sober men should ever be tempted to build the doctrine of perseverance, as they form and teach it, upon such Scriptures as this, and those lately opened.

But, besides places of this impress, and those dismissed in the former chapter, they insist upon others to prove that God hath made an absolute promise of final perseverance unto all true believers. Let us then briefly try the spirit of these; for if we can find so much as any one promise from God of such an import in all the Scriptures, all opposition must keep silence for ever. Some suppose they descry such a promise as we speak of, in that of David, "They that trust in the Lord, shall be as Mount Sion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever," Psalm cxxv. 1. I answer, here is no promise that they that trust in the Lord, shall abide trusting in the Lord for ever, or that they shall not be removed from this trusting in him for ever; but only, that trusting in him, and abiding so trusting, they shall never be removed, viz. from an estate, or condition of peace and happiness, into an estate of trouble or misery. For it is a stability of happiness or safety, not of faith, that is here promised unto those that trust in the Lord. If it be objected, that even a stability in happiness, supposeth or includeth a stability in faith, inasmuch as no man can make shipwreck of his faith, but his happiness is wrecked by it; I answer, that the meaning of the promise in hand, is not that they who at pre-

* Desponsabo te mihi, quem antea spretum turpiter dereliquisti; et, quod ad me, cujus dona sunt ἀμεταμέλητα, Rom. xi. 29, desponsatio illa durabit in seculum, ut nunquam desinat hæc spiritualis conjunctio, quemadmodum antea, confer Ezek. xvi. 8, &c.

sent trust in the Lord, let them at any time hereafter trust or distrust him, shall yet be unremoveably happy; nor to imply, that they who once, or at any time trust in the Lord, shall be necessitated by him to trust in him for ever, but only to show that those that trust in the Lord, are, as such, and whilst such, of that kind of persons for whose preservation and safety from evil the mighty power of God himself standeth engaged, and whom he will protect from evil: as when the apostle said to the Corinthians, that they were in his heart to die and live together with them, (2 Cor. vii. 3,) his meaning was not that they were so in his heart to die, &c.,—that what manner of persons soever they should prove afterwards, though they should apostatise to idolatry, blasphemy, heathenism, or the like, he could notwithstanding be well content to live and die with them; but thus, they were in his heart, &c., *i. e.* they were for the present such persons whom he singularly affected, and with whom he could be well content to hold communion both in death and life. We have given notice formerly more than once, Chap. x., and at the beginning of this chapter, that the promises of God made unto men with respect to such and such special qualifications, are to be understood with such an explication or caution wherewith his threatenings against such and such particular sins are to be interpreted; as for example, when God threatened that “unrighteous persons shall not inherit the kingdom of God,” 1 Cor. vi. 9; and John Baptist, that “he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life,” &c., John iii. 36, &c., the meaning is not that they that are now unrighteous or unbelieving, though they should repent and believe hereafter, should yet be excluded from the kingdom of God; but that unless they shall repent of their sins they should for them be excluded. In like manner, when God promiseth stability of condition, safety, salvation, or the like, unto those that believe and trust in him, he intends no obligation hereby to these persons otherwise than upon their abiding such in those qualifications of faith and trusting in him, in regard whereof the said promises were made to them. God himself leadeth us, as it were, by the hand to such an interpretation as well of his promises as of his threatenings; such I mean, of both kinds, as those specified. “At what instant,” saith he, “I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent me of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and plant it,” *i. e.* shall promise to build or to plant either the one or the other, “if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good wherewith I said I would benefit them,” Jer. xviii. 7, 8. Much after the same manner elsewhere, having promised or said that he that hath walked in his statutes, and kept his judgments, to deal truly, being righteous or just, “shall surely live,” Ezek. xviii. 7, he addeth afterwards, “But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and com-

mitteth iniquity, and doth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doth, shall he live?" ver. 24. In this passage we clearly see that this promise made by God to a righteous man, "he shall surely live," is to be understood with this proviso and condition, that he departs not from his righteousness, which is here plainly enough supposed that he may very possibly do. Therefore this promise also, "They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Sion," &c., being of that kind of promise which God makes out of those gracious respects which he beareth to some special qualification in men, carrieth no further obligation in it on God's part unto those to whom it is made, than as and whilst they remain so qualified as they were when first they came under the grace of the said promise, *i. e.* as and whilst they trust in the Lord. So that this promise hath nothing to do, little or much, with that doctrine of perseverance which we oppose, but looketh quite another way.

Another text of Scripture sometimes urged to prove the proposition of our present contest, viz. that God hath made an absolute promise of perseverance unto true believers, is that of our Saviour, "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up to eternal life," John iv. 14. But neither doth this Scripture any whit more (if so much) than only face the business in hand; for here is no promise made that they who once believe, how unworthily soever they shall behave themselves, shall still be preserved by God or the Spirit of God in believing, or that they shall be necessitated always to believe; but only a declaration and assertion made by Christ of the excellency and desirableness of that life which he comes to give unto the world, above that life of nature which is common unto all. This, by comparing the words transcribed with those in the former verse, is evident: "Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water," *i. e.* of material water, such as this well affordeth, "shall thirst again," *i. e.* is subject, notwithstanding his drinking hereof, to thirst again; "but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him," &c., *q. d.* The best means that can be had or enjoyed to render this present life which we live free from inconvenience and that which is troublesome and contrary to it, will not effect it: the condition of this life, being subject to dissolution, will not admit of any such freedom or perfection: but whosoever shall drink, inwardly receive and believe, that doctrine which I shall administer unto him, shall hereby be made partaker of such a life which shall within a short time, (if men be careful in the interim to preserve it,) by reason of the nature and perfect condition and constitution of it, be exempt from all sorrow, trouble, and inconvenience whatsoever, as being eternal. But,

1. That he doth not oppose that life which accrues unto men by drinking the water which he gives them, unto that natural life which they live by other means in respect of the present condition or constitution of it, or as it is enjoyed by men in this present

world, is evident from hence, because he asserts it free from thirst—"shall never thirst." Now, we know that the saints themselves, notwithstanding the life of grace which is in them by drinking the water that Christ hath given them, are yet subject to both kinds of thirst, as well that which is corporal or natural, as that which is spiritual; yea, that spiritual thirst unto which they are now subject, though it argues a deficiency of what they would further have or desire to be, and in that respect is troublesome, yet is it argumentative of the goodness or blessedness of their condition: "Blessed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled," Matt. v. 6. By the way, this spiritual thirst, which is incident even unto that life which is derived by Christ, and the waters given by him unto men, as it is enjoyed or possessed by them in this present world, is, according to the purport of our Saviour's own arguing in the Scripture under debate, an argument that, for the present and whilst it is obnoxious to such a thirst, it is dissolvable, and may fail: for in the latter part of the said passage he plainly implies that the eternalness of that life which springs from the drinking of his waters, is the reason or cause why it is exempt from thirst. Let the whole passage be read and minded, and this will clearly appear. If, then, the eternality of a life be the cause or reason why it is free from the inconveniency of thirst, evident it is that such a life which is not free from thirst, is not, during this weakness or imperfection of it, eternal or privileged against all dissolution. I easily grant that such a life as we now speak of, may, notwithstanding the dissolvableness of it, be in a sense called eternal, as it is frequently called in the Scriptures, viz. in semine or in fieri, as they say, as the conception of a man in the womb may be called a man; or because in respect of the native and in-bred tendency of it, and being duly nourished and preserved, it is apt in time to become eternal, formally and properly so called, even as the conception of a man in the womb, by reason of the natural frame and tendency of it, will in time, if it meets with no unnatural and destructive accident by the way, come to be a man in his full stature and strength. But as this frame or tendency of the conception we speak of doth no ways prove that therefore it must of necessity, or what will or can befall it, come in time to be a perfect man; so neither is it necessary that that life in the saints, which is seminally, inchoately, and conception-wise eternal, should, against all possible occurrences of things adverse to it, come to be actually, properly, and completely eternal. The result of this discourse amounts clearly to this, that our Saviour, in the words in hand, doth not oppose the life which comes by drinking his water to the life of nature in respect of the present and imperfect condition of it in this world, but in respect of the future and complete growth and condition of it in the world to come. Therefore,

2. When he saith that the water which he shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up, &c., his meaning is not as

if either the doctrine or spirit which he gives unto men, and they drink or receive from his hand, should always actually, necessarily, and infallibly end or issue in eternal life, properly and completely so called, the Scriptures in many places testifying the contrary of both, Matt. xiii. 20, 22; Mark vi. 20; Acts viii. 13, compared with ver. 20, 21; Heb. vi. 4, 5, &c., but that their natural course and tendency always stand that way; as the course, motion, and inclination of waters in a river always stand bent towards the sea, though they may be turned by force out of their channel, or dried up by the violent and scorching heat of the sun. Therefore neither is there any promise in this Scripture, of such a perseverance of the saints in faith, as is commonly notioned amongst us, and hath been opposed hitherto.

Another place wherein the said minor proposition, in the sense intended by the assertors, is pretended to be found, consists of these words: "And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever," John xiv. 16. But,

1. Evident it is that our Saviour doth not in this place oppose the abiding or remaining of the Holy Ghost, to his own discession or departure from the hearts or souls of men, into which he is entered or come, but to his departure out of the world by death, which was now at hand. Therefore,

2. By the abiding of the Comforter, or Holy Ghost, with them for ever, he doth not mean his perpetual or uninterrupted residence or abode in their hearts or souls, or in the heart or soul of any other particular man determinately, but his constant abiding in the world, in and with the gospel, and the children thereof, until the consummation and end of it. In respect of which permanency of his Spirit, with them and their spiritual successors or posterity, he saith of himself elsewhere, "And, lo, I am with you always, to the end of the world," Matt. xxviii. 20. And to put our Saviour's meaning in the words in hand, into words of more plainness, it was as if he should have said to his disciples thus: The counsel and purpose of my Father, in sending me into the world, required that I should make no long stay or abode in it, but that I should return by the way of death again unto him, after a season; and accordingly I am now upon my return, and so must leave you: but when I shall have finished my return unto my Father, and am come to him, I will intercede for you, and he will send you another Comforter, the Holy Ghost, upon better terms, for staying and continuing with you, than those on which I came: for he shall be sent, not to be taken out of the world by death, as I must be, but to make his residence with and amongst you, my friends and faithful ones, for ever. This to be our Saviour's express drift and scope, in the words, appears by the carriage of the greatest part of the chapter. Now from such an abiding of the Holy Ghost with them as this, cannot be inferred his perpetual

abiding with any one person or believer, determinately, much less with every one.

3. This promise concerning the abiding of this other Comforter for ever, must be conceived to be made, either to the apostles, personally considered, or else to the whole body of the church, of which they were principal members. If the first of these be admitted, then it will not follow, that because the apostles had the perpetual residency of the Spirit with them and in them; therefore every particular believer hath the like, no more than it will follow, that because the apostles were infallible in their judgments and doctrine, through the teachings of the Spirit in them; therefore every believer is infallible upon the same account also. If the latter be admitted, neither will it follow, that every believer, or every member of the church, must needs have the residence of the Spirit with him for ever. There are privileges appropriate to corporations or bodies politic, which every particular member of these bodies cannot claim. The church may have the residence or presence of the Spirit of God with her for ever; and yet every present member hereof lose his present interest and part in him. Yea, that the abiding for ever of the Spirit in the apostles themselves, was not absolutely promised unto them, appears from those and such like passages of our Saviour unto them. "If ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall *abide* in my love," &c. John xv. 10. "If any man love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and will *dwell* with him," John xiv. 23.

4, and lastly, Notice hath been taken and given formerly, that this particule *iva, ut*, "that," doth not always import the certainty of the thing spoken of, by way of event, no, not when speech is of God himself, but oft-times the intention only of the agent, see Chap. x. pp. 292, 306. In this dialect of speech those words, "That he may abide with you for ever," do not imply an absolute necessity of his abiding with them for ever, but only that that should be the intent of him that should send him, and that he would send him in such a way, or upon such terms, that if they were true to their own interest in so weighty a matter, and proportionably careful, they might retain him, and have his presence and abode with them for ever. Turn the words any way with any tolerable congruity, either to the scope of the place, manner of Scripture expression, or principles of reason, and the doctrine of perseverance, which we implead, will be found to have nothing in them.

As for such passages as these, "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation," &c., John v. 24; and again, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life," John iii. 36; and, "He that eateth me shall live by me," John vi. 57, with many others of like import, enough, and that with advantage, hath been said already, to evince them innocent from all compliance with

the common doctrine, heterodoxly surnamed orthodox, of perseverance. These indeed are all promises of eternal life unto those that believe, but that the condition of perseverance rules, though invisibly, in them all, but is itself absolutely promised in none, clearly appears by what hath been already argued from the Scriptures, and might easily be made to appear yet further by the consideration of all those Scripture texts wherein salvation is suspended upon perseverance, and perseverance upon the watchfulness and diligence of men. But it is like we shall have better occasion to survey such texts as these hereafter. We have now done with the first argument of our opponents in the present controversy.

Their second is built upon such texts which affirm and teach that God will, according to his promise, so preserve and keep all true believers, that none of them shall ever fall away from their faith, either totally or finally. Let us hearken to what they bring forth upon this account. From the apostle Paul they furnish themselves with such sayings as these: "Who," speaking of Jesus Christ, "shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom ye were called," &c. 1 Cor. i. 8, 9. Again: "But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil," &c. 2 Thess. iii. 3.

