

their advancings and retreats, their firstings and lastings, in matters of religion, in conjunction with that light of reason and understanding, which I have in common with other men; these together were sufficient to teach me, and that to a plenary satisfaction in most cases, what doctrines, what opinions are of the richest and most cordial sympathy and compliance with godliness, and what on the other hand are but faint and loose in their correspondency with her, or otherwise secret enemies unto her.

That that doctrine, which asserteth a possibility even of a final defection from faith, in true believers, well understood, riseth up in the cause of godliness with a far higher hand, than the common opinion about their perseverance, hath been sufficiently, though but in part, proved already, Chap. ix. : the further demonstration hereof sleepeth not, but only awaiteth its season. Our present task is to argue the letter of the Scripture for confirmation of the said doctrine, and to evince the truth thereof from the oracles of God. This done, we shall, God willing, advance some grounds of reason also built upon the Scriptures, for the further countenance and credit hereof. And because security upon security will not, we suppose, be unacceptable in a business of such grand concernment and import, we shall afterwards produce some examples, upon the same account: and then conclude our discussions of this subject, with an interview of some sayings, wherein it will appear that the God of truth hath drawn a confession and acknowledgment of that truth of his, which we now maintain, from the judgments and consciences of some of the greatest adversaries thereof, or at least so esteemed.

First, for the sense of the Holy Ghost himself in the question depending, we cannot lightly desire any account more satisfactory, than that given by himself in the Old Testament. "But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done, shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die. Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel, is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal? when a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them: for his iniquity that he hath done, shall he die, Ezek. xviii. 24, &c." What more can the understanding, judgment, soul, or conscience of a man reasonably desire, for their establishment in any truth whatsoever, than is delivered by God himself in this passage, to evince the possibility of a righteous man's declining from his righteousness, and that unto death? The latter words of the passage are conclusive hereof, against and above all contradiction. "When a righteous man turneth away, &c. and dieth in them," (*i. e.* repenteth not of them, forsaketh them not, before his death) "for his iniquity that he hath done, shall he die:" (*viz.* the second death, or perish ever-

lastingly.) For that this death is meant, at least included, in this latter clause, is evident, because otherwise we shall both make an unsavoury tautology in the sentence, and destroy all congruity of sense besides. For without such a supposition, the prophet must be supposed to speak thus: "When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them," (*i. e.* leaveth his natural life under the guilt of them, and without repentance for them) "for the iniquity that he hath done shall he" (leave his natural life, or, have his natural life taken from him.) When a man dieth in, or under the guilt of his sin, he shall die for his sin, or because of the guilt of his sin, the same death, which he dieth in his sin. Who tasteth not a palpable absurdity, and incoherence of sense, in such a construction as this? whereas, if by dying, in the latter clause, we shall understand, dying, or perishing for ever, the sentence will run clear, and in full consonancy with the general current of the Scriptures, the sense rising thus: when a righteous man shall forsake the ways of righteousness, wherein he hath formerly walked, and turn aside into ways of wickedness, and not repent of these ways before his death, this man shall die the death of the impenitent and unbelievers, which is the second death. In this sense, the sentence perfectly accords (for substance of matter) with such passages as these: "Know ye not the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, &c. shall inherit the kingdom of God, 1 Cor. ix. 10. And again: "For this ye know, that no whoremonger or unclean person, or covetous man which 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. And (to omit many others) with that of the same prophet, "therefore thou son of man, say unto the children of thy people, the righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression—when I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely live, if he trust his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousness shall not be remembered, but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it," Ezek. xxxiii. 12, 13. If the righteousness, which an apostate or backslider from ways of righteousness, hath wrought, whilst he was yet righteous, shall not deliver him, when he turns aside unto wickedness, what can be imagined should deliver him? doubtless his wickedness, whereunto he hath turned aside from his righteousness, will not befriend him with a deliverance. Nor can it any whit more reasonably be said, that though his former righteousness will not deliver him from a temporal death, yet it may deliver him from eternal death; than in the case of a true repentance it may be said, that though such a repentance will deliver a man from a temporal death, yet will it not deliver him from eternal death. For as the truest repentance that is, though continued in, will not deliver a man

from a temporal or natural death, but will most certainly deliver him from eternal death: in like manner, though apostasy and backsliding from ways of righteousness, persevered in, do not always expose a man to a temporal death, or bring this death upon him, yet they always render man obnoxious to eternal death.

Besides, when God threateneth such backsliders as we speak of, that when they shall commit iniquity, &c., "all the righteousness that they have done formerly, shall not be mentioned," *i. e.* as Calvin himself interprets, "shall not come into any account, as to matter of reward,"* evident it is, that if it shall not come into any account at all, as, for example, to obtain from God so much as the reward of a temporal deliverance, much less shall it turn to any such account, as to be rewarded with that "great recompense of reward," salvation.

Again, that death which God here threateneth against that double, or two-fold iniquity of backsliding, is opposed to that life, which is promised to repentance, and perseverance in well-doing. But this life is confessed by all, to be eternal life; therefore the death opposite to it must needs be eternal, or the "second death." When the apostle saith, "the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life, through Christ Jesus our Lord," Rom. vi. 23, is it not evident, from the antithesis or opposition in the sentence, between the death and life mentioned in it, that by that death, which he affirms to be "the wages of sin," is meant eternal death? How else will the opposition stand?

Yet again; when God in the Scriptures threatens impenitent persons with death for their sins, doubtless he intends, and means, eternal death, or that death which is the wages of sin. Otherwise we have no sufficient ground to believe, or think, that men dying in their sins without repentance, shall suffer "the vengeance of eternal fire," but only a temporal or natural death; which the righteous and truly penitent themselves suffer as well as they. Therefore, to say that God threatens impenitent apostates, in the place in hand, with a temporal death only, when as elsewhere he threatens impenitency under the lightest guilt of all, with eternal death, is, in effect, to represent him as vehement and sore in his dissuasives from ordinary and lesser sins; but indifferent and remiss in dissuading from sins of the greatest provocation.

Once more; if it be only a temporal death, which God here threateneth against the sins of apostasy, dying under the guilt of their apostasy, and of all the sins they have committed therein, without repentance, then may men under the guilt of the greatest and foulest abominations, remain in the greatest love and favour of God, as just and righteous men; yea, and without repentance, not only escape damnation, but also inherit eternal life. And "where then is the God of judgment?" Mal. ii. 17. Or what will become

* Cum autem satis liqueat non venire justitiam ejus, qui defecit, in rationem, ut quicquam mercedis sperare debeat, &c.—*Calv. in Ezek. xviii. 24.*

of that great voice of the Scriptures, which everywhere calleth men to "repentance for the forgiveness of sins?"

That comparative allusion, of the leper under the law, wherewith the Synod of Dort, it seems, much pleased themselves, and others also since, of the same judgment with them, reacheth not the case, nor administers any relief at all to their cause, against the Scripture in hand. "The leper," say they, "among the Jews, was enforced for a time," meaning, whilst his leprosy was upon him, "to want his house; but yet he did not, in this time, lose the right of title which he had to this house, because, upon his healing, or cleansing, he might again possess it."* This comparison, I say, squares not with the business in hand. For, 1. The reason why the person leprously affected did not lose the right he had to his house before he was leprous, by his becoming a leper, was, because there was no law by which any man's right or title to his house was disabled or made void by leprosy: whereas, in the case of apostasy, there is a plain law, or, rather, many laws, established and declared by the great Lawgiver of heaven, by which backsliders from ways of righteousness into ways of sin and abomination, are, without repentance, cut off from all right of title or claim to the inheritance of heaven. "For this ye know," saith the apostle, as we heard lately, "that no whoremonger, or unclean person, nor covetous man, (who is an idolater,) hath any inheritance," *i. e.* any right of inheritance, or to inherit; for otherwise no righteous person, yet living in the flesh, hath any actual inheritance, "in the kingdom of Christ and of God," Eph. v. 5. To object, that this law or decree of heaven holds good against such sinners in every kind, whoremongers, covetous, &c., who never were righteous; not against such, who have been righteous, though now lapsed into these ways of abomination, is not only to declare a law without the sense or authority of the lawmaker, but against that declaration which he hath made of it; who still declareth those the worst and greatest of sinners, who, with the lapsed angels, which we call devils, revolt from his service and ways, to walk in ways that are an abomination to him, "Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid: be ye very desolate, saith the Lord." Why? what is it that causeth the glorious God to appear in such an ecstasy of passion? "For my people," saith he, "have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water," Jer. ii. 12, 13. The Scripture is full of such declarations from God, as this, against apostates. So that the Dort comparison palpably falters in that circumstance, which should have rendered it apposite to their purpose.

2. The leprous person they speak of, was curable before his death, and so, as they say, being healed, might re-enter, and possess

* Leprosus siquidem apud Judæos, cogebatur pro tempore domo carere: non tamen jus ad domum amisit, quia sanatus potuit illam rursus possidere.—*Dr. Prid. Lect. 6, De Persever. Sanct. p. 202.*

his house again. But the revolter from righteousness, of whom Ezekiel speaks, is supposed, as we heard before, to die under the guilt of his revolt, without healing; and consequently to be without all possibility of cure, being dead. Therefore, as the leprous person they speak of, though, whilst he lived, had a right to his house, (no law, as was said, depriving him of this,) yet, during his leprosy upon him, he had no right to enter, take possession, or dwell in his house, the law disabling him hereunto, in respect of his leprosy; and in case he had been leprous until his death, he should have had no more power or right to possess his house, than if his title to it had been wholly lost: in like manner, should it be granted or supposed, that the spiritual leper, of whom Ezekiel speaks, had a right to the kingdom of heaven during his leprosy, yet supposing the cleaving of this leprosy to him until death, (which is the prophet's supposition,) he could never, according to the terms of the comparison, have any right to enter, or to be admitted thereunto; and consequently his leprosy, I mean, his apostasy, had been final, and so unto death. Therefore there is nothing gained to the Dort cause by this similitude, though it should be allowed a pre-eminence above similitudes, and permitted to run on all four. And whereas they say and grant, that a truly righteous man may, for a time, viz., from his turning aside into ways of wickedness, until his renewing by repentance, lose, though not *jus*, his right unto, yet *aptitudinem*, his fitness or meetness for, the kingdom of heaven, they argue quite besides the argument levied against them from the passage in hand. For in this reasoning they take it for granted, that their righteous man never dieth in those ways of wickedness, into which he turneth aside, but always cometh to be "renewed again by repentance," before his death; whereas Ezekiel, expressly, and *in terminis*, supposeth a possibility, at least, that his righteous man may die, in or under his apostasy from righteousness, and in his committing of iniquity. "When a righteous man," saith he, "turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them, for his iniquity that he hath done, shall he die," Ezek. xviii. 26. Therefore all this while the prophet of God, and the Synod of Dort, are two.

Nor is that distinction made choice of by Dr. Prideaux to arbitrate and umpire the difference between them, able to set them through or make them friends. "There is," saith he, "a double righteousness, one inherent, or of works, by which we are sanctified; another, imputed, or of faith, whereby we are justified. A righteous man may turn aside from his own righteousness, viz. from his holiness, and fall into very heinous sins; but it doth not follow from hence that therefore he hath wholly shaken from him," or out of him, "the righteousness of Christ."* But,

* Duplex enim est justitia, inherens sive operum, quâ sanctificamur; et imputata Christi, seu fidei, quâ justificamur.—Quibus positis, ex scopo prophetae respondeo: justum posse se avertere à justitiâ suâ, suâ nimirum sanctitate, et in atrociam incidere peccata—non inde tamen sequitur, illum, justiciam Christi, seu fidei, penitus excussisse.—*Dr. Prid. Lect. 6, de Persever. Sanctorum.*

1. The Doctor here presents us with a piece of new divinity, in making sanctification and justification no more intimate friends than that one can live without the company and presence of the other. Doubtless, if a man's justification may stay behind when his holiness is departed, that assertion of the apostle will hardly stand—"Without holiness no man shall see the Lord," Heb. xii. 14. And if "they that are Christ's," *i. e.* who believe in Christ, and thereby are justified, "have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts," (another assertion of the same apostle,) how their relation unto Christ should stand, and yet their holiness sink and fall, I understand not. But I leave his friends to be his enemies in this.

2. He seems, by his word "penitus," wholly, thoroughly, or altogether, to be singular also in another strain of divinity, and to teach magis and minus in justification: for in saying, that from a man's apostatising "from his own righteousness, it doth not follow that therefore he hath *wholly* or *altogether* shaken off the imputed righteousness of Christ," doth he not imply that a man may shake off some part of the righteousness of Christ from him, and yet keep another part of it upon him? or else, that by sinning he may come to wear the entire garment or clothing of it so loosely that it will be ready to drop or fall off from him every hour? and consequently, that the righteousness of Christ sits faster and closer upon some than upon others, yea, upon the same person at one time than another.

3, and lastly, Were it granted unto the Doctor, that from a man's turning aside from his own holiness, it doth not follow that therefore he hath wholly divested himself of the righteousness of Christ imputed; yet from God's determination, or pronouncing a man to be in an estate of condemnation and of death, it follows roundly, that therefore he is divested of the righteousness of Christ imputed, if ever he were invested with it before; because no man with that righteousness upon him can be in such an estate. Now, we have upon several grounds proved, that the righteous man under that apostasy wherein Ezekiel describes and presents him, is pronounced by God a child not of a temporal, but of eternal death and condemnation. This, indeed, the Doctor denies, but gives no reason of his denial, for which I blame him not: only I must crave leave to say, that the chair weigheth not so much as one good argument with me, much less as many. So that all this while, he that spake, and still speaks, unto the world by Ezekiel, is no friend to that doctrine which denieth the possibility of a righteous man's declining even unto death.

Notwithstanding some formerly, it seems, in favour of this doctrine, attempted an escape from that sword of Ezekiel lately drawn against it, by pretending that by the righteous man mentioned in the passages in hand, is not meant a person truly and really righteous, but a kind of formal hypocrite or outside professor of righteousness. But this shift had so little colour in the face of it, that it caused the after-patrons of the doctrine to blush and be

ashamed of it. The Synod of Dort itself, though it accepted of many helps in other cases of every whit as little strength as this, yet, judging itself better provided at that point where this was offered to relieve it, it was rejected by the members of this Synod, and that with some kind of disparagement put upon it; I will not say with any such intent or eye that they who thus rejected it might be looked upon as men who would own nothing but what was solid and substantial. The forementioned Doctor also rewards the Synod of Dort with his approbation for refusing to intrust their cause in the hand of such a sorry advocate as this: so that we shall not need to cause this interpretation to pass through the fire for the trial of it, inasmuch as it hath been publicly stigmatized for reprobate silver by the greatest masters of that cause for the maintenance whereof it was devised. And, indeed, the whole series and carriage of the context, from verse 20 to the end of the chapter, demonstratively evinceth, that by the righteous man all along is meant such a man as was or is truly righteous, and who, had he persevered in that way of righteousness wherein he sometimes walked, should have worn the crown of righteousness, and received the reward of a righteous man. As by the wicked man all along opposed to him, is meant not a person seemingly wicked, but truly and really so, as is acknowledged on all hands. So that the antithesis, or opposition between the righteous and the wicked, running so visibly quite through the body of the discourse, must needs be dissolved, if by the righteous man should be meant a person seemingly righteous only; he that is righteous in this sense being truly and really wicked. Yea, Calvin, writing upon the place, though he sets himself to manage it so that the cause of perseverance may not suffer damage by it, and in order hereunto turns many a stone to make the righteous man a man seemingly righteous only, yet now and then, by the force and power of the truth, is turned quite out of the way of his design, so as to make this righteous man righteous in such a sense that nothing should be wanting unto him but perseverance in his way to make him blessed;* which clearly sounds an acknowledgment of true righteousness in the man styled righteous by the prophet; inasmuch as perseverance in a way of formality, or of a pretended and seeming righteousness only, is quite out of the way to any man's blessedness. To this we may add, that of Dr. Prideaux, in the forecited lecture: "But if the righteous man," saith he, "should turn himself away from his counterfeit and hypocritical righteousness, should he not rather live than die, inasmuch as he should put off the wolf to put on the lamb?"†

* Nunc autem terret eos, qui ad tempus professi fuerant se puros et sinceros esse Dei cultores, si deficient in medio cursu—Cæterum colligimus ex hoc loco, quemadmodum Christus docet, solos esse beatos qui perseveraverint; quia nihil proderit temporalis justitia apostatis, qui postea se a Deo avertunt. Et paulo post; rursum ut in officio contineat eos, qui fecerunt aliquos progressus, et correctâ omni ignaviâ, eos ad sollicitudinem adducat, minari nisi ad extremum usque prosequantur cursum sanctæ et piæ vitæ, justitiam superiorem pro nihilo fore, &c.

† Quod si justus se averteret à justitiâ simulatâ et hypocriticâ, an non potius viveret, quàm moreretur? quia exisset vulpem, ut agnum indueret.

Others have sought for a door of escape from that exposition of the place yet in hand, which we have asserted, in the hypothetical tenor and form of the words themselves. Ezekiel, say these, doth not affirm that a righteous man may turn aside from his righteousness, &c., or that he may die in his apostasy; but only speaks conditionally, or by way of supposition, viz. that if, or when, he shall turn away from his righteousness, &c., then he shall die, &c. and from such a conditional saying as this, nothing positive can be concluded. But this sanctuary also hath been profaned by some of the chief guardians themselves of that cause for the protection and safety whereof it was built. There needs no more be done, though much more might be done, yea, and hath been done by others,* than what the learned Doctor, so lately named, hath done himself for demolishing it. Having propounded the argument from the place in Ezekiel according to the import of the interpretation asserted by us, "Some," saith he, "answer, that a condition proves nothing in being; which, how true soever it may be in respect of such hypotheticals, which are made use of only for the amplification of matters, and serve for the aggravating either of the difficulty or indignity of a thing, as, 'If I should climb up into heaven, thou art there,' Psal. cxxxix., it were ridiculous to infer, therefore a man may climb into heaven; yet such conditional sayings, upon which admonitions, promises, or threatenings are built, do at least suppose something in possibility, however by virtue of their tenor and form they suppose nothing in being. For no man seriously intending to encourage a student in his way would speak thus to him, If thou wilt get all the books in the university library by heart, thou shalt be Doctor this commencement. Besides, in the case in hand, he that had a mind to deride the prophet might readily come upon him thus: But a righteous man, according to the judgment of those that are orthodox, cannot turn away from his righteousness; therefore your threatening is in vain. Thus we see to how little purpose it is to seek for starting holes in such logic quirks as these."† Thus far this great assertor of the Synod of Dort, and of the cause which they maintained, to show the vanity of such a sense or construction put upon the words now in debate, which shall render them merely conditional, and will not allow them to import so much as a possibility of any thing contained or expressed in them;

* Vid. Defens. Senten. Remonstr. circa art. v. de Persever. p. 220.