That neither of these Scriptures, nor any of like character, hath any communion with that doctrine of perseverance which hath been disowned hitherto, hath been sufficiently proved already, where the passages themselves were briefly opened, and a clear sense rendered, wherein God, according to Scripture phrase, may be said to establish and confirm men unto the end, though these men be neither actually or with effect established nor confirmed thereunto. The Scripture frequently attributes actions, events, or effects, where means or endeavours are or have been used, or attempts made, yea, and when intentions only have been entertained in order to the acting or effecting such things; yea, and sometimes where occasion only hath been administered for the effecting of them. Instances have been given formerly of all these kinds of expression in the Scripture. So that God may properly enough, as the Scripture counts propriety, be said to establish or confirm believers unto the end, when he vouchsafeth unto them means sufficient, both inward and outward, for their establishment and confirmation in this kind; or when he doth that which is proper and fitting for him to do for and towards the procuring and effecting the one and the other. Now God may do all this, and yet men neither be completely, and to salvation, established nor confirmed unto the end, through their own negligence and carelessness to comport with the grace of God towards them in this behalf, and to do that which is required on their part towards the working out of their salvation. And,

2. That the apostle in neither of these places doth undertake or affirm that God will establish or confirm them unto the end, after any such manner, or in any such sense, but that they may possibly

miscarry notwithstanding, appears from the context itself, where the latter of them stands. For having comforted them with the words mentioned, ver. 3, "But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil," 2 Thess. iii. 3, and professed, ver. 4, a "confidence (*i. e.* a confident hope) in the Lord touching them," that "they both did and would do the things which he commanded them;" which, by the way, had been a very weak saying, if he had known that they must of necessity do them, and could not choose to do otherwise; ver. 5, he lifteth up this prayer for them: "And the Lord (or, now the Lord) direct your hearts into (or, unto, *eis*) the love of God, and into (or, unto) a patient waiting for Christ." Doubtless, had he first absolutely promised unto them such an establishment and keeping from evil by God, the saving success or event whereof had no ways depended upon them, nor upon any such comportment on their part with it, which they might possibly have neglected or refused, he would not so immediately have conceived such a prayer for them as we heard, viz. that "God would direct their hearts into (unto or towards, as the preposition *eis* might very well be translated) the love of God," &c. It is of no good consistence, that a man should first absolutely and confidently affirm that such or such a thing should or would be done by God against all opposition whatsoever, and then presently pray unto God that he would direct the hearts of men to such a course, upon their walking wherein the event or coming to pass of the thing so promised depended; especially considering, that a directing of the hearts of men into or towards such a course or way, doth not necessarily suppose that therefore they will, or of necessity must, walk in them. Therefore, certainly, that stablishment and keeping from evil which the apostle, in the place in hand, promiseth unto them, imports nothing else but his willingness and readiness at all times to furnish and follow them with such means of grace, which would be proper and abundantly sufficient to stablish them and to keep them from evil, yea, and which would actually stablish and keep them from evil, if they proved not extremely negligent and unfaithful to their own souls in despising them. Therefore,

3. Whereas the apostle, in both places, mentioneth the faithfulness of God, "God is faithful by whom ye were called," &c. as that Divine principle in him, or attribute, out of which he is moved to establish and confirm them unto the end, and so to keep them from evil; by faithfulness, he doth not necessarily mean that property or attribute in him which renders him true and just, or constant in the performance of his promises, (I mean, of his promises properly and commonly so called, and which are exhibited in words,) as if the apostle in these, or any the like places, supposed such a promise, one or more, made by him, by which he stands obliged to stablish or confirm his saints unto the end, by a strong and irresistible hand; but such a kind of faithfulness or disposition in him as that meant by Peter, when he styleth him "a faithful Creator," 1 Pet. iv. 19. Now God, as we formerly showed, is, and may properly be termed, "a faithful Creator," because he constantly performs unto

his creature whatsoever the law or relation of a Creator promiseth in an equitable and rational way unto it, which we there signified to be a great care, tenderness, and love towards it, for the preservation and well-being of it, according to the nature and condition of every creature respectively. In like manner he may be, yea, it is most likely that he is, called faithful, in his calling of men, ("God is faithful by whom ye were called,") *i. e.* as he is a spiritual Father, or Creator, a giver of a new and more excellent being unto men, because he never faileth to perform unto these new creatures of his whatsoever such a being as this, regularly interpreted, promiseth unto him who receiveth it, from him who is the donor or collator of it; *i. e.* convenient and sufficient means for the preservation and well-being of it. "Eadem est causa procreans et conservans," saith the natural philosopher. So that the faithfulness of God, in the Scriptures in hand, supposeth no such promise made by God as our opposers imagine, as, *viz.* whereby he should in terms or words stand engaged to stablish, confirm, or keep from evil, his new creatures, his regenerate ones, after any such manner but that they, if they be careless and negligent of themselves, may be shaken, decline, and commit evil, notwithstanding.

4, and lastly for this, By the tenor of other passages from the same apostle's pen, and upon like occasion, where he expresseth the care and diligence of the saints themselves to co-operate and join with God and his grace, by way of condition, to their establishment to the end, it fully appears that all such promises, which are made by him concerning such establishment, are conditional, and that the full and complete performance of them is suspended upon the said voluntary conjunction or co-operation of the saints themselves with him. Such passages as we now hint, are these: "And you which were in times past strangers and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight: if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel," &c. Col. i. 21—23. So again: "For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end," &c. Heb. iii. 14. So that there is no such promise of perseverance unto the end made by God unto the saints, but what they may possibly be disinherited of by their own slothfulness and unworthiness.

Another piece of Scripture by which the argument, now shaking, is supposedly strengthened, is that of the apostle: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it," 1 Cor. x. 13. I answer,

1. That this Scripture notably confirms the interpretation and explication lately given, of the faithfulness of God, wherever it is asserted upon the occasion mentioned, which is manifest enough in the words now before us, *viz.* that it signifies or imports such a

carefulness or respectfulness in him towards his saints, which answers the nature and terms of such a relation that accrueth unto him, by making himself the founder, father, or author of this new being of saintship unto them, and withal, which answereth the nature and condition of such creatures or persons. Now such a love or respectfulness in God towards the persons we speak of, which expresseth itself in vouchsafing unto them a liberal and bountiful sufficiency of means, for and towards the perpetual preservation of themselves in well-being, fully answers both the nature and import of the said relation, as also the frame and condition of these new creatures; with whose frame, or state and manner of being, viz. as they are men, it well consists that they should have all things requisite and necessary for their happiness and well-being, both present and future, supplied unto them by God, but not to be simply and absolutely, or by a forcible and strong hand, necessitated to use them in order hereunto. And accordingly the Holy Ghost in the words before us expressly testifieth on the behalf of God, that he will not suffer the saints to be tempted above what they are able, *i. e.* that he will afford them a sufficiency of means or strength to stand it out against all temptations whatsoever, that shall be permitted by him to befall them; not that he will not suffer them to be tempted above what they shall be willing, (to overcome or keep themselves upright under) nor that he will not suffer them to be overcome. Nor is this sense or notion of God's faithfulness any whit differing from what Mr. Calvin himself conceiveth upon the place. "The apostle," saith he, "calleth God faithful, not only because he is true in his promises; but it is as if he should say, the Lord is a certain keeper of those that are his, under whose tuition you are in safety: for he never leaveth his destitute. Therefore when he hath once received you into his care or trust, there is no cause why ye should fear, *in case you depend wholly on him.*"* So that he promiseth no absolute safety or security unto the saints upon God's faithfulness, but only conditional, viz., if they shall wholly depend on him. Therefore,

2. For those words, "But will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it," they do not imply that God will make such a way for their escape from under temptation, that they shall and must necessarily bear it, (viz. without falling under it, or miscarrying by it,) but that they may be able to bear it, (without suffering any such loss or misery by it,) and make an escape from under it in due time. This exposition of the place is confirmed by our English divines themselves in their annotations upon it. Common or incident to man, *i. e.*, say they, "such as

* Fidelem Dominum vocat, non tantum quia verax sit in promissis, sed perinde ac si diceret, Dominus est certus custos suorum, sub cujus tutelâ estis in tuto: nunquam enim suos relinquit destitutos. Ergo cum vos receperit in suam fidem, non est quod timeatis, modo pendetis toti ab ipso. Idem alibi: Fidelis qui vocavit] observa autem quo argumento perpetuum illis Dei auxilium promittat, nempe quia eos vocavit. Quibus verbis significat, sperandam esse gratiæ continuationem ex quo semel Dominus nos sibi in filios cooptavit. Neque enim unius diei se Patrem nobis fore pollicetur, sed hac lege nos adoptat, ut perpetuò nos foveat.—*Calv.* in 1 Thess. v. 28.

usually befalling men, even God's dearest children, or such as *may* be borne by man in this life especially, assisted by God's grace, which is always *sufficient* for God's children." That which is always sufficient is not necessarily at any time efficient as to the actual production of that for which it sufficeth; and that which *may* be borne by a man without inconvenience, *may* also possibly be an occasion of evil unto him.

3, and lastly, The exhortation or declaration immediately following, "Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry," plainly showeth that there is no absolute promise from God concerning their safe bringing off from their temptation intended by the apostle in the words in hand. The mention or assertion of such a promise is no proper motive to that duty which he requires of them in that exhortation, but rather a temptation from it.

Another place insisted upon, upon the last-mentioned account, presenteth itself in these words: "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God that your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Thess. v. 23. I answer,

1. These words suppose no promise, much less any absolute promise, made by God to preserve their spirit, soul, or body blameless; but only contain a prayer or holy desire conceived by the apostle for such a gracious vouchsafement from God unto them, which rather proveth that such a preservation might possibly have been withheld or denied by God unto them than the contrary; for those things are more likely to be sought by prayer, which may possibly not be granted or obtained otherwise, than such which might with the greatest confidence be expected upon another account and without such prayer. And besides, what efficacy or prevalency with God can be ascribed unto such a prayer which seeketh such things at his hand to the exhibition whereof he stands absolutely engaged by promise, purpose, or the like, and which should have been exhibited and given by him, whether such prayer had been made unto him or no?

2. The same thing, in effect, which the apostle here prayeth that God would do for the Thessalonians, in other places he exhorteth men themselves to do: which plainly showeth that the intent and purport of the apostle's prayer in this place, was not that he would, by a peremptory and irresistible hand, preserve them blameless, &c., (which is his manner of acting in the performance of all his absolute promises,) but that he would afford unto them such gracious excitements, quickenings, and enlargements of heart and spirit, by his Spirit, whereby they might be effectually provoked and engaged to put forth themselves to do what was requisite on their parts, for, and towards, such an actual preserving of themselves; which, notwithstanding, he clearly supposeth, in the passages immediately subjoined, that they very possibly might not do, even under such excitements and enlargements. "I give thee charge," saith this apostle to Timothy, "in the sight of God, who

quickeneth all things, and before Jesus Christ, that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Tim. vi. 13, 14. So also Peter to his proselytes, "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, *be diligent*, that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless," 2 Pet. iii. 14; wherein that very possibly they might miscarry, appears yet further from these words, not long after, "Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness," 2 Pet. iii. 17.

3. If it shall be supposed, that the apostle in the passage in hand any way supposeth a certainty, or necessity, in respect of any absolute promise or decree, that God would, actually and with success, preserve them blameless, &c., he should clearly destroy, or at least much shake and weaken, what he had built up in all his preceding exhortations and admonitions; the joint tendency of them all being this, to "preserve them blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." For to inform, or insinuate unto such men, whom we have most seriously admonished and exhorted to be studious and careful of doing such and such things, that so they may be blameless unto the coming of Christ, that they shall certainly, and without any possibility of miscarrying, be preserved by God blameless hereunto, is nothing else, being truly interpreted, but to tempt them to neglect all our admonitions and exhortations in that behalf.

Nor do the words following, "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it," 1 Thess. v. 24, imply any such thing; but only this, that God was, and would be, careful and tender over them, in preserving them blameless, &c., so far as his interest lieth, or is any ways meet for him to interpose, act, or assist, in or towards such their preservation. This sense we have formerly asserted unto like passages and expressions, in this chapter.* To heal the offence of such explications, or limitations, as these, as far as his interest lieth, as far as is proper, or appertaineth unto him to do, with the like, when the doing or performance of such things is attributed unto God, wherein men also are to join and act with him, I shall here add,

1. That such explications or limitations as these, in the said cases, and others of like consideration, are frequently used, both by the ancient fathers, and by our late divines also, even such as are supposed our greatest adversaries in the present controversies. "Therefore," saith Austin, speaking of Christ's coming to save the world, "*as much as lieth in the physician*, he came to [save, or] heal the sick. He slayeth himself, who will not observe the precepts of the physician."† So Chrysostom,—“For what,” saith he, “if all men do not believe, yet *he hath done his part*,” or fully per-

* Page 323, &c. See also Chap. X., page 265.

† Ergo, quantum in Medico est, sanare venit ægrotum. Ipse se interimit, qui præcepta Medici observare non vult.—Aug. in *Johan.* Tract. 12.

formed that which was proper for him to do.* And elsewhere,—“For although Christ was not like to win,” or gain, “all men, yet did he die for all men: *So fulfilling that which was proper for him,*” or which appertained to him.† “Yea, *as much as in them lieth,*” saith Calvin, speaking of wicked apostates, “they profane and abrogate the inviolable covenant of God, ratified by the blood of Christ.”‡ Piscator also, in a like case, useth the same explication. “Thy weak brother shall perish, viz.,” saith he, “*as to thee,* or as much as in thee lieth.”§ Our English divines make use of the same explicatory expression in their annotations upon the same place.