† Respondent nonnulli, conditionem nil ponere in esse: quod utcumque verum sit de hypotheticis, quæ ad ἀύξησιν solummodo, sive amplificationem adhibentur, et aggerandæ rei alicujus difficultati, vel indignitati inserviunt (ut si scanderem cælos, ibi es, Psal. cxxxix., ridiculum esset inferre, ergo potest aliquis cælum scandere:) conditionales tamen, quibus comminationes, promissiones, vel comminationes superstruuntur, supponunt saltem aliquid in posse, licet nil ponant ex vi connexionis. Nemo enim serio aliquem ad progressum in studiis sic adhortaretur: Si omnes in publicâ bibliothecâ libros mandes memoriæ, eris Doctor hisce comitiis. Quid? quòd in præsentī negotio, irrisori in promptu esset, sic adversus prophetam subsumere: at justus secundum orthodoxorum thesin non potest se avertere; ergo in nihilum recidit tua interminatio. Videtis quàm parùm opus sit, in logicis hujusmodi tricis, diverticulum quærere.—*Dr. Frid. lect. vi. de Perseverant. Sanct. p. 201.*

to which much more of the like demonstration might be added, if I conceived that light stood in need of light for the manifestation of it. To say that God putteth a case in such solemnity and emphaticalness of words and phrase as are remarkable all along the carriage of the place in hand, of which there is no possibility that it should ever happen or be exemplified in reality of event, and this in vindication of himself and the equity of his dealings and proceedings with men, is to bring a scandal and reproach of weakness, such a weakness as is scarce to be paralleled in men, upon that infinite wisdom of his which magnifies itself in all his words and works: which also is so much the more unworthy and unpardonable, when there is a sense commodious, every way worthy as well the infinite wisdom as goodness of God, pertinent and proper to the occasion he hath in hand, which offers itself plainly, clearly, without any straining of word or phrase, unto us.

Lastly, Some there are, who, being loath to see the cause of their long-magnified doctrine of perseverance dying by the hand of the Scripture yet before us, and despairing of help for it by any or by all the forementioned applications, have thought it not amiss, in a case of such imminent and extreme danger, to try conclusions by administering this antidote unto it. When God threatens, say they, the righteous man apostatising, that for the iniquity which he committeth he shall die, he speaks neither of the first death, properly so called, nor yet of the second death, but of afflictions, judgments, and calamities, (oft signified in Scripture by the word "death," as prosperity is by the word "life,") which God often brings upon truly good and righteous men, when they greatly provoke him by their sins. To this I answer,

1. That this mist hath been already scattered and dispelled by the strength of that light which shineth in the early part of this chapter; by which it clearly appeareth that by the death threatened by God against a righteous man's backsliding, and persevering in his backslidings unto death, (which we there show to be the case put by God in the Scripture in hand,) is meant eternal death; therefore not any temporal judgments or afflictions, at least, not only or principally these. Yet here we add,

2. That it ill becomes an interpreter of Scripture to recede from the plain, proper, and best-known signification of words, save only when necessitated by the exigency either of the context and scope of the place in hand, or else of the nature and condition of the matter, as viz. when the sense which the common signification of the word raiseth and exhibiteth is inconsistent either with the course of the Scriptures or with the principles of reason; neither of which can be reasonably pretended in this place.

3. The express tenor of the context itself riseth up like an armed man against this interpretation. For the execution or infliction of that death which is here threatened against the righteous man that shall apostatise, is not threatened but upon his dying

under his apostasy ; in which case there is no opportunity for God to inflict any temporal judgments upon men : “ When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and *dieth in them*, for his iniquity that he hath done shall he die,” Ezek. xviii. 26.

4. When God threateneth at any time such and such sins, or such and such sinners, in one kind or other, with death, it is of very dangerous consequence, and tending to allay and break the energy and power, and consequently to hinder the operation, of such threatenings upon the consciences of men, for any man to put a qualified or mitigating sense upon the word “ death,” especially not being authorised by God himself so to do.

5, and lastly, The authors themselves of this interpretation seem to be half heartless and hopeless of doing any great matters for their cause by it, and in their explication of themselves about it, they distinguish themselves quite besides that, which should relieve them. The word, death, they say, in the prophet, doth not *in the first sense* of it, signify eternal death, as neither doth the word, life, in the opposite part of the sentence, signify eternal life. But what though the word, death, doth not in the controverted passage, signify eternal death, in the first sense or signification of it, yet if it signifieth it in the second, third, or fourth sense, or if it signifieth it at all, it is of one and the same consideration, for the eviction of what is claimed by us from the place ; which is, that a man truly righteous may so degenerate and apostatise, that God will inflict eternal death upon him. I omit to demand of these interpreters, by what authority or confidence of genius, they undertake thus particularly to range and marshal the several senses, which, they say, God intended in such and such words, giving the pre-eminence to such or such a sense, and saying to another, stand back, or come behind.

If we had mere ignorance or nescience of the truth to encounter, or satisfy, though in conjunction with the greatest parts of judgment and understanding on the one hand, and with the greatest wariness and scrupulousness of circumspection on the other hand, the traversing of the Scripture already insisted upon, were sufficient, I conceive, without any further labour of arguing, to gain credit and fulness of consent to that truth, which is now upon the advance. But prejudice and partiality are hydropical, and hardly satisfiable : and these are our chief adversaries in the business in hand. Therefore to reconcile, if possible, the disaffections of these, with the truth, we shall show them more visions from heaven of the same light and truth with the former. And first, upon this account, we shall remember them of a passage, formerly argued ; and gather up, at present, only so much of the substance of the discussion, and that with what brevity may be, as we judge serviceable for our present purpose, referring the reader to a review, if he please, of the larger examination. The tenor of the place is this : “ Then his Lord, after he had called him, said unto him : O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all the debt, because

thou desiredst me : shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee? And his Lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due to him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." Matt. xviii. 32, &c. Evident it is from our Saviour's reddition or application of the parable, " So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if," &c., speaking unto his disciples, verse 1, and to Peter, more particularly verse 21, that persons truly regenerate, and justified before God, for such were they, to whom in special manner he addresseth the parable, and the application of it, and indeed the whole carriage of the parable showeth that it was calculated and formed only for such, may through high misdemeanors in sinning, as, for example, by unmercifulness, cruelty, oppression, &c., turn themselves out of the justifying grace and favour of God, quench the spirit of regeneration, and come to have their portions with hypocrites and unbelievers. If men will make any thing at all of the parable in a clear and direct way, without troubling or obscuring, without wresting or straining, the carriage, scope, and pregnant tendency of it, such an inference cannot be avoided. Further satisfaction herein may be had for the price only of so much pains, as the perusal of pages 222, 225, of the 8th chapter of this discourse, will require.

Nor doth the reversal of such acts of grace in God as we speak of, argue the least mutability, or shadow of change in him, either in respect of his love, counsels, or decrees ; it only argueth a change and alteration in men. For at that very instant, when God loveth a person, and justifieth him, in respect of his faith, he hateth with a perfect hatred, and such which hath death and destruction in the womb of it, all wicked, cruel, and unmerciful men whatsoever. So that in case that person, whom God now loveth and justifieth, shall at any time hereafter turn wicked, cruel, unmerciful, or the like, which is very possible for him to do, he falleth under that hatred of God, which was in him, even whilst he loved him, and which is always in him, unchangeably, unalterably, and indispensably, in respect of any person or persons whatsoever. Therefore in such a case as this, there is no alteration or change of affection in God, but only a change of mind, will, and ways in men, and that from better unto worse. A man living, or travelling, in a temperate climate, finds no inconvenience or offence, either from cold or heat : but let him remove his dwelling, or travel, either so far north, where extremity of cold reigneth, or so far towards the south, where heat rageth, he will accordingly suffer, from the one and the other. Yet this alteration in the state or condition of his body, doth not argue any alteration at all in the heavens, or in the earth, or in the air : these remain so affected, whilst he suffers from them, as they were, when he was no ways inconvenienced by them. A man who by the laws of the land, or state where he liveth, is at present obnoxious to no penalty at all, inflicted by these laws upon male-

factors, but is capable of the greatest dignity or preferment, which that state affordeth; as soon as he turneth a murderer, or traitor to this state, divests himself of that capacity of honour wherein he stood before, and becomes liable to the severest punishment which those laws inflict. The man's condition hereby is much altered from what it was, and that by reason of the law; but yet the law itself is altogether the same which it was under the one condition of this man, and the other. In like manner God justifieth a man this day, upon his believing: to morrow, upon a return to his vomit of unbelief, he divests him of his justification, and requires his sins at his hand: yet God, notwithstanding these contrary acts in reference unto and about one and the same person, remains entirely one and the same, no ways changed, no ways altered, in his affections, or in any thing else relating to him. But of this *dic kai rpic* already. See Chap iv.

The root or grand occasion of the common mistake in this point, I mean, why men conceive and judge, that if God loves a man at one time, and hates him at another, he must needs be variable in his affection, is that capital error of a personal election, and reprobation; or of such a love in God, which should produce the former, and hatred in him, that should cause the latter. For if there were any such affection or love in God, which did directly and immediately respect, or relate unto the person of any man, then, I confess, it would follow, that if he should at any time hate that person, whom he ever loved, he should be changeable in his affections. But supposing that, which we shall, God sparing life, and affording opportunity otherwise, demonstratively prove in due time, viz. that God bears no affection, or love, to the person of any man, simply in respect of his personality, or because he is this man, and not another; but that all the love that he bears to men, or to any person of man, is either in respect of their nature, and as they are men, in respect of which he bears a general or common love to them; or in respect of their qualifications, as they are good men, in one degree or other; in respect whereof, he bears a more special love to them: and again, that he bears no hatred to the person of any man simply, or, as he is this man, and not another, but only as he is sinful and wicked; it may very easily be conceived, how men may gain, and lose, and regain, and again lose, the love of God, without the least change or alteration in this his affection. Suppose a prince loved no one of his subjects, more than another, as they were his subjects, but thus far loved them all with a gracious and benevolous affection; yet in case any of them should prove more virtuous and deserving than their fellows, should upon such an account, express signal and high respects of favour unto them; and on the other hand, in case any of them proved vicious and ill deserving, should frown upon these, and threaten to punish them, in case of a non-amendment, it may well be apprehended, how the subjects of such a prince may often both rise and fall in their prince's affections, he himself remaining uniform and constant herein.

Another testimony from Scripture, evidencing the same truth with the former, speaketh these words, "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest by any means, when I have preached unto others, I myself should be a castaway," 1 Cor. ix. 27. From which words I argue thus: if Paul, after his conversion unto Christ, was in a possibility of being, or becoming a reprobate, or castaway, then may true believers fall away, both totally and finally, (for finally ever includes totally.) But the antecedent is true; Paul, after his conversion, was in the possibility mentioned. Ergo. The major proposition, I presume, will pass without control. The minor is proved from the place in hand, thus: that which Paul was very solicitous and industrious to prevent, he was in a possibility of suffering, or being made. But Paul was very solicitous and industrious to prevent his being made a castaway, as the Scripture in hand plainly avoucheth; he "kept under his body, and brought it into subjection," in order to prevent his becoming a castaway. Ergo, he was in danger or possibility of being made a castaway. The reason of the consequence in the major proposition is, because no man of understanding will be solicitous to prevent or hinder the coming to pass of such a thing, the coming to pass whereof he knows to be impossible.

It is like it will be here said, that the word *ἀδόκιμος*, translated, a "castaway," doth not always signify a person wholly rejected of God, but sometimes a person reprobable, in respect of some particular action, omission, or course. I answer,

1. The word *ἀδόκιμος*, in the writings of this apostle, is constantly translated "reprobate." See Rom. i. 28; 2 Cor. xiii. 5—7; 2 Tim. iii. 8; Titus i. 16; unless it be once, as viz., Heb. vi. 8, where it is Englished, "rejected;" which, in sense and import, is as much as, "reprobate," as is evident from the expressions which accompany it. "But that (earth) which beareth thorns and briers, is rejected, and is *nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned,*" Heb. vi. 8.

2. Chrysostom, who is generally acknowledged to be the best expositor of Scripture amongst all the fathers, by the word *ἀδόκιμος*, understands a person rejected from salvation by God. "Do not think," saith Paul, "as this author commenteth on the place, "when once you have believed, that it is sufficient to save you: for if it be not sufficient for me to salvation, to preach, to teach, to bring thousands unto God, unless I be unreprouvable also in my personal ways and actions, much less will it be so unto you."*"

3. Pareus himself acknowledgeth, that, besides Chrysostom, Ambrose, Theophylact, and Lyra, interpret the word, and place, accordingly.†

4. Our best modern expositors themselves, though for the most part they strain hard to deliver the common doctrine of persever-

* *Μὴ γὰρ δὴ νομισθῆτε, φησιν, ἰπειδὴν ἐπιστεύσατε, ὅτι ἀρκεῖ τῆτο εἰς σωτηρίαν ὑμῶν. Εἰ γὰρ ἐμοὶ τὸ κηρύξαι, τὸ διδάξαι, τὸ μυρίους προσαγαγεῖν οὐκ ἀρκεῖ εἰς σωτηρίαν, εἰ μὴ τὰ κατ' ἐμαυτὸν παρεχόμεν ἄληπτα, πολλῶ μᾶλλον ὑμῶν.*

† Par. ad Roman. p. 780.

ance out of the hand of the word ἀδόκιμος, yet, by the tenor of the sentence, and manifest scope of the place, are so amused in their design, that in their expressions they fall into the way of the ancient interpretation mentioned. Calvin, having mentioned the exposition of some to this effect, "Lest, when I have well and faithfully taught others, I myself, by an evil course of life, should receive the sentence of damnation from God," doth not at all tax this exposition, but only presents another, which, as he supposeth, doth *melius quadrare*, better suit with the place. And yet, immediately after, acknowledgeth that the sentence may cohere with the former saying, thus, "Lest I be defrauded," or deprived, "of the Gospel, whereof others, by my means, are made partakers."* Which sense, with that contended for by us, are no more two, but one interpretation. Musculus is right down for the same sense, upon the place. "The first reason," saith he, "is, lest he should become a reprobate, *i. e.* lest he should be amongst those who do not run," or strive, "lawfully, and so never come to obtain the prize."† Mr. John Deodate, as he is Englished upon the place, thus, "A castaway, *i. e.* found unworthy of being approved and rewarded, as one of God's bold champions. He hath a relation to that there were certain colleges or schools of these exercises of arms, in which those that were entered, if they did not submit themselves to the rigour of the discipline, or did not prove as they should do, were *crossed out* by the masters." Our English annotators, who plough much of their ground with Mr. Deodate's heifer, incumber their opinion about perseverance, with words of the same import upon the place. So that the best ancient expositors, freely, and with perfect agreement to themselves, and their judgments otherwise, and the best modern interpreters, unwillingly, and without sparing themselves in their opinions otherwise, give testimony to such a sense of the word ἀδόκιμος, and so of the whole period, which clearly asserteth a possibility of a final fall in true believers.

5, and lastly, The scope of the place, from verse 23, evinceth the legitimacy of such a sense in both, above all contradiction. For the apostle, having asserted this for the reason, motive, or end, why he had made himself a servant unto all men, in bearing with all men's humours and weaknesses in the course of his ministry, viz., that he might be partaker of the Gospel, *i. e.* of the saving benefit or blessing of the Gospel, with them, verse 23, and again, that what he did, he did it to "obtain an incorruptible crown," verse 25, plainly showeth, that that which he sought to prevent, by running, and fighting at such a high rate as he did, was not the blame or disparagement of some such misbehaviour, under which, not-

* Nonnulli exponunt, ne cum alios bene ac fideliter docuero, malè vivendo, damnationis judicium à Deo reportem. Potest etiam conjungi cum superiore dicto, in hunc modum; ne Evangelio defrauder, cujus alii meâ operâ fiunt participes.

† Ratio est, *i. e.* ne reprobus fiat. Hoc est, ne inter eos sit, qui non ritè currunt, adeoque nec brabio potiuntur.

withstanding he might retain the saving love of God, but the loss of his part and portion in the Gospel, and of that incorruptible crown, which he sought, by that severe hand, which he still held over himself, to obtain.

Pareus seems not to be very difficult in admitting the sense of the place contended for, but denies that this sense doth any ways imply or suppose any danger or possibility of Paul's becoming a reprobate. To which point he reasoneth thus: "As it followeth not; Christ died lest believers should perish, therefore believers are in danger of perishing, but on the contrary, that believers are out of the danger of perishing because Christ died for them. So," saith he, "it doth not follow; I keep under my body, lest I should be a reprobate, therefore I am in danger of being a reprobate; but on the contrary, therefore there is no danger of my being a reprobate because I keep my body under," &c.*

To this I answer, If this author intends only to assert by this arguing that Paul was in no danger of being a reprobate, whilst he did continue that holy exercise of keeping under his body, which he speaks of, I am not he that shall oppose him. Doubtless Paul was in no danger, no, nor yet in any possibility, which is much less than a danger, of being a reprobate, or of being rejected by God, whilst he used the means specified to prevent it. But,

2. If his intent be to assert, or affirm, either that Paul, whilst he did keep under his body, was in no possibility of giving over his exercise in this kind; or, that in case of giving it over, he was in no possibility of becoming a reprobate hereby; my answer is, that his argument reacheth neither of these, unless it be in a way of confutation. For as there was a precedaneous possibility, that Christ who did die, might not have died; and again, in case he had not died, that the persons who now believe in him, and are saved, should not have been saved; in like manner, there was a possibility, both that Paul, who did now keep under his body, might not have kept it under, or might not continue to keep it under, and that in case he had not continued to keep it under, he might be a reprobate. Nay, as in case Christ had not died, there had not been a possibility only, but even a certainty of their perishing, who now by believing on him are saved: in like manner, in case Paul had deserted his exercise of keeping under his body, there had been more than a possibility, and no whit less than a certainty, of his proving a reprobate; though now, by means of his persevering therein unto the end, as we have cause in abundance to judge concerning him, he be saved. So that the argument recoils, as we see, upon the author himself, and the cause which he seeks to maintain by it.

* Sicut igitur non sequitur: Christus est mortuus, ne credentes in eum pereant: ergo periculum est, ne credentes pereant: sed contra: ergo non est periculum, quia Christus est mortuus. Ita non sequitur: contundo corpus, ne reprobus flam: ergo periculum est, ne reprobus flam: sed contra: ergo non est periculum, quia contundo corpus, &c.—*Pareus in viii. Rom. Dub. 15, p. 780.*

Our English annotators upon the place are very tender of admitting any such sense of the word ἀδόκιμος, which should imply any uncertainty in the apostle of his election or of obtaining the prize. But the truth is, that that sense of the word, for which we have contested, doth no ways imply the former; nor yet, if by uncertainty be meant any thing grievous or discouraging to the apostle, the latter. For, 1. He might, notwithstanding a possibility of becoming a reprobate afterwards, know certainly that for the present he was elected, inasmuch as know he might with the greatest certainty, and doubtless did, that he did believe. And that all those who truly believe, are elected, our adversaries themselves will not deny. 2. Notwithstanding such a possibility as we suppose, of his becoming a reprobate, he might have as much certainty of obtaining the prize, as he desired, or was any ways meet or reasonable for him, either to desire or enjoy. This certainty he might have, and questionless had, upon his continuance in well doing: and for any man to be certain of obtaining the prize, though he should apostatise and decline into ways of wickedness, is not a certainty either meet for God to give, or for any man to receive. Somewhat more was said upon this account in the ninth chapter.