2. Upon the same account I add this further; that there is very good reason for such attributions, as we now speak of, whether unto God, or men, or any other efficient cause; I mean, why such effects should be ascribed unto them, towards the production whereof they contribute any considerable degree of efficiency, whether the said effects be ever actually produced, or no; viz., because they do as much, and altogether the same, in such a case of a non-production of the effect, as they should do in a case of an actual production; and the reason of the non-attainment, or non-production of the effect, resteth not at all in them, but in some other cause, one, or more, which should have contributed their efficiency or strength likewise, towards the same production, but did not. As for example: suppose four or five horses yoked in a team, and that one or two of these should pull or draw lustily, yet because the rest are jadish and lazy, and will not put their shoulders to it, the wain, being heavy laden, sticks fast in the slough, and is not drawn out; in this case, because the horses supposed to pull stoutly do as much for their parts as was requisite for them to do towards the drawing of it out, and that which would actually have drawn it out, in case their fellows had joined, as they ought and might, in the same act of drawing with them, there is no reason why they should lose the credit or commendation of their activity, through the jadishness of their fellows, nor, consequently, why they should not be said to have drawn the wain out of the mire. In like manner, when God contributes his efficiency towards the keeping of men blameless, and that such an efficiency, which, being seconded and complied with by them, according to their duties and abilities for the action, would actually produce the effect, and keep them blameless indeed, there is no reason why he should be deprived of the honour of his action because men are slothful, and will not act with him; and, consequently, why he should not be said to keep them blameless, how blameworthy in the meantime

* Τί γαρ, εἰ μὴ πάντες ἐπίστευσαν; αὐτὸς τὸ εἰαυτῷ πεπλήρωκε.—*Chrysost. in Heb., Sermon 4.*

† Καὶ τοιγε οὐ πάντας ἐμελλε κερδαίνειν ὁ Χριστὸς, ἀλλ' ὅμως ὑπὲρ πάντων ἀπέθανεν, τὸ αὐτῷ πληροῦν.—*Chrysost. in Rom., Sermon 26.*

‡ Imò, quantum in se est, inviolabile Dei fœdus, ac sancitum Christi sanguine, profanant et abrogant.—*Calvin. in 2 Pet. ii. 20.*

§ Peribit] nempe per te quidem, seu quantum per te stat.—*Piscat. in 1 Cor. viii. 11.*

soever they be, through their own default. For of the two it is a more honourable expression, to say that a man did such or such a worthy action, than that he did somewhat towards it. And forasmuch as, 1. God doth no more towards the keeping of those saints of his blameless, who are actually and indeed kept blameless, than he either doth or is ready to do in a regular way, towards the keeping of others of them blameless, who yet miscarry: and, 2. Considering, that when any of the saints are actually kept blameless through that gracious supply of his Spirit, and other means vouchsafed by him in order thereunto, though not without their own care and concurrence with him herein, the honour of this action, or keeping blameless, is most properly due unto him; there is no reason why it should not be ascribed unto him in the former case, as well as in the latter, or that he should not be as well said to keep those blameless, who, only through their own unworthiness, prove blameworthy, as those who, through his grace, attended with their own endeavours, are kept blameless. It is a saying approved, I suppose, on all hands,

————— Careat successibus opto,
 Quisquis ab eventu facta notanda putet. I. e.,
 Success in his attempts I wish him none,
 Who by the event will judge an action.

Therefore when God acteth uniformly in a way of grace, he is uniformly to be honoured, what deformity soever there be found in the event, issue, or consequent of his action.

5, and lastly, The words in hand cannot be judged promissory, or to suppose a promise, because then it would follow, that God should stand engaged by a promise to preserve believers, not only from total and final apostasy, but from all partial and temporary declinings also. For they that are sanctified wholly, or throughout, and whose whole spirit, and soul, and body are preserved blameless, &c., are, in the same sense, preserved from all, and all manner of declining.

The last piece of Scripture frequently called upon for support of this second argument, answereth in these words, "Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ," Philip. i. 6. This text is of the same interpretation with the former; only it hath not so much of the letter, or face, as some of them have, for an absolute promise from God unto the saints, that he will cause them to persevere. For,

1. That confidence, or persuasion rather, *πειθοῦς*, which the apostle here professeth, is not said nor insinuated, to be built upon any promise, much less upon any absolute promise of God to interpose after any such manner for their perseverance, that it should not be possible for them to decline or not to persevere: but upon a charitable or equitable apprehension he had of the ingenuous integrity, and simplicity of their hearts towards Christ, his saints, and gospel; which kind of temper or frame of spirit in men, is of

all others most promising of perseverance in well doing through the grace of God; and, consequently, of the continuation of this grace unto men, inasmuch as, according to the common saying of divines, "Deus non deserit, nisi deserentem," God forsakes no man, but those who forsake him first. That such an apprehension of the holy ingenuity and uprightness of their hearts, as we speak of, in conjunction with that gracious principle or disposition in God now hinted, was the ground of that good persuasion, which he here expresseth, most evidently appeareth from the words immediately following: "Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, (viz., that he who hath begun a good work in you will perform it, &c.) because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace," Philip. i. 7. Therefore it was the present goodness or honesty of their hearts, expressed by their willingness to partake of the afflictions of the gospel, and of the saints, not any promise of God, which was the ground of that persuasion in him which he here mentioneth.

2. Had he had any absolute promise of God for the ground of that his persuasion, doubtless he would not have expressed himself with so much tenderness, and wariness, as to say, "Even as it is meet for me to think," &c. The promises of God would have taught Paul to speak at another manner of rate of confidence, than so.

3, and lastly, Had he here given unto these Philippians any absolute assurance of God's performing the good work begun in them, until the day, &c., or such which might have satisfied, or made them confident, that the good work he speaks of should have been continued and perfected by God, without all interposal, or means to be used on their part; he had laid a very slippery foundation to build all those exhortations upon, which with much earnestness he presseth upon them in the sequel of his epistle; and more particularly these, "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ,—that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel," &c., Philip. i. 27. And again, "Wherefore my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," &c. Philip. ii. 12. Hope or confidence of obtaining, by and upon the means to obtain, is a spur unto action; but hope and confidence of obtaining, whether any means be used or no, is a temptation unto sloth.

Nor do our reformed expositors of best account interpret the place in hand concerning any certainty that the apostle had of the perpetual continuance of the grace of God with them, but only of a charitable or humane persuasion hereof. "But where-soever," saith Calvin upon the place, "we see any such signs of a Divine election, which we are capable to apprehend, it becometh us to be presently stirred up to a good hope, as well for this end, that we

be not evil minded towards our neighbours, or defraud them of an equitable and humane judgment of charity, as that we may be thankful unto God.* Musculus, yet somewhat more fully, "God indeed," saith he, "had begun a good work in the Philippians, but from whence was the apostle certain that he would perfect it until he day of Jesus Christ? I answer, he doth not say I am certain, but I am persuaded: it is one thing to be certain of a matter, another to be persuaded. A certainty of God's works may be had out of his word, but a persuasion (may be had) from a good belief or reliance upon his goodness, and from some arguments of such his works. Certainty deceives no man, but a man's persuasion often falls out otherwise than was hoped."†

A third argument laid hold on, for the service of the doctrine of perseverance, is founded upon the immutable decree of election from eternity; and operates after this manner. A living or saving faith is given to none, but to those that are elect, in which respect, such a faith is called "The faith of the elect of God," Titus i. 1. And God hath determined to bring his elect to salvation by faith, with the greatest certainty that can be. From hence then it follows, either that the elect must be brought to salvation by faith with so much certainty, that they shall never fall away from it, either totally or finally, or that God is changeable in his counsel. But this latter is at no hand to be admitted: therefore the former must stand. To this I answer,

1. That this argument demands that which is sacrilegious to grant, viz. that God hath from eternity elected a certain number of men personally, and, as it were, by name considered, unto salvation, whom he purposeth to bring thereunto infallibly and without all possibility of miscarrying. The inconsistency of this notion or conceit with the nature and attributes of God hath been already intimated; and the inconsistency of it with the main current of the Scriptures, reason, and truth itself, shall, with God's assistance, be demonstrated at large in the second part of this work. In the mean time, to the argument in hand, in respect of other particulars in it, we answer,

2. That by "the faith of God's elect," Titus i. 1, is not meant such a faith as he gives unto men elected unto salvation under a mere personal consideration from eternity, which are a kind of men allied to Paracelsus's non-Adami, but the doctrine of the gospel which Paul was to preach to the saints and the chosen ones of God. The carriage of the whole sentence evinceth this:

* Sed ubicunque cernimus quæcunque Divinæ electionis indicia à nobis apprehendi possunt, protinus ad bonam spem excitari nos oportet: tàm ne simus in proximos maligni, eosque æquo et humano charitatis iudicio fraudemus, quàm ut Deo grati simus.

† Cæperat quidem bonum hoc opus in Philippensibus Deus; verùm unde certus erat apostolus, quodd esset illud perfecturus usque in diem Jesu Christi? Respondeo, non dicit, Certus sum, sed Persuasus sum. Aliud est, esse certum de re aliquâ, aliud vero esse persuasum. Certitudo de operibus Dei haberi potest ex ipsius verbo; persuasio verò, ex bonâ ergâ bonitatem ipsius fiduciâ, et quibusdam operum illius argumentis. Certitudo fallit neminem: persuasio autem sæpnumero aliter cadit, qua sperabatur.

“ Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God’s elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness;” meaning, that he served God and performed the office of an apostle of Christ according to the exigency and requirement of that doctrine which God had now revealed and sent into the world to be preached unto his saints, every where termed his “ chosen ones,” as likewise according to the “ acknowledging of the truth which is,” &c. ; meaning, that he did not only serve God and Jesus Christ in preaching the gospel unto the saints and persons already called and gained into the faith, as became him, and as the nature of the gospel required of him in this behalf, but that he was faithful and serviceable also unto them in preaching it unto such as were yet infidels and unconverted, upon such terms that they also might be brought to the acknowledgment of it. That which in the former clause he calls “ the faith of God’s elect,” in the latter he calls “ the truth which is after godliness;” meaning, in both, the doctrine of the gospel, which in twenty places besides, especially in the writings of this apostle, by a kind of metonymy, where the object is put for the act, is called “ faith.” “ It was needful,” saith Jude, “ for me to write unto you, and exhort you that you should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints,” Jude, ver. 3. Peruse Acts vi. 7; Gal. i. 23; Phil. i. 27; Gal. iii. 2, 5, &c. There is one place, amongst the rest, of like construction with this in hand, and that within two or three verses of it, where the apostle calleth Titus his “ natural son,” or a “ natural son after the common faith,” or according” (as it is the same preposition, *κατά*) “ to the common faith;” meaning, that he was a genuine and true saint or son of God, and of his, as an instrument of his spiritual being, according to all those holy qualifications which the gospel now commonly preached and known in the world requireth of those whom it owneth or adjudgeth for sons. The preposition *κατά* is frequently used in such a construction or sense as this: “ But if for meat thy brother be made sorrowful, now walkest thou not” *κατά ἀγάπην*, “ according to charity,” Rom. xiv. 15; *i. e.* according to the exigency of charity, or as charity requireth. So, *κατά τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ*, “ according to his works,” Rom. ii. 6; *i. e.* according to the exigency of his works, or as his works require. To pass by other instances without number, in the latter end of the verse in hand, “ the truth which is” *κατ’ ἐπίβειαν*, “ according unto godliness,” is a kind of periphrasis or description of the gospel as being such a truth, which godliness, as it were, requireth for her promotion and advancement in the world.

3. If, by “ the faith of God’s elect,” we shall understand either the grace of faith given unto the elect of God, or the act of believing wrought in the elect of God, we shall make no good consistency of sense in the sentence: for if Paul should style himself “ the servant of God and apostle of Jesus Christ according to the” grace of “ faith,” or act of believing, in the “ elect of God,” what can

we reasonably imagine his meaning should be? Verily I understand not. Or, if there could be any commodious or tolerable sense made with such a construction of the word "faith," yet, by "the elect of God," we need not understand the generality of the saints, much less such as are supposed to have been chosen unto salvation by God from eternity, (of which number there are always some, as our adversaries themselves confess, unconverted, and consequently that have no such faith as is here pretended,) but the excellent ones, as David calleth them, among the saints, whose faith is most signal and glorious. It is a frequent Hebraism in the Scriptures, to call both things and persons of special worth and excellency in their kind, "elect," or chosen. See 1 Sam. xxvi. 2; Isa. xxii. 7; Jer. xxii. 7. In this sense the Messiah was notioned and termed among the Jews, *ἐκλεκτός τοῦ Θεοῦ*, "the elect of God," Luke xxiii. 35; and Christ himself is called a "corner-stone, elect and precious," 1 Pet. ii. 4. So Paul, "a chosen" or elect "vessel," &c.

4. Nor do I know any ground, either in Scripture or good reason, why, by "God's elect," we should understand persons under a personal consideration segregated or chosen by God from amongst other men to be infallibly conveyed by faith unto salvation. The Scripture knoweth no such sense or signification of the words as this: nor can it be proved from hence, nor otherwise, that men are in any other sense chosen or said to be chosen from eternity, but only as that law or decree of God, by virtue whereof men come to be elected in time, was from eternity. The tenor of God's law or decree of election, which was from eternity, is, as the Scripture evinceth, this, or the like: Whosoever shall believe in my Son, Jesus Christ, whom I purpose to send into the world, shall hereupon become a man of that species, sort, or kind of men whom I have chosen from amongst all other men or sorts of men in the world, and designed for salvation. For that men cannot, in propriety of speech, be said to be elected from eternity, is evident, because they were not, had no being from eternity, nothing having been from eternity but God himself alone. Now, that which is not, cannot be said, unless haply it be in some improper and by-sense, to be elected or to be the object of any act or action whatsoever. And as men are properly said to be justified in time, as viz. when they believe, though the decree of justification, by virtue whereof they come to be justified in time, was from eternity; in like manner, though the decree of election, by virtue whereof men come to be elected, was from eternity, yet it brings forth in time, and, in propriety of speech, men cannot be said to be elected but in time. But concerning election from eternity, as somewhat hath occasionally been spoken already, so much more remains to be spoken in due place.