The next passage we shall insist upon, to evince the possibility of a final defection in the saints, openeth itself in these words. "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. For the earth, which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them, by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God. But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned," Heb. vi. 4—8. Answerable hereunto is another in the same epistle: "For if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite to the Spirit of grace?" Heb. x. 26—29. Evident it is, that in these two passages the Holy Ghost, after a most serious manner, and with a very pathetic and moving strain of speech and discourse, scarce the like to be found in all the Scriptures, admonisheth those, who are at present true believers, to take heed of relapsing into the ways of their former ignorance and impiety. This caveat or admonition he vehemently presseth by an argument of this import; that in case they shall thus relapse, there will be very little, or no hope at all,

of their recovery, or return to the estate of faith and grace wherein they now stand. Before the faces of such sayings and passages as these, rightly understood, and duly considered, there is no standing for that doctrine, which denies a possibility either of a total or final defection in the saints. But this light also is darkened in the heavens thereof, by the interposition of the veils of these two exceptions. 1. That the apostle in the said passages affirms nothing positively concerning the falling away of those he speaks of, but only conditionally, and upon supposition. 2. That he doth not speak of true and sound believers, but of hypocrites, and such who had faith only in show, not in substance. The former of these exceptions has been already non-suited, and that by some of the ablest patrons themselves of the cause of perseverance;* where we were taught from a pen of that learning, "That such conditional sayings upon which admonitions, promises, or threatenings are built, do at least suppose something in possibility, however by virtue of their tenor and form they suppose nothing in being." But,

2. As to the places in hand, there is not any hypothetical sign or conditional particle to be found in either of them, as they come from the Holy Ghost, and are carried in the original. Those two "ifs," appearing in the English translation, the one in the former place, the other in the latter, show, it may be, the translators' inclination to the cause, but not their faithfulness in their engagement; an infirmity whereunto they were very subject, as we shall have occasion to take notice of the second time ere long in another instance of like partiality: but the tenor of both the passages in hand is so ordered by the apostle, that he plainly declares how great and fearful the danger is, or will be, "when" believers do or shall "fall away," not "if," or in case, they shall "fall away."

To the latter exception, which pretends to find only hypocrites, and not true believers, staged in both passages, we likewise answer, that it glosseth no whit better than the former, if not much worse, considering that the persons presented in the said passages are described by such characters and signal excellences which the Scriptures are wont to appropriate unto saints and true believers, and that when they intend to show them in the best and greatest of their glory. What we say herein will, I suppose, be made above all gainsaying by instancing particulars.

1. The persons spoken of are, in the former of the passages, said to be φωτισθέντες, *i. e.* "enlightened," meaning, with the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ in the gospel. How frequently is this grace of illumination or enlightening attributed unto the saints or true believers? The apostle having said that "the god of this world had blinded the eyes of those who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine unto them," he adds soon after, "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts,"

* Chap. XI. p. 317.

πρὸς φωτισμόν, "to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God," &c., 2 Cor. iv. 6: so that true believers are here distinguished from unbelievers by this, that they are "enlightened;" the others having their eyes "blinded," by reason whereof they are without any such illumination. So again, where he saith to these Hebrews, "But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were enlightened," φωτισθέντες, "ye endured a great fight of afflictions," Heb. x. 32, he clearly termeth their conversion itself to the faith, the illumination or enlightening: yea, this illumination is so appropriate unto the saints or sound believers, that our Saviour himself styles the generation of them *υιοὶ τοῦ φωτός*, "children of light," Luke xvi. 8. So the apostle Paul admonisheth the Ephesians to walk, *ὡς τέκνα φωτός*, "as children of the light," Eph. v. 8; meaning, as saints or true believers: and in the same verse he distinguisheth their present estate in faith from their former in unbelief thus, "For ye were sometimes darkness; but now are ye light in the Lord."

2. In the latter of the said passages, the persons spoken of are said to have "received" *ἐπίγνωσιν τῆς ἀληθείας*, *i. e.* "the acknowledgment of the truth;" which expression doth not signify the bare notion or apprehension of what the gospel teacheth and holdeth forth, of which they are capable who are the most professed enemies thereof, but such a consenting and subjection hereunto which worketh effectually in men to a separating of themselves from sin and sinners. This is the constant acception and import of the phrase in the Scriptures. "Always learning," saith the apostle, 'of silly women, laden with sins,' "and never able to come," *εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν ἀληθείας*, "to an acknowledgment of the truth," 2 Tim. iii. 7; *i. e.* to a thorough and cordial assent to it, which is wont to utter itself in a suitable conversation. So when he saith that "God will have all men to be saved and to come," *εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν ἀληθείας*, "to the knowledge," or acknowledgment, rather, "of the truth," 1 Tim. ii. 4, by "coming to the acknowledgment of the truth," he cannot mean any thing ineffectual or unavailable to salvation: such a sense would render the sentence senseless, and exhibit it in this form, "God will have all men to be saved, and come to" that which is not able to save them. Therefore, by "the acknowledgment of the truth," is meant such a cordial and thorough assent to it which consists in a sound and saving faith. So when he saith that "the servant of the Lord must be gentle . . . in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance," *εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν ἀληθείας*, "to," or for, "the acknowledgment of the truth," he clearly supposeth "the acknowledgment of the truth" to be either the end or special perfection of repentance, *i. e.* such a thing which demonstrates repentance to be sound and of the saving kind, wherever it is found. There is but one place more where the phrase is used, and here also it bears as high a sense as in the testimonies already opened: "Paul a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus

Christ, according to the faith of God's elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which is after godliness," Titus i. 1. By the "acknowledgment of the truth," cannot any such knowledge of it be meant, in this place, which should stand with unregeneracy or unbelief, because then Paul should style himself "an apostle of Jesus Christ according to" the exigency or requirement of such a "knowledge" of the gospel in men which is insufficient to save them—a sense ridiculous and preposterous. Somewhat was done by us in the preceding chapter towards the unfolding of this place: yea, the word *ἐπίγνωσιν*, "acknowledgment," in construction with other words of like import, as the "acknowledgment of Christ," Eph. i. 17; "of the sons of God," Eph. iv. 13; "of God," Col. i. 10; "of the mystery of God," Col. ii. 2; "of him that hath called us," 2 Pet. i. 3, to omit many the like, still importeth such a knowledge which accompanieth a sound and saving faith.

3. The persons queried about, are said to be "sanctified with" or by "the blood of the covenant," *i. e.* by their being sprinkled herewith to be separated from such who refuse this sprinkling, as likewise from the pollutions and defilements of the world. To "be sanctified," when applied unto persons, is not found in any other sense throughout the New Testament, unless it be where persons bear the consideration and respect of things rather than of persons, and this only in that one place, 1 Cor. vii. 14. But of this signification of the word, which we claim in this place, instances are so frequent and obvious that we shall not need to mention any; and we have formerly, I remember, demonstratively evinced that the Scripture in hand speaks of none other but a true and real sanctification, Chap. viii., and such which is appropriate unto saints.

4. They are said to "taste," or to have "tasted, of the heavenly gift." By this heavenly gift may be meant either, 1. Christ himself, who is called "the gift of God," John iv. 10; or, 2. The Holy Ghost, who is said to be "given to them that believe," Acts xi. 17; and again, to them "who obey God," Acts v. 32; or, 3. The gift of righteousness or justification, for this also is called a "gift," Rom. v. 15—17; or, 4, and lastly, Salvation or eternal life, which also is termed the "gift of God," Rom. vi. 23. Now, all these gifts are given only unto true believers. Whatsoever is meant by this heavenly gift, certain it is that, by tasting, is not meant any light or superficial impression made upon the hearts or souls of men, through the sense or apprehension of it, but an emphatical, inward, and affectuous relish and sense of the excellent and heavenly sweetness and pleasantness of it, opposed to a bare speculation, or naked apprehension thereof. The reason hereof is clear, *viz.* because the tasting of this heavenly gift here spoken of, is not mentioned by the apostle in a way of easing or extenuating the sin of those that should fall away from Christ, but by way of aggravation and exaggeration of the heinousness and unreasonableness thereof; and withal, more fully to declare and assert the equitableness of that

severity in God, which is here denounced against those, that shall sin the great sin of apostasy here spoken of, it must needs be much more unworthy and provoking in the sight of God, for a man to turn his back upon, and renounce those ways, that profession, wherein God hath come home to him, and answered the joy of his heart abundantly, than it would be in case he had only heard of great matters, and had his head filled, but had really found and felt nothing with his heart and soul truly excellent and glorious. Therefore, to understand the phrase of "Tasting the heavenly gift," in any diminutive or extenuating sense, is to break the heart, as it were, to dissipate the strength and power of the apostle's arguing in this place. And besides, the very word itself, to "taste," ordinarily in Scripture, imports a real communion with, or participation and enjoyment, if the thing be good, of that which is said to be tasted. "O *taste* and see," saith David, "that the Lord is good," Psa. xxxiv. 8. His intent, doubtless, was not to invite men to a slight or superficial taste of the goodness of God, but to a real, cordial, and thorough experiment, and satisfactory enjoyment of it. So, when he that made the great invitation in the parable, expressed himself thus to his servants: "For I say unto you that none of those that were bidden shall *taste* of my supper," Luke xiv. 24; his meaning clearly was, that they should not partake of the sweetness and benefit thereof with those who should accept of his invitation, and come unto it. In like manner, when Peter speaketh thus to his Christian Jews, "If so be that ye have *tasted* that the Lord is gracious," 1 Pet. ii. 3, his meaning, unquestionless, is not to press his exhortation directed unto them in the former verse, upon a consideration of any light or vanishing taste, such as hypocrites and false-hearted Christians might have of the graciousness of the Lord, but of such a taste wherein they had had a real, inward, and sensible experiment thereof. See other instances of the like import of the word, Acts x. 10; Matt. xvi. 28; Mark ix. 1; Heb. ii. 9, &c. Sometimes, I acknowledge, the word *γεύσασθαι*, to taste, signifies only a slender perception of the quality or taste of a thing; but this is only or chiefly when the relish or taste of a thing is desired to be known; as John ii. 9; Matt. xxvii. 34; which cannot be affirmed in the Scripture in hand. And, besides, according to the sense of our adversaries in the present debate, if the taste of the heavenly gift we speak of should imply no more, but only a faint or weak perception of the sweetness and glorious excellency of it, yet even this may be sufficient to evince truth of grace and faith in men. For their opinion is, that a man may be a true believer with a grain of mustard seed only, *i. e.* with a very slender relish and taste of spiritual things; yea, their sense is, that in some cases of desertion, and under the guilt of some enormous courses, they may have little or no taste of them at all. Therefore we may safely conclude, that the persons whose estates and conditions are exhibited unto us by the Holy Ghost, in the Scriptures in hand, are true saints, true believers.