5, and lastly, Nor is there truth in this assertion, in the argument, God hath determined to bring his elect unto salvation by faith, with the greatest certainty that can be. God hath indeed de-

terminated with the greatest certainty that can be, to bring his elect to salvation by faith (persevered in, or if persevered in,) but this is not to determine to bring them to salvation with the greatest certainty that can be by faith simply, or by faith, whether persevered in or no. So that the whole frame of this argument is crazy and loose; scarce is there a sound part in the whole body of it.

A fourth argument for the countenance of the said doctrine of perseverance, is taken from the intercession of Christ, and pleadeth thus: Whatsoever Christ prayeth for unto the Father, shall certainly be granted unto him and done; but Christ prayeth for the perseverance of all true believers, as appears by his praying for Peter in this kind, Luke xxii. 32; ergo. I answer,

1. To the major proposition, by granting it, rightly understood, and with some explication as this: Whatsoever Christ prayeth for unto the Father, shall certainly be done, viz. so, or after such a manner, and upon such terms, as Christ in his prayer intendeth, not simply or absolutely, as the words of the prayer may sometimes seem to some to import. Hanging upon the cross he prayed for his enemies, and those that crucified him, that they might be forgiven, Luke xxiii. 34. May it not be as well inferred from hence, that therefore all his enemies, and all such who in any sense crucify him, shall be forgiven by God, as it is argued from his praying for Peter that his faith might not fail, that the faith of no true believer shall fail? Dr. Twiss's notion upon the case is not so authentic, and though admitted will not heal the difficulty. "Christ," saith he, "prayed for his enemies, *ex officio hominis privati, i. e.* according to the duty of a private man; but for his elect, as a Mediator." This is said, but not proved, nor, indeed, probable; for very unlikely it is that Christ, being now in a full investiture of his great office of Mediator, should wave his interest in heaven by means hereof in his addressments unto God for men, and pray only in the capacity and according to the interest and duty of a private man. This would argue that he prayed not for them with his whole heart, nor with an effectualness of desire to obtain what he prayed for. But let it be granted, yet still it follows that whatsoever Christ prayed for, was not simply or absolutely granted or done; and if whatsoever Christ prayed for was absolutely granted, it is not material, as to matter of impetration, whether he prayed as Mediator or as a private man. But the intent of Christ's prayer for those who crucified him was not that all their sins should be forgiven them, much less that simply and absolutely, *i. e.* without any intervening of faith or repentance, they should be forgiven, which had been to pray for that which is expressly contrary to the revealed will of God, but that that particular sin of their crucifying him should be forgiven them, *i. e.* should not be imputed unto them by way of bar to their repentance, either by any sudden or speedy destruction, or by a delivering of them up to such a spirit of obstinacy or obduration under which men seldom or never repent; which was also the sense of Stephen's prayer for those who

stoned him: *μη σήσους αὐτοῖς τὴν ἁμαρτίαν ταύτην*: "lay not this sin to their charge," Acts vii. 60. So from Christ's prayer for all those that should believe in him, that they might all be one, as the Father and he were one, and as the Father was in him, and he in the Father, John xvii. 21, 22, it cannot be concluded that therefore there should never fall out any difference in judgment, any disunion in affection between the saints, because there is neither between him and the Father; the intent of this prayer being only this, that God would vouchsafe gracious and plentiful means unto them, as well for the uniting of them in judgment as affection; not that he would necessitate or compel them into either of these unions, either by such means or without. So again, when he prayeth to the Father to keep his disciples from evil, John xvii. 15, it cannot be gathered that therefore they never sinned or never did that which was evil; or, if it be to be understood of the evil of suffering, as some conceive, that they never suffered. Therefore,

2. To the Scripture cited for proof of the said proposition, "And I know that thou hearest me always," John xi. 42, I answer, that the clear sense of these words is, that Christ knew, and doubted not but that God the Father, perfectly knowing the secret of his heart and soul in every prayer that he made unto him, had formerly and would still accordingly answer him, and gratify him in every thing according to the true intention of his prayer. He knew that what he prayed for absolutely, God the Father would absolutely grant and do; and what he prayed for with or under a reserve, exception, or condition, that he would grant and do where and as far as such a reserve, exception, or condition did not take place and interpose. Whenssoever he prayed for the Father's concurrence with him to work miracles for the confirmation of his doctrine, he prayed absolutely, and consequently was heard absolutely: the matter and letter of his prayer was never denied unto him in such cases; but when he prayed that the cup, which he afterwards drank, might pass by him without his drinking it, though he prayed thrice, and that very earnestly, as the text saith, yet because he prayed this prayer with a reservation, desiring what he prayed for only conditionally, and with submission to his Father's will and the great exigency of mankind, these standing in opposition to what he prayed for, it was not granted unto him. Now, certain it is, that Christ never prayed for the absolute perseverance of believers in their faith; yea, it is no ways likely that he would have prayed for it as he did, I mean with so much seriousness and affectionateness of spirit, if God had absolutely decreed the giving of it unto them whether he had prayed for it or no. Therefore,

3, and lastly, Concerning his praying for Peter, that his faith might not fail, which is all the strength of the minor proposition, I answer,

1. That from hence it apparently followeth, that therefore Peter's faith was in danger of failing, or might have failed, had not Christ interceded for him: and consequently, that God had not

absolutely decreed the perseverance or non-failing of Peter's faith, or of the faith of any other man; otherwise, what efficacy can we ascribe to the prayer of Christ for Peter's faith? or how can it be known upon what account Peter's faith was preserved; whether that of Christ's prayer or that of God's decree, for the non-failing of it.

2. Neither can it be proved that Christ prayed that Peter's faith might never fail totally, but only, if so much, that it might not fail upon that particular and sore temptation which he knew would soon after come upon him. It is evident from the context that this was all, if not more than all, that Christ prayed for on the behalf of Peter's faith: "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." Luke xxii. 31, 32. Now then, to infer from Christ's prayer that Peter's faith might not fail by or under a particular temptation, that therefore it could or should never fail, is a strain of no better logic than it would be to conclude that those who were with Paul in the ship never died, because God made a promise unto Paul that he would give their lives unto him as for that voyage, Acts xxvii. 24.

3. If it be by the virtue and efficacy of Christ's prayer for Peter's faith, that the faith of true believers can never fail, then was the faith of all true believers, before this prayer made by Christ, obnoxious unto a failing. If this, then neither was there nor is there any peremptory decree of God concerning the non-failing of the faith of believers. If so, then is there a possibility that their faith may fail; for whatsoever is possible in respect of the nature of the thing, and of second causes sufficient to produce it, may very possibly come to pass, where no decree of God to the contrary obstructeth the possibility. Now, our adversaries themselves acknowledge that the faith of true believers is in itself failable, and, in respect of several causes destructive to it, might perish.

4. Nor is it so clear from the tenor of Christ's prayer, intimated by him, that he prayed against the total failing of Peter's faith under the said temptation, much less against the final failing of it afterwards; but most likely it is that what he prayed for was only this, that Peter's yielding to the temptation, or his being overcome by it, might not extinguish his faith upon any such terms, but that he might and should eftsoons recover it by repentance. If this were that which Christ prayed for on his behalf, then might his faith fail totally under the temptation, (as Ambrose, amongst the fathers, conceiveth that he did,) notwithstanding Christ's prayer, though not finally; and that Peter's faith did indeed fail totally by the force of the temptation seems very probable, at least, from these words of Christ to him, "When thou art converted, strengthen," &c. Men are not said to be converted a gradu ad gradum, sed a specie ad speciem; *i. e.* from a lesser degree of faith to a greater, but from unbelief unto faith. And besides,

that Peter, upon his denial of Christ, was, until his repentance, in the state and condition of those who shall be denied by Christ at the great day, which could not be under any degree of true faith remaining in him, is evident from that general and express intermination of Christ, Matt. x. 33, "Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven."

5, and lastly, Whatsoever the intent or subject-matter of Christ's prayer for Peter was, evident it is, that as his temptation, with an eye whereunto this prayer was made for him by Christ, was singular and particular, so was Christ's prayer also for him; and a man may as well from Peter's temptation argue that all true believers shall be tempted after the same manner and to the same degree, as from Christ's prayer for Peter that his faith might not fail, conclude that the faith of no true believer shall fail. So, likewise, from Christ's looking back upon Peter, to provoke him the more effectually to repentance, as good an argument as that now under contest may be framed to prove that Christ will visibly look upon all true believers when they sin, to provoke them to repentance. It is in the case of Christ's prayer as it is of his precepts: when he commands any thing upon a particular occasion or ground, the obliging force of the command is to be extended no further than where the same or like occasion and ground take place; and intimation hath been given formerly, that the apostles, in respect of that great and extraordinary service of carrying the name of Jesus Christ up and down the world, so full of enmity and opposition to it, had many prerogative favours vouchsafed unto them by Christ, wherein the generality of believers, having no such engagement lying upon them, have no ground or reason to expect an equality or share with them: therefore there is nothing of any value in Christ's praying for Peter's faith to support the falling cause of the common doctrine of perseverance.

A fifth argument advanced in defence of the same doctrine is drawn from the intercession of Christ at the right hand of God for his saints, "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" &c., Rom. viii. 34, 35. So again, "Christ is entered into heaven itself, to appear in the presence of God for us," Heb. ix. 24; and, "since he ever liveth to make intercession for them," Heb. vii. 25. From hence it is thus argued: If those for whom Christ intercedes at the right hand of God may fall away from their faith so as to perish notwithstanding, then is the intercession of Christ ineffectual and insufficient to preserve them. But the intercession of Christ is not ineffectual, &c. Ergo. To this I answer,

I. It is no where affirmed that Christ intercedes for the perseverance of the saints in their faith, or that they who once believe should never cease believing, how sinful and wicked soever they shall prove afterwards; but Christ intercedes for his saints, viz.

as such, and as continuing such, that no accusation from any hand whatsoever may be heard against them,—that no afflictions or sufferings which they meet with in the world may cause any alienation or abatement in the love of God towards them, but that God will preserve and protect them under them, &c., and consequently, that they may be maintained at an excellent rate of consolation in every estate and condition against all interposures of any creature whatsoever to the contrary. This to be the tenor and effect of Christ's intercession for his saints is evident from the first of the three passages cited; and for that demand, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" it is not meant of separating us from that love wherewith we love Christ, but from that love wherewith Christ loveth us, viz. as we are saints, and abide in his love by keeping his commandments, John xv. 10. Neither is it to be so conceived as if sin, wickedness, looseness, profaneness, &c., could not unsaint men, and hereby separate them from the love wherewith Christ sometimes loved them, (for that iniquity will separate between men and their God is evident from Isa. lix. 2;) but the clear meaning is, that nothing, no creature whatsoever, person or thing, can make Christ an enemy unto those who shall in faith and love cleave fast unto him.

2. Were it granted that part of Christ's intercession for his saints is that their faith may never fail, yet the meaning hereof would not necessarily, nor indeed with any competent probability, be this—that no sin or wickedness whatsoever that shall or can be perpetrated by them might cause them to make shipwreck of their faith; but rather that God would graciously vouchsafe such means, and such a presence of his Spirit unto them, whereby they may be richly enabled to keep themselves in faith and a good conscience unto the end. If Christ should simply and absolutely intercede that no sin or wickedness whatsoever may destroy the faith of any true believer, and consequently deprive him of salvation, should he not hereby become that which the apostle rejects with indignation as altogether unworthy of him, I mean, a "minister of sin?" "Is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid," Gal. ii. 17. Or whereby or wherein can it lightly be imagined that Christ should become a "minister of sin" rather than by interceding with his Father that such and such men, how vile and abominable soever they shall become, may yet be precious in his sight, and receive a crown of righteousness from his hand? or doth not such an intercession as some men purpose upon him, as, viz. they who make him to intercede simply and absolutely for the perseverance of believers in their faith, amount to an intercession of every whit as vile and unworthy an import as this?

If it be said, that the men I speak of do not make Christ an intercessor for the non-failing of the faith of his saints upon such terms as I pretend, as, viz. that their faith may not fail, how wicked or abominable soever they shall be; but thus, that God will preserve them from such wicked and abominable ways and practices,

which, should they fall into them, would be the ruin of their faith, and that he would effectually direct and persuade them into the use of such means, which through his grace and blessing on them, shall preserve them, at least from a total and final declining; to this I answer,

1. If this be asserted for the tenor of Christ's intercession for his saints, that God will preserve them from such sins, which would be the bane and ruin of their faith, should they fall into them, the assertors render the intercession of Christ every whit as invalid and ineffectual as they pretend such men do who deny the necessity of the saints' perseverance, notwithstanding Christ's interceding for them. For evident it is, that the saints are not preserved by God, at least in their sense of preserving, from such sins as these, unless we shall say that murder, incest, drunkenness, adultery, dissembling, denying of Christ, &c. are none of these sins. For that the saints of God did fall into such sins as these, is notoriously known from the Scriptures.

If it be said, that though Christ doth not intercede that his saints should simply and absolutely be preserved from such sins, yet he interceded, that in case they fall sometimes into them, they may not be wholly overcome by them, or continue in them, so as not to recover themselves any more, &c.; I answer,

If so, then Christ doth not intercede for the preserving of his saints from sin simply, no, nor from the greatest or foulest of sins simply, but only so far as they are wholly and absolutely inconsistent with their salvation. Here, 1. I would willingly know from what quarter of the Scriptures the least or gentlest air of such a doctrine or conceit as this breatheth; or where the intercession of Christ for the saints is thus stated or taught by the Holy Ghost. 2. The purport, end, and intent of the intercession of Christ for the saints is the same with those of his death for them; only the Scripture placeth, though not more virtue, yet a clearer ground of hope or confidence unto the saints for their obtaining the same ends and blessings, in the intercession of Christ for them, than in his death. This is clear from the place lately cited: "Who is he that condemneth? it is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us," Rom. viii. 34. In which tenor of words he plainly buildeth one and the same hope or consolation to the saints upon all these grounds, the death of Christ, his resurrection, his sitting, or being at the right hand of God, his making intercession for them; only with this difference, that he placeth more pregnancy of strength to bear or exhibit the consolation in every latter of these grounds respectively than in the former. Now certain it is, that the adequate end or intent of Christ's dying for his saints, as to the matter of sanctification, was not to redeem or preserve them only from high misdemeanors in sinning, and such as are incompatible with their salvation, but from all and all manner of sin whatsoever. "Who gave himself for us," saith the apostle, "that he might redeem us

from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works," Tit. ii. 14. See also 1 Pet. i. 18, 19, with many other places. Thus then we clearly see that Christ's intercession no ways mediates in the behalf of the common doctrine of perseverance. However,

A sixth argument for the confirmation of it is this: Whatsoever true believers ask or pray for unto the Father in Christ's name, especially being necessary unto salvation, that they certainly and always obtain, John xvi. 23; 1 John v. 14. But they daily pray for constancy or perseverance in true faith, as, viz. when they pray unto God, that he would "not lead them into temptation, but deliver them from evil," Matt. vi. 13. Therefore certainly they obtain perseverance of him. I answer,

1. This whole argument might be granted both without any prejudice to the doctrine which we maintain, as also without advantage to that doctrine which it undertakes to protect. For the question is not whether the perseverance of the saints be a thing possible, or whether it may not be obtained by a diligent use of such means, such as frequent or daily prayer unto God in faith is: but whether there be not a possibility that the saints may neglect the use of such means which are necessary and proper for the obtaining or maintaining of it. Therefore,

2. When the minor proposition saith, that "true believers daily pray for perseverance," &c., it doth, in effect, assert that which is questionable between the controverters for a proof of itself, and so is guilty of that infirmity in arguing which logicians call *petitio principii*, a begging of the question. For to say that the saints daily pray in faith unto God for perseverance, &c., is, being interpreted, to say that they will persevere. So that this proposition is every whit as doubtful as the conclusion itself; and a substantial proof of it is desired. And though this could be sufficiently proved, yet,

3. The major proposition itself in those general terms, wherein it is propounded, is no proposition of faith. For it is not sufficient for the obtaining of what they ask, that the saints should simply pray in the name of Christ, or in faith, *i. e.* with a confidence of receiving what they ask, but further, that they ask or pray according to his will. "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing *according to his will*, he heareth us," 1 John v. 14. So that the frequent praying of the saints for perseverance, though in the name of Christ, and in faith, is no competent proof that they shall certainly obtain it, *i. e.* how wickedly or abominably soever they shall live, until it be first proved that it is according to the will of God that they should pray for it upon such terms.

4, and lastly, If both the propositions were granted, yet would the conclusion follow upon none other terms, than perfection in this life is proved by this argument of the perfectionists. Whatsoever true believers pray for according to the will of God, that they shall certainly obtain, according to the promises, John xvi. 23; 1 John

v. 14. But the saints, according to the will of God, and in order to his glory, pray, that his will may be "done on earth, as it is in heaven," *i. e.* perfectly, for so it is done in heaven. Therefore his will is done perfectly on earth; and consequently perfection is actually attained in this life. Let the perseverists answer this argument of the perfectionists, and they will be able to answer their own.

A seventh argument upon the former account, is this: They who shall certainly and faithfully be preserved and kept by Christ unto the end, shall never, either totally or finally, miscarry or fall away. But all true believers are and shall be thus kept by Christ. Ergo. The minor is proved by these texts of Scripture, John vi. 37, 39; x. 27, 28; xvii. 12; xiii. 1; 1 Cor. i. 8; Eph. v. 23; Jude 1; 2 Tim. i. 12; Heb. xii. 2; 1 Pet. i. 5. I answer,

1. That the strength and substance of this argument hath received answer in full already, when we opened at large several of the principal texts insisted upon for the proof of the assumption: whereof we shall give notice presently. Yet,

2. We answer, that the conclusion itself, "that all true believers shall never miscarry or fall away," rightly understood, opposeth not our sense in the present controversy. We firmly hold and believe, that no true believer shall fall away, (from the grace of God,) or miscarry, (in point of salvation,) and that all who either do thus fall away or miscarry, are no true believers, but wicked apostates, at the time of their falling away, or miscarrying. But this, we presume, satisfies not the argumentators. Therefore,

3. If these words, "shall certainly and faithfully be preserved and kept by Christ unto the end," import no other preservation or keeping by him, but what is meant in, and can be proved from, the texts specified for proof of the minor proposition, the major is denied: they who are preserved and kept by Christ in such a sense, as the Scriptures affirm men to be preserved and kept by him, may possibly miscarry or fall away, both totally and finally from their faith: *viz.*, in case themselves shall not comport with Christ in his act of preserving or keeping them, with their diligence and care to preserve themselves. Nor do any of the Scriptures cited prove the contrary; no, nor yet that those that are preserved by Christ, must, by any compulsory or necessitating power, join with him their care and diligence in preserving themselves. Let us take a brief survey of such of the particulars, which have not been taken off already from the engagement.

The first place, John vi. 37, affirmeth, "that Christ will in no wise cast out him that cometh unto him," or, that is coming unto him, *τὸν ἐρχόμενον*. But this proveth not, but that he that is on his way towards Christ, may go back before he comes fully to him; nor that he that is fully come to him, is under no possibility of departing from him. It only proveth, that there is not the least disposition or inclination in Christ to discourage any man whatsoever from coming to him, nor to deny entertainment or acceptance, to whosoever shall come to him, and while he shall be willing to stay,

or abide with him. And elsewhere he persuades and exhorts those that are come to him, to "abide in him," or with him, as John xv. 4, and threatens those who shall not abide with him, John xv. 4, 6; Heb. x. 38, both which evidently suppose a possibility of their departure from him, who at present are with him.

Whereas, verse 39, he expresseth himself thus, "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," it is evident that he speaketh not of losing believers by defection from faith, but by death. And to assure all believers of this, he declares that it is his Father's will and pleasure, that he should raise them all up (all that should die believers) unto a blessed estate and condition of life, "at the last day." Besides, if the place should be meant of losing by defection from faith, the losing of such who should be lost this way, could not be imputed to Christ, who fulfils his Father's will and pleasure to the uttermost for their preservation, but to themselves, who withdraw themselves from his custody.

Concerning the third place, John x. 27, 28, we spoke largely in the next preceding chapter, page 284, &c., where we showed in what sense Christ, speaking of his sheep, saith, that "no man shall pluck them out of his hand." The next place, John xvii. 12, presenteth us with these words, from Christ in his prayer to the Father, "Those that thou gavest me, I have kept, and none of them is lost." But neither can it be inferred from hence, either that Christ so keepeth all true believers, that none of them at any time perisheth, or is lost; much less that he so keepeth them, that there is no possibility that any of them should ever be lost; no, nor yet that he had kept his apostles themselves (of whom it is a plain case that he speaks particularly in the place) so, or upon any such terms of keeping, that there was no possibility that any of them should be lost, or perish; but only that he had so kept them, that none of them was lost, excepting only the "son of perdition," as it immediately follows, who was not lost neither for lack of good and sufficient keeping, (wherein doubtless he did partake with his fellows,) but through the great malignity or wretchedness of his own will, his good keeping notwithstanding. So that neither can hence any thing be gathered to prove any such preservation of the saints by Christ, but that they may nevertheless decline, both totally and finally.

The two next places, viz., John xiii. 1, and 1 Cor. i. 8, upon former examinations, have been found strangers to that cause, which they are here brought to plead. The former, Chap. x. page 286; the latter, in the same chapter, page 265, and page 323 of this present chapter.

The Scripture next to these, is Eph. v. 23, where Christ, according to the more general sense of interpreters, for some understand it, not of Christ, but of the husband, is termed "the Saviour of his body." But neither doth this expression import any such preserva-

tion of the body, or church of Christ, by him, which supposeth an impossibility of the defection of any one member from it. For, to follow the ducture of the parable or similitude here used by the apostle, the husband is the conservator or keeper of his wife; yet, notwithstanding, the wife may possibly miscarry, and break the marriage covenant, yea, though the husband acts his part upon the best and most commendable terms, for the preserving of her from that folly, that may be. The reason is, because the wife, being a reasonable creature, is to be dealt with, in order to her preservation or keeping in that kind, accordingly, as, viz., by rational arguments or motives only, as by an exemplary, loving, and prudent carriage in the husband towards her, by seasonable instructions, gentle admonitions upon occasion, &c., not by keeping her under lock and key as in a prison, where no man may come near her, nor by any compulsory or violent means, in one kind or other. All such ways of securing her from folly, as these, would ill become the husband, and be very unacceptable to the wife, whether virtuously or viciously disposed. In like manner Christ is the Saviour of his spouse, the church, and not only of the church in general, but of every member thereof: but he executes and performs the interest or office of a Saviour, by ways and means meet to be exercised towards and about such a body, and such members, for their preservation, if we speak of their preservation from sin, as, viz., by inward motions and excitements of his Spirit, unto well doing, and to a continuance therein, by vouchsafing the ministry of his word, the examples and converse of his saints, many providential opportunities, apt and proper to prevail with a rational creature, to mind the things of God, and of its own peace, &c., but not by any necessitating administrations or applications of himself whatsoever. So that though Christ performs the office of a Saviour towards his body, upon the most faithful, careful, and honourable terms that can be imagined, yet there must needs be a possibility, at least, left, for any member thereof to miscarry. But,

2. I rather conceive that Christ is here called, the saviour of his body, in respect of that protection, which he affords unto it, and to every particular member of it, as such, and whilst it continues such; or rather in respect of that great salvation and deliverance from death, and hell, and all manner of penal evils, which he hath purchased for it with his blood, and with which he will actually invest the members of it in due time. But this doth not prove, that every present member of his body, though it corrupts, and putrefies, and falls off from it, should nevertheless partake in privileges with the sound: nor yet that every member, sound at present, will never hereafter putrefy or corrupt. Nor is it any whit more dishonour, or disparagement unto Christ, to have such members relating to his body, which are capable of spiritual, than which are liable to corporal, putrefaction. He that vouchsafeth to be the head of a body consisting, either in whole, or in part, of flesh and blood, in, and by this very act of grace, condescendeth

to be a head of such members, which are very capable of sinning, and therefore not uncapable of dismembering themselves through sin:

To that of Jude, verse 1, "to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called," I answer,

1. It is not denied, but that Christ doth preserve his saints, and that with much care and tenderness, yea, and watcheth over them for good: the question is, whether by his preserving them, he imposeth an unconquerable necessity upon them of persevering in faith unto the end. The simple preservation of the saints by Christ, is all that can be concluded from this Scripture, the manner of it, or the terms on which it is performed, are not at all so much as intimated here.

2. The participle, *τηρημένους*, preserved, being of the preterperfect tense, imports only that the persons to whom he speaks, had been, viz., hitherto, preserved, or kept, by Jesus Christ: or, for Jesus Christ (for so the words will bear); not that he intended, whatsoever their after-misdemeanors in sin should be, to preserve them in faith unto the end. Here is no word, syllable, letter, or iota, of any such thing as this. And if his intent had been to inform them, that they were so kept by Jesus Christ, that there was no danger or possibility for them finally to miscarry, he had laid a very slippery and incongruous foundation to build that serious exhortation upon, wherein he addresses himself unto them, verse 3, viz., to contend earnestly for the faith. For what need they contend earnestly for the faith, who have assurance from God, that they shall be preserved in the faith, whether they contend for it, or no? And if they were, against all possible interveniencies whatsoever, to be preserved by Christ in the faith, to what purpose, or with what coherence of discourse, doth he remind them of the example of God's severity upon many unbelieving Israelites, even after he had delivered them out of the land of Egypt; as likewise upon those angels, who kept not their first standings? verses 5, 6. The very proposal of such examples unto them, as these, plainly enough supposes, that they also were liable to suffer the same severity from God, upon the like terms.

The next place, 2 Tim. i. 12, acquaints us with the apostle Paul's spirit, as far as these words will extend: "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him, against that day." I answer,

That this place of all the rest is eccentric to the business in hand. For it speaks only of the power of God to keep; whereas this never came within the verge of the question. Or if the will of God to keep, be here included, or supposed also; neither was it ever questioned by me, whether God be willing to keep His saints, or no. That which I oppose, is that manner, which some obtrude, affirming, that God preserves his saints upon such terms, after such a manner, that he peremptorily hereby necessitates their

perseverance. Certain I am that the Scripture in hand gives no such sound as this. Besides, that depositum, or thing committed by him unto God, which the apostle here speaks of, was not his faith, (this can in no very tolerable sense be said to be committed unto God,) but rather his soul, which he committed to the care and safe-keeping of God. Nor is there the least doubt or question to be made, but that God was both able, and willing, to keep this safe, as long as the apostle was desirous and willing to intrust him with it, and to suffer it to lie in his hand. But this proveth not, but that the apostle himself was at liberty to have recalled, or taken back this his depositum out of the hand of God: in which case he had been discharged from taking further care of it.