5. This conclusion may be rendered yet more authentic, and full of light unto us, by considering further, that the said persons are here represented as having sometimes worn this crown of saintship upon their heads; they were made "partakers of the Holy Ghost." To be made partaker of the Holy Ghost signifies no less than to be made partaker of his regenerating virtue or power, (as to be made partaker of Christ, signifies a saving communion with him by faith, Heb. iii. 1; and so, communion or partnership with God, 1 John i. 2, 6, imports an estate of salvation, at least;) it usually signifies more, viz. some additional and richer communion with him by way of oblation, or earnest; *i. e.* such a communion with him, by which true believers become mightily strengthened in their inner man, and filled with confidence of receiving the great inheritance of heaven in due time. Upon this account the apostle prays, on the behalf of the Corinthians, whom he supposeth all along to have been true believers, that *ἡ κοινωνία τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος*, "the communion of the Holy Ghost might be with them;" 2 Cor. xiii. 13; meaning, some richer and greater presence of his than yet they had found with them. And if we mind the course of the Scriptures they will inform us that the Holy Ghost was not wont to be given unto men, (and, consequently, they could not be partakers of him,) but upon and after their believing. See to this purpose, John vii. 39; Acts xix. 2; Eph. i. 13; Acts ii. 38; viii. 15—17; x. 47; xi. 17; xv. 8; 2 Cor. i. 22; Acts v. 32, &c. Therefore, certainly, those that are said to be made partakers of the Holy Ghost, are at least true believers.

If it be objected, But many had the gift of miracles, and in this respect may be said to have been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, who yet never were true believers, as appears from those words of Christ unto some of them; "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity," Matt. vii. 23; to this I answer, It is very true, some who made profession of the faith of Christ, and yet wrought iniquity all the while they made this profession, had the gift of miracles for the confirmation of that faith which they professed. But such persons as these are nowhere in Scripture said to have been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, or to have had communion or fellowship with him. Even all the while that they wrought miracles in the name of Christ, they had communion or fellowship with Satan, and were partakers of his spirit. Communion with, or partaking of the Holy Ghost, is, as hath been shown in Scripture dialect, appropriated only to true believers. And whereas Christ will say to them, *οὐδέποτε ἔγνων ὑμᾶς*, "I never knew you," *i. e.* approved you or liked your ways, the computation of the time of his dislike of them is here intimated to begin, when they began to work iniquity, and more particularly, when they entered upon the profession of his name, without ceasing from their works of iniquity. So that the meaning of the clause, "I never knew you," is only this: From first to last of your profession of my name, even when others honoured

and highly esteemed you for those excellent gifts which were given you, and for your exercise of them to the benefit of many, I never looked upon you as any true disciples or friends of mine, seeing and beholding your evil ways and works.

6. The persons yet sought after, whether hypocrites or true believers, are further said to have "tasted the good word of God," *i. e.* according to the import of the word "tasting," lately opened, to have had a lively and satisfactory impression upon their hearts and consciences, of the goodness, *i. e.* of the great beneficialness of the word of God, or the gospel, unto them; as being "able to build them up, and to give them an inheritance amongst those that are sanctified," Acts xx. 32. Goodness seems to be interpreted by the Holy Ghost himself, by bountifulness, or beneficialness. "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man, some would even dare to die," Rom. v. 8. "For a good man," *i. e.* for a liberal, or bountiful man, and who is a benefactor unto many. So again: "Is thine eye evil, because I am good?" Matt. xx. 15; *i. e.* because I am bountiful, or beneficent unto men? Upon this account, doubtless, it is, that the law of God is termed "good," Rom. vii. 12; viz., because, as David saith, "in keeping it," and the precepts of it, "there is great reward," Psalm xix. 11; the law of God is a great benefactress to those who observe it. Now then, this tasting the goodness of the word of God, the Scripture clearly appropriateth unto the saints. "Are not my words good?" or, do not my words good, as our last translation readeth, "unto him that walketh uprightly?" Micah ii. 7; implying that they are not so to wicked men. "The law of thy mouth," saith David in his holy applications unto God, "is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver," Psalm cxix. 72; "unto me,"—tacitly implying, that other men, of a different spirit from him, do not taste any such sweetness or goodness in them. And the apostle Paul puts the point in question, out of question, in that decision of his: "To the one," meaning to unbelieving and wicked men, "we are the savour of death unto death: and to the other," *i. e.* to those who truly believe, "the savour of life unto life," 2 Cor. ii. 16. So that hypocrites and unbelievers are incapable, whilst such, of tasting the "good word of God," *i. e.* the word of God in the goodness, sweetness, and bountifulness of it; the taste which they have of it, is in the terror and severity of it against wicked men. And whereas tasting is not without touching, nor touching without application of the object, it appears that those who "taste the good word of God," must needs make application of the goodness of it unto themselves and their own souls; which our adversaries frequently make a distinguishing character between hypocrites and true believers.

7, and lastly, The persons we speak of, are yet further said to have tasted *δυνάμεις μέλλοντος αἰῶνος*, "the powers of the world to come," *i. e.* not the powers of miracles, as Pareus interprets, there is a manifest incongruity in such an interpretation, which we leave

to the reader to conceive; but either the joys of heaven, as our English annotators, or the might and glorious things of immortality, which is the more general interpretation; or rather, as Cameron expoundeth, the incarnation, humiliation, sufferings, death, resurrection, ascension, &c. of the Son of God;* which may therefore be termed, *δυνάμεις*, "the powers of the world to come," either because they are, in respect of their full notification unto men, appropriate to the times of the gospel, wherein the great change and new state of spiritual affairs, in comparison of what they were under the law, may well be termed, "the world to come," as Pareus and others understand the expression, both here and elsewhere in the same epistle, and with all, are exceeding full of efficacy and power, to ravish the hearts of men into the heavens; or else because the glorious estate of life and immortality in the world-to come, as it is attainable, and enjoyable by men, depends upon them, as a means full of efficacy and power to bring them hereunto. But whatsoever in particular be meant by these powers of the world to come, incontrovertible it is, that in the general, somewhat transcendently excellent and glorious was intended by the apostle to be signified by them. So that for any person to be admitted to the taste of them, *i. e.* to a real and inward feeling of their virtue, influence, and vigour, upon his heart and soul, fully evinceth him to be a member of the congregation of the first-born, to have spiritual communion by faith with Jesus Christ.

The premises relating to the two passages yet under debate, considered, I am so far from questioning whether the apostle speaks of true and sound believers in them, that I verily judge that he purposely sought out several of the most emphatical and signal characters of believers, yea, such which are hardly, or rather not at all, to be found in the ordinary sort of true believers, but only in those that are most eminent amongst them, that so he might give them to understand and consider, that not true believers only, and such who, though sound, were yet weak in the faith, might fall away and perish, but that even such also, who were lifted up nearer unto heaven than their fellows, might, through carelessness and carnal security, dash themselves in pieces against the same stone, and make shipwreck of their souls, as well as they. Yea, I conceive yet further, that that *impossibility* of being "renewed again by repentance," upon, or after, a falling away, which he asserts in the former passage of the two, was not asserted by him with an eye to the state or condition of ordinary believers, in case of their falling away, as if he intended to conclude them under the heavy doom of such an impossibility, but with an eye only to the most deplorable condition of such who, having been sons of the morning, and shined with more lustre and brightness than other stars, in the firmament of Christian profession, should, notwithstanding, afterwards fall with Satan "like lightning from heaven," Luke x. 18. My

* Cameron. Myroth. page 320.

meaning is not to imply, that true believers, if but of a mean stature and growth in the faith, are in no danger of final obduration, or under no great difficulty of recovering their former standing, in case they shall fall away, but only to observe, that that most serious and severe admonition, administered by the apostle in the passages in hand, by way of antidote against the great evil of apostasy, was in a more especial manner calculated for the estates and conditions of grand believers.

But that it was no part of his intent in the said passages to caution hypocrites or outside professors against falling away, but true believers only, besides the characters already observed and examined upon the point, there are these reasons pregnant of proof.

1. There is no clause, phrase, or word in either of the places, any ways characteristical or descriptive of hypocrisy, or hypocrites: there are none of those colours to be seen, which are wont to be used in drawing or limning the portraitures or shapes of these beasts, as distinguished from creatures of a better kind. All the lineaments of the persons presented in these tables, before the mention of their falling away, become the best and fairest faces of the saints, as hath been proved, and are not to be found in any other. Yea, the greatest and most intelligent believer under heaven hath no reason but to desire part and fellowship with the hypocrites here described, in all those characters and properties, which are attributed unto them before their falling away, or sinning wilfully.

2. True believers are in an estate of honour, and are lifted up on high, towards the heavens; in which respect they have from whence to fall. But hypocrites are as near hell already, as lightly they can be, till they be actually fallen into it. From whence, then, are they capable of falling? Men of estates may fail, and break, but beggars are in no such danger. If hypocrites fall away, it must be from their hypocrisy; but this is rather a rising, than a fall. A beggar cannot be said to break, but only when he gets an estate. When he doth this, the beggar is broke.

3. It is no punishment at all to hypocrites, to be under no possibility of being renewed again by repentance. Nay, in case they should fall away, it would be a benefit and blessing unto them, to be under an impossibility of being renewed again. For if this were their case it would be impossible for them to be ever hypocrites again; and, doubtless, it is no great judgment upon any man to be made incapable of such a preferment.