Whereas, Heb. xii. 2, Christ is styled the author and finisher of our faith, or rather, of the faith, *τῆς πίστεως*, the particle, our, is not in the Greek, it doth not imply any acting of Christ, in, about, or upon, our faith, in a physical way, or with any efficiency (properly so called) much less with any necessitating efficiency; but that he was an absolute or perfect captain, or leader, in that way of faith, wherein we all stand bound to follow him at the peril of our souls; he was dismayed, discouraged, daunted at nothing, which he was called to suffer or endure, in his course; but with an excellent and unconquerable spirit of faith, held on his way through the midst of those threatenings and devouring afflictions, which encountered him, until he came where glory and blessedness waited for him, and attended his coming. This to be the sense and meaning of the said words, the carriage of the context round about doth perfectly manifest: we shall not need to argue for it. So that Christ is called, *Ἀρχηγός τῆς πίστεως*, *i. e.* the archleader, or captain, of faith, not because by any physical or proper efficiency, much less because by any irresistibleness of power, he worketh the beginning of faith in his saints, but because he marched (as it were) in the head of his saints, and like a valiant and resolute captain, led the way of faith unto all that should believe in him, and showed them how to walk in it. And so, *τελειωτής τῆς πίστεως*, the perfecter of faith, not because he actually consummates, or perfecteth, the work, or grace of faith in his saints; (for this work is never brought to perfection in them, in this life; and though it be, in a sense, perfected, in the life to come, yet this perfection is *extra speciem*, *i. e.* not by adding degrees to it of the same kind, but by a transmutation of it into vision;) but because by his most noble example he taught men the very perfection of faith, or believing; which consists, in a quiet, patient, and contentful suffering of all manner of tentations and tribulations, which a man is called to suffer in the world, and the suffering whereof he cannot decline without sin, out of settled and firm belief of receiving that incorruptible crown of blessedness and glory in the end of his race, which God hath promised unto all those that are faithful unto death.

To the last of the texts cited in favour of the argument in

hand, 1 Pet. i. 5, plenty of light hath been already given in Chap. x. whereby it fully appears that it holds no correspondence at all with the opinion or doctrine which pretends unto it in the argument.

A further argument advanced by some to promote the common doctrine of perseverance, incapable of preferment, is this: They who are sealed in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, that they shall certainly be saved, can neither totally nor finally lose their faith: but all true believers are thus sealed; ergo, they cannot but persevere without any either total or final amission of their faith. For the proof of the minor these Scriptures are produced, 2 Cor. i. 22; Eph. i. 13, 14; iv. 30; which all speak of the obsignation of believers by the Spirit of God. To this also we answer,

1. By distinguishing the major proposition thus: They who are sealed, &c., that they shall certainly be saved, &c., viz. with such a sealing which is unchangeable or irreversible by any inter-veniences whatsoever, as of sin, wickedness, apostasy, &c., cannot lose their faith. But if the sealing be only such, the continuance whereof depends upon the continuance of the faith of the sealed, and consequently may be reversed or withdrawn, it no ways proves that all they who are partakers of it must of necessity retain their faith without all possibility of any either total or final miscarriage of it. Therefore,

2. We answer further, that "the sealing with the Spirit," spoken of in the Scripture specified, is the latter kind of sealing, not the former, *i. e.* such a sealing which depends upon the faith of those that are sealed: as in the beginning or first impression of it, so in the duration or continuance of it; and consequently hath none other certainty of its continuance but only the continuance of the said faith, which, as we have already proved in part, and shall, God willing, further prove ere long, being uncertain, the sealing depending on it must needs be uncertain also and reversible. That the sealing proveable from the Scriptures mentioned depends upon the faith of the sealed, is evident by the tenor of one, and by the context and plain circumstances relating to them all: "In whom also," saith the apostle, Eph. i. 13, "*after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Spirit of promise.*"

Nor can it reasonably be here objected, that this indeed proves the dependence of the sealing spoken of upon the faith of the sealed in the first act or impression, but not in the duration of it; for the answer hereunto is plain; viz. that if it depends upon it in respect of the beginning or first act of it, much more doth it thus depend in respect of the perpetuation of it. The reason is, because he that hath once believed, and afterwards shall make shipwreck of his faith, is far more incapable of this grace of sealing than he was before his believing.

If it be objected, that believers are said to be "sealed by the Holy Spirit of God against the day of redemption," Eph. iv. 30, and God is said to "give them the earnest of the Spirit in their hearts," 2 Cor. i.

22; which gift of the Spirit is likewise said to be "the earnest of their inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession," Eph. i. 14, *i. e.* by an hypallage, until the possession of the purchased redemption, meaning, their full deliverance from sin and sorrow, which expressions seem to import that the sealing of the Spirit, once granted unto believers, is granted upon such terms that it shall continue in them and upon them until their resurrection unto life and glory; to this I answer,

1. By concession, It is very true the sealing of the Spirit granted unto believers, is granted with an intent or purpose, on God's part, that it should remain perpetually with them. So that if there be an interruption or cancelling of it, it shall not arise from any variableness or mutability in him, nor from any change of mind or affections in him, from what he was in both when he first vouchsafed it unto them. But,

2. I answer further, by way of exception, that the sealing we speak of is never granted by God unto believers themselves upon any such terms, that upon no occasion or occasions whatsoever, as of the greatest and most horrid sins committed and long continued in by them, or the like, it should never be interrupted or defaced: for this is contrary to many plain texts of Scriptures, and particularly unto all those where either apostates from God, or evil-doers and workers of iniquity, are threatened with the loss of God's favour and of the inheritance of life. Such are Heb. x. 26, 27, 38, 39; Ezek. xviii. 24; Eph. v. 5, 6; 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10; with many more of like import. Therefore,

3. Believers are said to be sealed by the "Holy Spirit of God against," or until, or for, *etc.* "the day of redemption," because that holiness, which is wrought in them by the Spirit of God, qualifies them, puts them into a present and actual capacity of partaking of that joy, blessedness, and glory, which the great day of the plenary and full redemption of the saints, *i. e.* of those who lived, and died, and shall then be found such, shall bring with it. And it is called "the earnest of their inheritance," because it is binding or obliging on God's part, as well in respect of his promise, (for he promiseth part and fellowship in this "inheritance" unto those that shall live holily, and not turn aside into ways of sin,) as of the nature of the thing itself, being somewhat, for kind and property, of that "undefiled inheritance" which he hath promised unto holy persons, and which is reserved for them in the heavens. But as earnest, given and received amongst men, though they be engaging and obliging on both sides, simply, and in case of a non-intervention of very material circumstances in order to the breaking or dissolving of the contract ratified by them, yet are they seldom or never engaging or obliging on either side upon such terms that no possible interposition, whether of providences or other things, can discharge them. A contract of marriage, ratified and confirmed by both parties, with earnest given and received, may, notwith-

standing, lawfully be dissolved upon an act of adultery committed by the one party, if the other pleaseth. There is the same consideration likewise of confirmation by earnestness in other cases.

4, and lastly, If the apostle's intent had been to inform the Ephesians that the gift of the Holy Spirit, which they had received from God, was "the earnest of their inheritance" upon such terms that no unworthiness or wickedness whatsoever on their parts could ever hinder the actual collation of this inheritance upon them, he had plainly prevaricated with that most serious admonition wherein he addresseth himself unto them afterwards: "For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience," Eph. v. 5, 6. To what purpose should he thus severely discipline and nurture those, in order to their escaping the wrath of God, which would certainly come for such and such sins upon men, whom he had a little before assured that there was no danger, no possibility, of their falling under "the wrath of God," or of their miscarrying in point of salvation?

A ninth argument taught by some to speak for the doctrine of perseverance, hitherto opposed, consists of such Scripture similitudes, wherein true believers are resembled to such things which seem to import the certainty of their perseverance. As, viz. Psal. i. 3, they are compared to "a tree planted by the rivers of water that bringeth forth his fruit in his season, whose leaf also shall not wither," &c.; Matt. vii. 24, 25, "to a wise man that built his house upon a rock, so that though the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, yet it fell not;" Luke viii. 8, "to seed that fell upon good ground, which sprang up, and bare fruit an hundred-fold." To this I answer,

1. In the general, that no similitude whatsoever, whereby the prosperity, safety, or glory of the saints or children of God are set forth in the Scriptures, does any ways reach the point in question. Because the question is not whether the saints, viz. as such, and abiding such, shall stand for ever in the greatest prosperity, safety, and glory; but, as hath oft, in effect, been said, whether those who have been saints at any time heretofore, must necessarily be such at this day, and cannot possibly degenerate into any other kind or sort of men for ever. The similitudes produced evince no such thing as this. And therefore,

2. I answer in particular, 1. That the comparison of a man "delighting in the law of the Lord," Psal. i, to the tree there described, doth not suppose that he can never cease delighting in his law; nor is any such thing as this signified by the non-falling of the leaf of this tree: too frequent experience commandeth acknowledgment on both sides that the saints themselves, or men sometimes delighting in the law of the Lord, may otherwhile delight themselves in ways of vanity and great wickedness. But the purport of the simi-

litude is only to show that the condition of a person eschewing evil, and observing the law of God, and continuing such, shall be ever prosperous and blessed. There is nothing more ordinary in Scripture than to attribute or predict unto men both future punishments and rewards, in respect of their present ways, whether good or evil, simply and without any clause of exception in case of an after change in either; whereas notwithstanding the possibility of a change is clearly supposed, and a suspension likewise, as well of the said punishments as rewards hereupon, according as the change shall be. Thus wicked men in several kinds, whoremongers, adulterers, idolaters, extortioners, drunkards, &c. 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10; Heb. xiii. 4, are very frequently threatened with the loss of the kingdom of heaven, without any mention made either of that possibility they are in of repenting afterwards, or of any reversal of such a punishment, in case they shall repent; whereas it is a clear case, from other Scriptures, that both the one and the other are supposed notwithstanding, as, viz. where forgiveness of sins is promised unto sinners of all kinds upon repentance. I forbear to cite places, being so frequent and obvious. So God often promiseth life and salvation unto just and righteous men, without mentioning that possibility they are in of turning aside from their righteousness, or any deprivation or loss of life and salvation they are like to sustain, in case they shall thus turn aside; yet evident it is from other places, of which we shall have occasion to produce many in the following chapter, that both the one and the other are there supposed, as, viz. where backsliders are threatened with the displeasure of God and destruction. But of this idiom of Scripture expression we have taken knowledge formerly, and that more than once. See page 317 of this chapter. And that by the man delighting in the law of God, compared unto a tree planted, &c., in the passage in hand, is meant not simply that man thus delighting at present, but such a man who should constantly and with perseverance thus delight, is evident from the antithesis which the psalm maketh between him and the wicked man, who is described as perseveringly wicked unto the end. "Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment," verse 5; and again: "And the way of the wicked shall perish," verse 6; which expressions clearly show, that by the sinner or wicked man, here opposed to the godly, is not meant simply such a person who at present is wicked or a sinner, but who shall continue such without repentance unto his end.

2. There is the same consideration of the second comparison, Matt. vii. 25. By him who should "hear Christ's sayings and do them," and in that respect is compared to a "wise man who built his house upon a rock," &c., is not to be understood such a person who shall at present, and for a time after hearing, do the sayings of Christ, and afterwards do that which is contrary unto them; but who shall do them, and continue in the practice and doing of them unto the end. This is evident by the course of the Scriptures in such passages as these. "Look to yourselves, that we lose not the

things which we have done, but that we may receive a full reward," 2 John 8. Which words plainly suppose that we may do many things of a beneficial tendency and import, which must needs be by doing the sayings of Christ, and yet lose the benefit of such doings, by turning aside out of the way of them before we come to receive our reward. So again: "The love of many shall wax cold; but he that continueth unto the end shall be saved," Matt. xxiv. 12, 13. The Galatians did for a time run well, Gal. v. 7, yea, and suffered many things for Christ's and the gospel's sake, Gal. iii. 4; but afterwards they were bewitched, Gal. iii. 1, proved disobedient to the truth, and so fell from that grace, Gal. v. 4, and favour of God wherein they stood whilst they obeyed the gospel. But we shall, God willing, in due time muster greater numbers of such passages as these.

The third and last comparison, Luke viii. 8, hath less colour in the face of it than either of the former. In this, they who receive the word with good and honest hearts, are compared unto "seed that fell on good ground, which springeth up and beareth fruit an hundred fold." For,

1. It is not said, that the seed which fell on good ground are they who hear the word with a good and honest heart, but who, having heard the word, detain or keep it in a good and honest heart. The tenor of the place in Luke, is this: *Τὸ δὲ ἐν τῇ καλῇ γῆ, οὗτοί εἰσιν, οἵτινες ἐν καρδίᾳ καλῇ καὶ ἀγαθῇ, ἀκούσαντες τὸν λόγον, κατέχουσι, καὶ καρποφοροῦσιν ἐν ὑπομονῇ*, Luke viii. 15. So that it is not simply the hearing of the word with a good and honest heart that brings men under the comparison of the seed that fell into good ground; but the retaining and keeping of it in such a heart, and that so as to bring forth fruit with patience, *i. e.* with patient continuance in well doing, whatever temptations they shall meet with to interrupt them in their way, as the word is translated, Rom. ii. 7, both by our English translators, and by Calvin himself, who interprets the place accordingly.

2. Our Saviour's intent in describing the several tempers and conditions of those that should hear the gospel, together with the event and consequence of their hearings respectively, by that variety of grounds, which the parable of the sower speaketh of, was not to assert the absolute necessity of the several events specified upon the respective hearings, as if, for instance, those who at the time of their first hearing, were like unto the thorny ground, must necessarily miscarry, and never afterwards believe savingly; but to inform and admonish the world, what is like to be the event and consequence, and what ordinarily is the event and consequence of such hearings as are here described by the several tempers of those that hear, being habitual, and of long standing with them. For otherwise there is no absolute impossibility, but that he, in whose heart the gospel is for the present much incumbered and choked with the cares and pleasures of this life, and so hath been for a long season, may yet recover himself from under this great disadvantage, and so believe unto salvation; though such a recovery as this be very dif-

ficult and rare, which is all that our Saviour intended to show or teach, in this part of the parable. There is the same consideration of all the other grounds, or kinds of hearers. So that though he that should hear the word with a good and honest heart should be compared to the seed falling on good ground, yet could there not an absolute necessity be concluded from hence, that therefore such a man must bring forth fruit unto salvation, but only a great likelihood and hopeful probability that such a hearer will not miscarry by the way, but will hold out with patience in well doing unto the end, and so be saved. So that there is nothing in this argument neither, to keep that doctrine from falling, which is already shaken. Therefore,

A tenth argument is built by some for the honour of the said doctrine, upon such Scriptures, which testify that such as do not persevere, but make either a total or final defection, in, or from the faith, were never true believers, or by a true faith ingrafted into Christ; and that make it the property or badge of a true believer that he still doth continue in the faith. The Scriptures produced to justify this account, are John viii. 31; 1 John ii. 19; Heb. iii. 6, 14. To this also we answer,

1. In general, three things, 1. That there is no good consistency of sense in it, to say, that they fall away from faith, who never were at it, never were true believers. If it be said, that men are said to fall away from faith, when they fall away from such a faith as they had, as viz., from a temporary faith, or a light and superficial believing of the gospel, &c. I answer, 1. If this be the faith, from which men are said to fall in the Scriptures, then must this needs be the faith also, wherein they are exhorted and charged to persevere. For those that have in any kind, or with any faith embraced the Gospel, and made profession of it, are exhorted to continue in the faith. Now that the Holy Ghost should persuade men to continue in a temporary faith (I mean in such a faith, which is not accompanied with justification, or, which worketh not by love, or which will certainly fail) imports a kind of impious contradiction. 2. If this were all the apostasy or backsliding from faith mentioned in the Scriptures, viz. to apostatise from a temporary, false, hypocritical, dead faith, the sin of apostasy would not be a sin of that deep demerit, or high provocation unto God, which the Scriptures so frequently declare it to be. Nor hath God any reason to say, that his soul shall have no pleasure in such men, who withdraw themselves from a hypocritical, feigned or unsound faith. 3, and lastly, It is no where to be found in the Scriptures, either explicitly or implicitly, that they who make shipwreck of faith, or prove apostates, were no true or sound believers at any time, before this shipwreck; but the contrary hereunto will be made manifest in due time. In the meanwhile, to the Scriptures upon which this argument is built, I answer,

2. And in particular, 1. That these words of Christ, John viii. 31, "If ye continue in my words, then are you my disciples indeed," do not imply, that in case they should not continue in his

words for the time to come, it would argue that they were not his disciples at the present; but that they could not approve themselves disciples of his upon those excellent and blessed terms, which being disciples of his at present, they very well might do, and were hereby in a ready way of doing, unless they did continue in his words, *i. e.* in obedience unto his commands, unto the end. For that they were his disciples at present without any respect to their continuance, or non-continuance in his words, for the future, is evident from the words immediately preceding in the same verse: "Then said Jesus to those Jews who believed on him." Therefore being such who believed on him, they were his true disciples, though they had not had opportunity as yet to approve themselves his disciples indeed, *i. e.* so as to obtain eternal happiness by their discipleship in this kind.

2. For those words, Heb. iii. 6, "Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end;" together with those of like character, verse 14, "For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end," there is much the same consideration of them with the former. The meaning is not, as the rigour of the letter seems to hold forth, as if their being the house of God, or partakers of Christ, at present depended upon their future being, of what for the present they were, (things that are, are what they are, so or so, such or such, determinately, whatsoever follows, or not follows in the future,) no, nor yet as if their future perseverance would declare that their present estates or standing in the faith, was good; for they whose faith for the present is weak and not able to justify them, may notwithstanding, insensibly both to themselves and others, grow up in time to such a faith, which is justifying, and may persevere in it accordingly, but only to show that their being the house of God for the present (and so their being partakers of Christ for the present) would stand them in little stead, would in the end and upshot of all be, as if they had not been, yea, and of a worse consequence too, than so, unless they persevered in the same faith and profession unto the end. This exposition of the places is fully consistent with the main drift and scope of the epistle, which was not to teach the Hebrews to know whether they were true believers, or no, at present, much less to teach them this knowledge, by what they should approve themselves to be, to the day of their death, which had been to give men darkness to see by, but to animate, encourage, urge, and press them to continue constant in that faith which at present they had embraced, and made profession of, unto the end.

3, and lastly, As to those words, 1 John ii. 19, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us," &c., we gave a large account in the preceding chapter, where we gave evidence upon evidence that there is no such thing so much as supposed or insinuated in them as that they who once truly believe must of necessity always persevere believing. The clear

scope and drift of the context carries them quite another way. I shall here only add this, that the apostle's scope being, as is evident from that verse and the words next preceding, to caution them against those anti-christian teachers that were abroad in the world, lest they should be seduced by them, it had been very incongruous and enough to blunt, if not quite to take off the edge of such a caution, so immediately to subjoin such a doctrine, from whence they might conclude that it was a thing impossible for them to be seduced, at least to the making shipwreck of their faith. Besides, that it was not impossible for them to be thus seduced, is fully evident from verse 24: "Let that therefore abide in you which ye have heard from the beginning; if that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son and in the Father." If there had been an impossibility, either that the word which they heard from the beginning should not have remained in them to the end, or that they should not have continued in the Son, doubtless the apostle would never have subjected the former unto question, nor suspended the latter upon the taking place of it; both which are manifestly done by him in the said words. No man speaks at so poor a rate of reason and sense as this: If the light makes things visible, then may a horse or a man be seen by it.

Another argument calculated for the support of the received doctrine of perseverance, pretends regulation by many pregnant places of Scripture, which bear that true believers who are partakers of the quickening Spirit of Christ and of regeneration, cannot either totally or finally lose them or fall away from them. The places levied upon this account are, Rom. vi. 2, 8—11; 1 John iii. 9; v. 4, 18; Jude 3; Apoc. xx. 6. To this I answer,

That upon due examination none of these places will be found guilty of any such doctrine as they stand charged with in this argument. We have at large, in the former chapter, cleared the innocence of one of them, viz. 1 John iii. 9, which bears the greatest heat and burthen of the charge; to the rest we answer in course.

Rom. vi. 2. "How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?" These words import no impossibility of their returning unto sin who are dead to it, at least, who by the tenor and band of their Christian profession are dead to it, for of this kind of death to sin the apostle seems here to speak, but only a great and signal unworthiness in them so to do. So that the interrogative particle *πῶς*, how, carries some such sense with it as this: with what face; or with what conscience; or with what comfort, peace, or the like. "How then," saith Joseph to his mistress, "can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Gen. xxxix. 9. *How* can I do it, doth not here imply an impossibility for Joseph to have committed the sin, but only a great unseemliness or unworthiness. See also Matt. vi. 4; Gal. iv. 9; &c. Calvin himself stretcheth the same line of interpretation over the Scripture in hand which we have

done, affirming that "Paul here discourseth what manner of persons it becometh us to be, when God hath showed mercy to us and adopted us freely; and by an adverb of the future tense showeth what kind of change ought to follow our justification."*

The contents of verses 8—11 of the same chapter, are of the same import and interpretation with the former. "Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him; knowing that Christ being raised again from the dead, dieth no more: death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin," &c. The intent of the apostle in these passages is nothing less than to teach or insinuate a non-possibility of their returning or living again unto sin who at present are dead unto it: such a supposal as this is diametrically inconsistent with the emphatical energy of his exhortation, verse 12, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies," as likewise with many other pregnant Scriptures, which shall be consulted with in due time, but to set forth the spiritual condition of the children of God, partly in respect of what it is, partly in respect of what it should or ought to be, by a metaphor or similitude borrowed from what happened unto Christ corporally or literally after this manner. As Christ died once corporally, for the abolishing or taking away of the sins of men, but now liveth and acteth for the advancement of the glory of God, and is not obnoxious unto any more dyings in that kind; in like manner, they who are his, or desire or profess themselves to be his, ought to be conformable to him in these things, in a spiritual way, as, viz. by dying unto sin, *i. e.* by endeavouring to destroy and work out all sinful dispositions from within them, and by ceasing from all sinful actions and ways, and again, by living unto God, *i. e.* righteously, holily, and so that God may be glorified in the world by the excellency of their conversations, and by persevering and continuing in this course of living unto God without relapsing into that death in sin which is opposite hereunto, even as Christ liveth unto God, so as never to cease thus living unto him. Therefore all that can be inferred from this contexture of Scripture is the duty of perseverance in faith and holiness, or necessity of it, in respect of the great obligation to it that lieth upon the saints, and that profess interest in Christ, and expect salvation by him; not any absolute, not any such necessity of it, which is unavoidable or undecidable by the saints. For to what purpose should they be so solemnly, so seriously cautioned against that whereby they were not in any possibility of suffering inconvenience? If it were impossible that sin should reign in their mortal bodies after they were once dead to it, needless and vain had that exhortation been, "Let not sin reign in your mortal bodies." The common maxim among divines and interpreters

* *Porro memoriâ tenendum est, quod nuper attingi, Paulum non hic tractare quales nos Deus inveniat, dum vocat in societatem Filii sui, sed quales nos esse deceat, postquam nostri misertus, gratis nos adoptavit. Adverbio enim futuri temporis, qualis justitiam sequi debeat mutatio, ostendit.—Cavin. Rom. vi. 2.*

of Scriptures is, that similitudes or metaphors do not run on all four; meaning that they are not to be extended or applied to the spiritual thing intended to be illustrated by them, in all the properties or relations which are found in those things, from which they are taken; but in respect of that only, which suits naturally with the scope of the place where they are used. From the consideration of Christ's death once suffered by him, without being liable to die the second time, and so of his living unto God without danger of ever having this life extinguished or taken from him, cannot be proved either that men who are once dead unto sin can no more live to it; or that men once alive unto God, cannot possibly suffer any interruption or loss of this life. Because these particulars are not mentioned or insisted upon by the apostle, to prove the absolute, but only an hypothetical or conditional necessity of the saints conforming themselves spiritually unto them, or unto Christ himself in respect of them, viz. if they mean to answer the tenor and import of their holy profession, or to obtain life and salvation herein in the end.

Nor do these words, 1 John v. 4, "For whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world; and this is the victory" (*i. e.* the means of the victory, or, that victorious thing) "that overcometh the world, even our faith," imply any absolute necessity, that he that is born of God, or, that truly believeth (*viz.* at the present) and in this respect is victorious over the world, must always retain the strength and vigour of his new birth, or true faith, and so be victorious always, and to the end. All that can be, reasonably, and according to the usual import of such Scripture expressions concluded from this place, is, 1. That all the true-born sons and daughters of God, by means of that spirit of faith which works in them, in this estate of regeneration, are for the present above the temptations and allurements of the world, wherewith others are overcome, and hereby remain in imminent danger of perishing. 2. That they are likewise in such a posture, or condition, by means of their faith, that if they shall ἀνδρικοῦσθαι, (as the apostle Paul's word is,) quit themselves like men, and act their faith, or with their faith, according to the virtue, vigour, and usefulness of it, they may make good the ground, or standing, which they have gained, and maintain their present victory or conquest over the world, unto the end. But here is not the least or lightest intimation given, but that those, who are at present victorious over the world, by the aid and working of their faith, may through carelessness, security, and inconsiderateness, suffer the world to recover her former advantage, and so far to insinuate with them, as to cause them to let fall the shield of faith out of their hand, before they be aware of it. See more to this point, page 317 of this chapter.

Nor is there any whit more relief for the cause now in distress, in that other place, verse 18, of this chapter. "We know that whosoever is born of God, sinneth not: but he, that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not."

For that which is here asserted and held forth by the Holy Ghost, is only this, that the natural genius or property of a true-born child of God, as such, and whilst such, is to refrain from ways or customary practices of sin, and to set a guard (as it were) of holy and potent considerations, and resolutions, about his heart, that the devil may have no entrance or access thither, by the mediation of any temptation whatsoever. Not that such vigilance and care as this are always performed and taken by him, (the contrary hereunto is too much experimented,) but that there is a certain propenseness in that divine nature, wherein he partakes by being born of God, that inclines him hereunto. Men are often in Scripture dialect said to do that, not which they always do, but which they are apt and likely to do, and which very frequently, or customarily they do, (indeed,) and sometimes that which is their duty to do.* In this dialect our Saviour speaketh, when he saith, "If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not," (*i. e.* he is not apt to stumble, or, he doth not ordinarily stumble,) "because he seeth the light of the sun. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth," (*i. e.*, he is apt to stumble, or he often stumbleth) because there is no light in him, "John xi. 9, 10. So likewise the apostle Paul: "He that is unmarried, careth for the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord;" (*i. e.* frequently he doth so, or he hath an opportunity, which the married hath not, to do it: for otherwise we know, that many unmarried persons are far from caring for the things of the Lord;) "but he that is married, careth for the things of the world, how he may please his wife," 1 Cor. vii. 32, 33. His meaning is not, that the married, always, and without exception of any one in that condition, thus miscarrieth; there are some married persons, that tread lighter on the earth, I mean, that are less addicted to the world, than many that are unmarried. But only that persons so engaged and related, have a temptation upon them, more than the unmarried, and so are apt to turn aside on that hand, yea, and frequently do so. That which followeth is of the same character. "There is a difference also between a wife, and a virgin: the unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy, both in body and in spirit: but she that is married, careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband." The book of the Proverbs aboundeth with such veins of expression as these, *viz.*, where men of such or such a qualification, or relation, are simply said to do so or so, according to the nature and genius of either, not because they do always and universally so, but because they are disposed, apt, and likely, by reason of such a qualification, or relation, to do it, and accordingly, often do it. Thus it is said, "a man void of understanding striketh hands, and becometh surety for his neighbour," Prov. xvii. 18, *i. e.* He is apt to do it: men weak in

* In Scripturâ, sæpe ea facta, vel futura dicuntur, quæ fieri decet, aut debent, sive quæ ut fiant, honestas et rerum natura postulat, vel quibus ut fiant, justa gravisque causa datur.—*Cornel. Lap. in Zech. xiii. 12.*

understanding and less considerate, often bring themselves into this snare; not that they always do it, or that every man thus weak doth it. So again: "The poor useth entreaties," *i. e.* Poverty ministereth occasion unto men thus to do, and poor men ordinarily do it: yet some poor there are, who are so far from using entreaties, that they are more surly and rough in their answers, than many that are rich; though it follows, "but the rich answereth roughly," Prov. xviii. 23. Meaning only, that they are apt to do it, and do it frequently. Other instances of like interpretation, are obvious in this book. See cap. xviii. 11; xv. 18; xvi. 17, 28, &c. Therefore when John saith, "Whosoever is born of God sinneth not:" and, that "he that is begotten of God keepeth himself," &c. nothing can be concluded from such sayings, but only that men regenerate have a principle within them, disposing and inclining them unto ways of righteousness, and to vigilancy over themselves; or that regenerate men do frequently abstain from the customary ways of sinning in the world, and watch over themselves: not, that every regenerate man, without exception, doth these things.