4, and lastly, It stands off forty foot at least from all probability, that the apostle writing only unto those whom he judged true and sound believers (as appears from several places in the epistle, as chap. iii. 14; vi. 9, &c.) should in the most serious, emphatical, and weighty passages hereof, admonish them of such evils or dangers which only concerned other men, and whereunto themselves were not at all obnoxious: yea, and whereunto if they had been

obnoxious, all the cautions, admonitions, warnings, threatenings in the world would not, according to their principles with whom we have now to do, have relieved or delivered them. To say that such admonitions are a means to preserve those from apostasy, who are by other means (as suppose the absolute decree of God, or the interposal of his irresistible power for their perseverance, or the like,) in no possibility of apostatising, is to say that washing is a means to make snow white, or the rearing up of a pillar in the air a means to keep the heavens from falling. But more of this in the chapter following.

Thus then we clearly see by the impartial discussion of the two Scriptures lately insisted upon, that there is a possibility that true believers, yea, the greatest in this rank or order of men, may fall away, and that to an impossibility of a return to their former standing, by repentance. Whether the apostle speaks of a district and absolute impossibility in this place, or of such an impossibility only, which our Saviour expoundeth by a difficulty, Matt. xix. 23—26, doth no ways alter the state of that conclusion which we have wrought from it. Pareus, from Nazianzen, mentioneth six several significations of the word impossible, and preferreth two of them with equal approbation to the apostle's service in this place. Neither of them imports that rigid or district impossibility we speak of: but the one, such an impossibility which is caused through want of strength in him that should perform a thing; the other, such which exceedeth the course of nature and efficiency of second causes. So that he supposeth a liberty or power remaining in God to renew again by repentance the persons here spoken of, after their falling away, notwithstanding that impossibility which is here asserted of their recovery. Which interpretation of his I willingly subscribe unto, and could plead the cause of such a subscription if it were pertinent to the process of the business in hand.

That which is commonly alleged in opposition to what hath been argued concerning the two last Scriptures, is of little consideration, excepting only those Scriptures and arguments by which the doctrine of perseverance in the general is wont to be maintained, both which we have answered at large in the two next preceding chapters. To say with Pareus, that "The apostasy and event prove the persons spoken of to have been hypocrites,"* is to cause a man's opinion to rise up early to praise itself. His refuge of an hypothetical form in the words is but a sanctuary built in the air, as we showed formerly. There is nothing hypothetical in either of the passages, if there were, his greatest friends and abettors have polluted that sanctuary, and made it unclean for his use, as hath once and again been declared. And with how little truth, he, or any man can affirm, that "All things here attributed to the apostates spoken of, illuminations, gifts of tongues and

* Hypocritas fuisse, apostasia et eventus declarat.

miracles, the tasting of the good word of God and faith, &c., amount to nothing more than to what hypocrites may have,"* hath been our chief design in the traverse of the places to show and prove.

The next Scripture testimony we shall produce, and briefly urge in the cause now under maintenance, is in the same epistle with the former, and speaketh these words: "Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him," Heb. x. 38. Our English translators, out of good will doubtless to a bad cause, have almost defaced this testimony, by substituting any man for the just man. For whereas they translate, "but if any man draw back," the original readeth, *καὶ ἂν ὑποστειλήται*, *i. e.* and if (or, but if) *he* (*i. e.* the just man, who should live by his faith, viz. if he continues in it,) shall draw back. Beza himself likewise before them, had stained the honour of his faithfulness with the same blot in his translation. But the mind of the Holy Ghost in the words is plain, and without parallel, viz. that if the just man, who lives (*i. e.* who at present enjoys the favour of God, and thereby is supported in all his trials,) and should live always by his faith (if he continues in it, as Pareus well glosseth) shall draw back, or shall be withdrawn (viz. through fear or sloth, as the word properly signifieth, see Acts xx. 27,) from his believing, "my soul shall have no pleasure in him," *i. e.* according to the import of the Hebraism, my soul shall hate or abhor him to the death; † as it is also expounded in the words immediately following, "But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but," &c. From hence then evident it is, that such a man who is a just or righteous man, and under promise of living for ever by his faith, (and, therefore, also a true and sound believer,) may draw back, or be withdrawn to the contracting of the hatred of God, and to destruction in the end. The forlorn hope of evading, because the sentence is hypothetical or conditional, not positive, hath been routed over and over, yea, and is abandoned by some of the great masters themselves of that cause, unto the defence whereof it pretendeth; and, however, in this place it would be most preposterous. For if it should be supposed that the just man, who is in a way and under a promise of living by his faith, were in no danger or possibility of drawing back, and that to the loss of the favour of God and ruin of his soul, God must be conceived to speak here at no better rate of wisdom or understanding than thus, The just shall live by his faith, but if he shall do that which is simply and utterly impossible for him to do, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. What savour of wisdom, yea, or of common sense, is there in admonishing or cautioning men against such

* *Apostolus autem non dicit categoricè, semel illuminatos prolabi, sed hypotheticè, si prolabantur.* Ab hypotheticà autem non valet consequentia, nisi conditione positâ.

† *Apud Hebræos, adverbium negandi contrarium ejus, cui adhibentur, significant.—Mel. Apoc. p. 172.*

evils, which there is no possibility for them to fall into, yea, and this known unto themselves? Therefore this testimony, for confirmation of the doctrine we maintain, is like "a king upon his throne, against whom there is no rising up."

The same doctrine is clearly taught and asserted by our Saviour himself in the parable of the sower. But he, saith he, "that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it. Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended," Matt. xiii. 20, 21. The words are part of the explication, or application of the said parable, wherein our Saviour plainly declareth that the persons typified by the several grounds specified therein, were several kinds of hearers of the gospel, some whereof should, or would, hear upon such terms, that their hearing would turn to the blessed account of saving their souls: these, saith he, were signified by the good ground, spoken of in the parable. Others of them, would hear without reaping any such benefit thereby; and this partly by not setting their minds at all upon what they should hear, who were resembled to the high way: partly by a neglect to ground and establish themselves throughly in the truth and goodness of the gospel, after their hearing and embracing of it; these, saith he, were shadowed by the stony ground; partly also, by suffering the cares and lusts of the world to overgrow the sproutings or puttings forth of the gospel in their hearts and souls, by means whereof they came, after a while, to wither, and die quite away: and these, saith he, were pointed at by the thorny ground. Now those signified by the stony ground, he expressly calleth *προσκαίρους*, *i. e.* persons who continue for a time, or a season, *i. e.*, as Luke explaineth, *οἱ πρὸς καιρὸν πιστεύουσι*, who believe for a season, Luke viii. 13. So that those, who only for a time believe, and afterward make defection from Christ, and from the gospel, are nevertheless numbered and ranked by him amongst believers. The words in Luke are very particular: "They on the rock, are they which when they hear, receive the word with joy: and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away." From whence it appears, that the hearers here described, are not compared to the rock, or stony ground, for the hardness of their hearts; inasmuch as they are said to receive the word with joy; which argues an ingenuity and teachableness of spirit in them; and is elsewhere, *viz.* Acts ii. 41, taken knowledge of by the Holy Ghost, as an index or sign of a true believer: but for such a property, disposition, or temper as this, *viz.* not to give or afford the word so received, a radication in their hearts and souls, so intimous, serious, and solid, which should be sufficient to maintain their belief of it, and good affections to it, against all such occurrences in the world, which may oppose or attempt either the one or the other. For this is the nature or condition

of a stony, or rocky soil, which hath but a thin coat or covering of mould, or earth upon it; viz. to exhibit a speedy and sudden spring, or blade, from the seed that is sown in it, but not to afford this blade, or seed, any such rooting, which is sufficient to preserve it from scorching, when the sun beats violently and for any considerable space of time together, with his fiery beams upon it. But as the blade which springs from one and the same kind of seed, as suppose from wheat, or any other grain, though sown in different, yea, or contrary soils, is yet of the same species, or kind, the nature of the soil not changing the specific nature of the seed that is sown in it, and "God giving to every seed its own body," of what temper soever the ground is, where it is sown; in like manner that faith, which springs from the same seed of the gospel, must needs be of one and the same nature and kind, though this seed be sown in hearts of never so differing a constitution and frame; the temper of the heart, be it what it will be, not being able specifically to alter, either the gospel, or the natural fruit issuing from it. And as a blade or ear of wheat, though it be blasted before the harvest, is not hereby proved not to have been a true blade or ear of wheat before it was blasted: in like manner the withering or decay of any man's faith, by what means or occasion soever, before his death, doth not prove it to have been a false, counterfeit, or hypocritical faith, or a faith of any other kind, than that which is true, real, and permanent unto the end. Therefore the possibility of a final defection in those, who for a time truly believe, believe with the same kind of faith, whereby others persevering in it to the end are saved, is clearly asserted by the Lord Christ himself in the said parable; yea, there is not only a possibility in this kind asserted by him, but a futurity also of many instances, wherein this possibility would be acted upon the great stage of the world.

Against the interpretation given, and the inference drawn from the words lately opened, it is commonly objected, that our Saviour in the second ground (and so in the third) doth not set forth the condition of true believers, or speak of true justifying faith, but of temporary believers, and of a temporary faith. I answer,

1. That if by a temporary faith the objectors mean a faith which is eventually only such, it is acknowledged that the Scripture owneth both the term and notion. But if by a temporary faith they mean a faith intrinsically, in the nature and kind of it, differing from that which is true and truly justifying, they devise a new kind of faith which the Scriptures know not of; and of how dangerous a consequence the introducing of an exotic faith into the affairs of Christian religion may be, I leave to themselves to judge. For those hearers or professors, which in Matthew's relation of the parable our Saviour calls *πρόσκαιροι*, temporaries, are explained by Luke to be such, *οἱ πρὸς καιρὸν πιστεύουσι*, who *believe* for a season, as we heard before. Now the ordinary and most familiar significa-

tion of the word, πιστεῖν, to believe, in such cases and construction as this, I mean, when it is used indefinitely, and without a specification of some particular object, is to signify, true believers, or such who believe unto justification. Instances hereof are too many to be numbered. And to turn words out of their native, proper, and best-known significations, into unusual, by, and improper senses, no exigency of the context compelling hereunto, hath always been adjudged a dangerous breach of the laws of Scripture interpretation.