2. Some understand the words, "whosoever is born of God, sinneth not, but keepeth himself," &c., in a declarative sense, thus: Whosoever desireth to approve himself, whether to himself, or others upon any sufficient ground, for a man regenerate, or born of God, he must abstain from ways of sin, and watch narrowly and carefully over himself, that the devil may not do him the least hurt: (as our English annotators interpret the phrase, "toucheth him not":) This interpretation reduceth the place to a like sense and notion with that in the same epistle, (formerly opened,) "little children, let no man deceive you: He that doth righteousness, is righteous," 1 John iii. 7; meaning, that no man hath any sufficient ground, either to judge himself a righteous person, or to expect to be so judged by others unless he doth righteousness, *i. e.* lives holily, and in a conscientious observance of the commandments of God, See Chap. ix. page 232. There are many assertions and sayings in Scripture of like consideration with this. Now this interpretation doth not find in the words any impossibility for the regenerate man to sin, or any absolute necessity that he must so keep himself, that the evil one shall not touch him; but only a necessity for him to refrain the one, and to practise the other, if he desires upon good and sufficient grounds, either the comfort within, or the honour without, of being born of God.

As for that argument, which some build upon the metaphor or similitude of the natural birth or generation, viz., that as men are capable only of being once born, and cannot lose the substance of that nature wherein they were born, or change their species afterwards; so neither are men capable of being born of God more than once, or of losing the substance or nature of this birth, being once made partakers of it; this argument, I say, is built upon one of the lame feet of the similitude, upon which it neither runs nor

stands. For it cannot be proved from the Scriptures, that the similitude of the natural generation or birth, is borrowed or used by the Holy Ghost, to signify, teach, or import any such thing, as this; but only to show, either, 1. That men have no being, no complete, perfect, or desirable being, till they be spiritually born of God, in which respect they are said to be nothing, who are not regenerate, or born of him, Gal. vi. 3: or else, 2. To show, that as no man comes to partake of the nature, or natural properties or endowments of men, but by a suitable generation, *i. e.* by a generation or propagation from man, so neither do or can men partake of the Divine nature, or true holiness, but by a proportionable descent from God: or, 3. To show, that as men, in, and by means of their natural generation and birth, come to partake of the same properties, principles, and propensions, which are natural to their parents who beget them, and act according to the genius of such properties, principles, and propensions; so do they, who are spiritually propagated by God, in, and by means of this propagation, receive such principles and impressions, which are in God himself, and withal act and move in the world, according to the heavenly genius, ducture, bent, and tendency of these: or else, perhaps, 4, and lastly, To show, that as the effect of natural generation, *i. e.* the conception of the person generated in the womb, is secret and unseen, and for the manner of it, in a great measure unknown unto men, "as thou knowest not what is the way of the Spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child," Eccl. xi. 5; so is the manner of God's dealing with the heart, soul, and conscience of a man, in and about the act of regeneration, of a very abstruse consideration, and remote from the apprehensions and understandings of men, according to that of our Saviour, "The wind bloweth where it listeth; and thou hearest the sound thereof: but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit," John iii. 8. That these particulars are, or may be, imported in the metaphor or resemblance of the natural generation, may be proved from the Scriptures. But that the impossibility for a man to pass from that species, wherein he was born, into another, which attendeth the birth natural, was intended to signify a correspondent impossibility in the birth spiritual, can no more be proved, than that this generation or birth consists in a change of essentials, and not of qualities only, or that it is a generation of a corporeal substance, because both these are found in the natural generation. And who knows not, that by straining and stretching similitudes beyond their staple, I mean, beyond what is intended to be signified by them, an endless generation of absurd, incoherent, and monstrous conceits may be produced? But,

2. The Scriptures do not only nowhere countenance any such deduction from the said simile, but plainly enough assert the contrary, *viz.*, that men may pass from one spiritual species into another, and repass into the former again. "My little children," saith Paul to the Galatians, "of whom I travail in birth *again* until

Christ be formed in you," Gal. iv. 19. And again, "Ye did run well; who did hinder you, that you should not obey the truth?" Gal. v. 7. Yet again, "Christ is become of none effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law: ye are fallen from grace," Gal. v. 4. So when the apostle affirms it to "be impossible to renew those by repentance, who have once been enlightened," &c., in case "they fall away," Heb. vi. 4, 6, he clearly supposeth, 1. That some men may fall away, who may be renewed by repentance, *i. e.* restored to their former species in faith and holiness, from which they had been transformed by sin. 2. That others may fall away, and be trans-speciated upon such terms, that they are incapable of such restoration. But of these passages more hereafter.

Nor doth that of Paul to the Corinthians, "Though you have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel," 1 Cor. iv. 15, import the contrary. For, 1. He doth not say, that it was not possible for them to have many fathers, but only that *de presenti*, they had not many. This implies, that Paul was the instrument of God, for and in their conversion to the faith at the beginning; and withal, that they at present persisted in that faith, or species of believers, whereunto, or wherein, he had begotten them. But it no ways supposeth, or implies, either that they were unchangeable in that Divine nature, wherein he had begotten them; or incapable of being begotten the second time, in case they had been actually changed. 2. Our English divines, in their annotations upon the place, by "fathers," understand such as were tender over them, and free in their teachings; as by instructors, *παιδαγωγούς*, schoolmasters, who are imperious in their teachings, and teach for hire. 3, and lastly, In saying that they had not many fathers, he doth not necessarily imply, that they had no more but one father; but, possibly, that they had but very few. For *many* is not always, nay, seldom, opposed to *one*; but sometimes, and more frequently, unto *few*.

The next Scripture attempted in favour of the said argument, is that wherein the saints are exhorted to "contend earnestly for the faith, which was once delivered unto the saints," Jude 3. But neither doth this place, so much as in face, look like pillar or prop of the doctrine we oppose. For,

1. By faith, is not here meant the grace of faith, or justifying faith, but, (by a metonymy, either of the efficient for the effect, or of the object for the faculty,) as in twenty places besides, the doctrine, or word of faith. "Faith," say our English annotators upon the place, "is not here taken for faithfulness, nor for credulity, nor for confidence, nor for faith of miracles, but for the doctrine of the Gospel, which is to be believed. So hope is taken for the thing hoped for," Rom. viii. 24; Col. i. 5. This exposition of the word *faith*, is confirmed by the apostle himself, affirming it to have been *ἅπας παραδοθεῖσαν*, "once delivered," not once given, "to the saints;" or rather to holy men. It is very improper to say of the grace or

habit of faith, that this was delivered, but most proper of the doctrine of faith. This doctrine is said to have been once delivered to holy men, to imply either that it hath been delivered by God so, that he intends never to make any change or alteration of it, or addition to it, which implies the perfection of it, or else that he intends to reveal or deliver it no more, in case the saints who are, and ought to be the guardians and keepers of it, should suffer it to be cashiered, or wholly extinguished in the world. See the aforesaid annotations upon this clause. In saying that it was delivered to holy men, or saints, he intends to lay so much the greater and more effectual obligation upon this generation, to contend earnestly for it, *i. e.* for the maintenance and preservation of it, in its purity of being.

2. If the place should be understood of the grace of justifying faith, nothing could be inferenced from it, but only that they, who are once possessed of such a faith, shall keep and make good this their possession, if they quit themselves like men, and shall strive in good earnest to effect it. This is nothing but what is fully consonant with the doctrine asserted by us.

Neither hath the last Scripture mentioned any right hand of fellowship to give unto the doctrine now gainsaid. For the Holy Ghost pronouncing, "Blessed and holy is he, that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power," Rev. xx. 6, doth not, by the first resurrection necessarily mean regeneration, or renovation by faith: or if this should be granted, doth he necessarily suppose that the second death shall have no power on those who have part in regeneration, unless they keep possession of what they have at present unto the end. Some learned and grave authors by the first resurrection, in this passage, understand not a spiritual or metaphorical, but a literal and proper resurrection, which shall take place and be effected by God, in the beginning, and, as it were, in the morning of the great day of judgment; as they conceive another, far greater than it, to follow after it, in the close or evening of this day.* This interpretation of the first resurrection is marvellously probable from the context itself. For John having, verse 4, described the happy condition of those, who had borne the heat and burden of the day of antichrist, without fainting, in this, "that they sat upon thrones, and had judgment (*i. e.* power of judging the world) given unto them," and that "they reigned with Christ a thousand years," he adds, verse 5, "This is the first resurrection:" where likewise he saith, "That the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished." Much more might be argued for this exposition: but our present engagement craveth it not.

2. Nor doth the sense contended for of the resurrection, any ways optulate the cause in distress. For in case it should be said, that the second death shall have no power on those that are rege-

* Mede, Comment. Apocalyp. p. 277.

nerate, it must, according to the constant rule (formerly delivered*) for the interpretation of such like passages, be understood with this proviso or explication, viz., if they continue regenerate, or be found in the estate of regeneration at their death. Which condition is expressed and insisted upon in several places; and particularly, Rev. ii. 11, where our Saviour himself, in his epistle to the Church of Smyrna, promiseth exemption from harm by the second death, only upon condition of victory, *i. e.* of such a victory, which imports a standing fast and faithful unto Christ in the profession of the gospel, against all temptations, allurements, persecutions, and whatsoever should attempt their loyalty and faithfulness in this kind, unto the end, "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." The sense now given of these words, is fully confirmed by those in the verse immediately preceding, "Be thou faithful *unto death*, and I will give thee a crown of life:" as also by other passages from the same blessed hand, to other churches. "And he that overcometh," saith he to the church of Thyatira, "and keepeth my words *unto the end*, to him will I give power over the nations," Rev. ii. 26. So to the church of Sardis, "Behold I come quickly; *hold that fast*, which thou hast, that no man take thy crown," Rev. iii. 11. To which many others of like character might be added from other places: but this hath been done already in part, and remains to be done more fully in place more convenient. In the meantime we clearly see that however the received doctrine of perseverance saith unto the Scriptures, "Scriptures, Scriptures," yet these make no other answer, but, "Depart from us, we know you not," you are a doctrine that gather not with us, but scatter what we gather.

CHAPTER XII.

The former digression yet further prosecuted: and a possibility of Defection in the saints, or true believers, and this unto death, clearly demonstrated from the Scriptures.

It is the saying, as I remember, of Quintilian: † "Many men might have been wise, had they not prevented themselves with an opinion of being wise before they came to it." Nor is there much question to be made, but that many have miscarried and do miscarry daily, in the great and important affair of their everlasting peace, out of a presumption or conceit, that they are under no danger, in no possibility of any such miscarrying; whose most deplorable and irremediable disaster and loss in this kind might otherwise have been prevented, and their persons crowned with eternal glory,

* See p. 317, 349; and Chap. X., p. 292.

† Multi ad sapientiam pervenire potuissent, nisi se jam pervenisse putassent.

which now are like to suffer the vengeance of eternal fire. Of so dismal a consequence it is to misunderstand, pervert, or wrest the Scriptures, especially in order to the gratifying of the flesh, or to the occasioning, or encouragement of men to turn the grace of God in the gospel into wantonness. The truth is, that the Scriptures seem in many points and matters of question, to speak very doubtfully, and to deliver such things in several places, and sometimes in the same, which men of contrary judgments may very plausibly interpret in a compliance with them in their respective opinions: though the unquestionable truth be, that even in such cases as these, they love the one opinion, and hate the other. It is no part of our present engagement to prescribe any perfect or complete method, or rule, how to discover which way the heart of the Scripture leaneth, when the tongue or mouth of it seems to be cloven, or divided between two inconsistent opinions. I shall only (by the way) make my reader so far of my counsel in the business, as to give him to know, that when the letter of the Scripture hath for a time left me in a great strait and exigency of thoughts, between contrary opinions, (a condition that hath more than once befallen me,) that brief periphrasis or description of the gospel, which the apostle delivers, calling it the truth which is according unto godliness,* hath upon serious consideration, often delivered me; yea, and brought me to such a clear understanding of the letter itself, wherein before I was entangled, that I evidently, and with the greatest satisfaction I could desire, discerned the mind of God therein; and that with full consonancy to the ordinary phrase and manner of speaking in the Scripture, upon a like occasion. For having this touchstone by an unerring hand given unto me, that the gospel is a truth according unto godliness, *i. e.* a system or body of truth, calculated and framed by God, in all the veins and parts of it, for the exaltation of godliness in the world, I was directed hereby, in the case of doctrines and opinions, incompatible between themselves, to own and cleave unto that, as the truth, and comporting with the gospel, the face whereof was in the clearest and directest manner set for the promotion and advancement of godliness amongst men; and to refuse that which stood in opposition hereunto. Nor did I find it any matter of much difficulty, or doubtfulness of dispute within myself, especially in such cases, and between such opinions, wherein I most desired satisfaction, to decide and determine, which of the two opinions competitors for my consent, was the greater friend unto godliness. That competent knowledge which God had given me, of the general course of the Scriptures, together with the experimental knowledge I had of mine own heart, the workings, reasonings, and debates thereof, seconded with that long observation which I had made of the spirits, principles, and ways of men in the world, together with their ebbings and flowings, their risings and fallings,

* Ἀλήθεια ἢ κατὰ εὐσέβειαν. Tit. i. 1.