2. The temporariness of the faith found in the stony ground, did not arise from the nature, essence, or any internal property in this faith, wherein it was specifically distinguished from the faith of those emparabled by the good ground, but partly from the ill temper or inconsiderateness of the persons, in whom it was seated, who neglected to give it sufficient rooting or establishment within them; partly from the outward occasions of trouble and persecution for the gospel which came upon them. Nor is there any sufficient ground or reason to conceive, that it would have proved temporary, and not perseverant unto the end, had not the persons in whom it was, been attempted with persecution. When the year proves very moist, showers of rain ever and anon falling from heaven upon the earth, the seed that is sown even in stony ground, is wont to prosper, and to yield a competent increase at least at harvest, to the husbandman. Otherwise such ground as this would never be sown: nor would our Saviour have had the opportunity of furnishing this parable with the mention of that event, or ill success, which frequently befalleth the seed sown in such ground. Now if the temporariness of the faith we speak of, was occasioned only ab extra, or by means accidental and extraneous to it, evident it is that it did not arise from any thing in the nature or essence of it: and consequently, that it was of the same kind, with that faith which did persevere unto the end.

3. If the temporariness of the faith now under consideration, either caused it or declared it to be specifically distinct from that which was sound and justifying, and which held out to the end, then must perseverance, or an impossibility of failing, be of the nature and essence of true faith; the consequence is evident, and needs no proof. Now, 1. If perseverance be of the essence of true faith, no person can be looked upon as a true believer, either by himself or others, until he gives up the ghost and dieth. 2. If an impossibility of failing be of the essence hereof, no man can be looked upon as a true believer, neither before nor after he be dead. For what though a man's faith should not fail before he dieth, yet this amounts to no sufficient proof, that therefore it was impossible that it should fail. A thousand things come to pass which yet very possibly might not have come to pass.

Again, that perseverance is not an intrinsical or essential property of true faith, but only a consequent of it, and that contin-

gent, appears, 1. From the principles of our adversaries themselves, who commonly distinguish between the gift of faith, and the gift of perseverance. "Wonderful it is," saith Austin, "and much to be wondered at, that God should, unto some of his children whom he hath regenerated in Christ, to whom he hath given *faith*, hope, and love, *not give perseverance*." * Therefore, by the way, Austin is no friend to the common doctrine of perseverance, as it is taught and received amongst us. 2. Adam, they say, before his fall, had true faith, or, at least, a power of believing truly, (which now they acknowledge in none but in those who truly believe,) however certain it is that he had true holiness; yet the event in his fall declared that perseverance was not essential unto any of these; and consequently, that in case he had persevered in them, this perseverance had been but consequential to them, and that contingently. 3. That which is true is not wont to be opposed or contradistinguished to that which is temporary, but may commodiously enough be distinguished into that which endureth for a season, and that which continueth for ever. Therefore, that which is temporary and which standeth by a man only for a short time, may be as real and true in the same kind, as that which continueth with him all his days. 4. If the faith under dispute were temporary in the nature of it, and not by consequence only, then could not a falling away from it, by those who were possessed of it, be the cause of their final miscarriage, (which yet our Saviour plainly supposeth,) because should they have persevered in it, they should not have been any whit more saved by it, than now they were under a falling away from it. The losing of that, which being kept, would not have saved a man, cannot be the cause of his loss of salvation. 5, and lastly, If the said faith were temporary, and not true, justifying or saving in the nature of it, then the lack of moisture afterwards could not be the reason or cause thereof; I mean, why it was, or proved temporary, and not true or saving. The reason hereof is plain; viz. because what is so or so, such or such, in the nature of it, cannot be made or become such by any after means or occasion whatsoever, whether act or neglect. But evident it is, from the express words of the parable, that the reason why the said faith was, or proved temporary, was because the seed, from whence it sprang, wanted moisture. "And some fell upon a rock," saith Luke, "and as soon as it was sprung up," *i. e.* within a short time after, as appears Mark iv. 17, "it withered away, because it lacked moisture," Luke viii. 6. So that the withering of it away, *i. e.* the temporariness of it, was occasioned or caused by a means accidental and extrinsical to it, viz., the want of a thoroughness or cordialness of affection to the gospel, by which the faith or belief of it now sprung in the soul, should

* *Mirandum est quidem, multumque mirandum, quod filiis suis Deus quibusdam quos regeneravit in Christo, quibus fidem, spem, dilectionem dedit, non dat perseverantiam.—Auj. de Corrupt. Et Grat. c. 8.*

have been fed, nourished, and maintained against all attempts made by persecution to destroy it.

If it be demanded, But why are true and sound believers compared to the good ground, if they also were true believers who are resembled by the stony ground? I answer, The reason hereof is plain, viz., not because the faith in the persons signified by these different grounds, was different in the nature or kind of it, but because the issue or event of their respective faiths differs, and this by way of similitude to the different success or event of the same corn (for kind) growing in stony ground, and in good or fruitful ground.

If it be objected, That the faith of the stony ground is said to have no root, whereas it is evident, that the faith of the good ground which persevered, had root. And doth not this argue a specific difference between them? I answer, When the faith of the stony ground is said not to have root, the meaning cannot be that it had no root at all: for then it could not have sprouted or sprung up, as it did; but that it had no considerable root, no sufficient rooting to carry it through unto the harvest; or, no root comparatively, viz., in respect of the faith of the good ground. The seed that is sown in stony ground, though it wants depth of earth, and so must needs want depth of rooting, yet it hath some kind of rooting proportionable to the earth which it hath, as well as that which is sown in the best and fruitfulest soil that is. So that as a sprout or blade of wheat sown in stony ground doth not differ specifically from a blade of the same grain growing in good ground, though this hath, by the opportunity of the soil, the better rooting: in like manner the faith of him that believeth only for a time, and afterwards declineth, may be essentially and for nature, the same faith with his who persevereth unto the end. If difference in rooting should cause or prove a specific difference between blade and blade of the same grain, it is like that every blade, though growing in the same field, or ground, would differ specie from all its fellows; inasmuch as it is no ways probable but that there constantly is some difference, more or less, between the respective rootings of every particular corn that is sown in the same field. Yea, there is little question to be made, but that some individuals of the same seed, sown in the same ground, suppose the best and richest ground of all, may have, yea, and have commonly so slight and faint a rooting, that heat and drought will cause it to wither away before the harvest. Therefore no specific difference can be inferred between faith and faith, from a gradual difference in their rootings.

If it be yet further objected, The faith of the stony ground yielded no fruit; whereas the faith of the good ground is said to bring forth fruit with patience. Doth not this argue a specific difference between them? I answer, Neither: yea, those very words, with patience, which are distinguishing, clearly imply, that

the faith of the stony ground did bring forth fruit also; and that it came short of the good ground only in this, that this brought forth fruit with patience, (*i. e.* the fruitfulness of it was not extinguished by any persecutions or sufferings from the world,) whereas the fruitfulness of the other gave up the ghost through fear of sufferings. And indeed had not this stony ground been some ways fruitful, and made such a profession of the gospel which rendereth men obnoxious to persecution from the world, there had been no cause why it should either have suffered or feared persecution. Besides, fruitfulness and unfruitfulness make no specific or essential difference between subject and subject, more than strength and weakness, speech and silence argue one man to differ specie from another. If they did, the same tree that beareth fruit one year and is barren another should differ specie from itself; yea, and the faith of true believers themselves, who, according to the known sense of our adversaries themselves, may go astray like lost sheep, and live for a long time together in ways of the greatest unworthiness, without repentance, all which time their faith must needs be unfruitful, should come in time to differ specie from itself.

The last objection, which I think knows how to appear against the truth of the faith of the stony ground or temporaries in the parable, is this: True faith, such as was found in those resembled by the good ground, always includes a purpose of heart to bear the cross of Christ, and suffer persecution: But the faith of the temporaries wanted this property; Therefore it was not true faith, but another kind of faith essentially distinct from it. To this also we answer,

1. That true faith doth not in the precise or formal conception of it include such a purpose of heart as the objection speaks of; nor can such a thing be proved, either from the Scriptures or from any sound principle of reason. That such a purpose is seminally or virtually included in true faith, may be granted. But,

2. That such a purpose of heart was not in those that are called temporaries in the parable, cannot be proved: there is no word or clause herein that doth import it. That they did not take up the cross of Christ when it lay in their way, nor endure persecution for the gospel, doth not at all prove that there was no real purpose in them of doing either. The apostle Paul said of himself: "To will, (*i. e.* to purpose or intend) is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not," Rom. vii. 18.

3, and lastly, Evident it is from other Scriptures, and in part from the parable itself in hand, that such believers who proved temporaries did yet endure persecution for a time. Which plainly proves that they had a true purpose of heart to endure it. Yea, and probably that they had a purpose of heart to endure it unto the end. "Have ye suffered so many things in vain," saith Paul to the Galatians, "if yet it be in vain?" Gal. iii. 4. That these Galatians, to whom he bears witness that they had suffered many things for the gospel, were temporaries, appears from those words: "I marvel

that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel," Gal. i. 6. And as the seed that sprang up in the stony ground endured the scorching heat of the sun for a time, before it withered away by means of it; so did the believers portraited hereby suffer persecution a while before their faith expired. So that the faith of those who in the parable are called temporaries can by no argument or allegation be evicted of any degenerateness, or unsoundness in kind, but only of a deficiency in point of rooting or firm fixation in the soul. Nor doth our Saviour any ways blame or reprove it but upon this account only. Yea, in blaming it upon this account only, and reproving those who had it for being no more diligent and careful in the use of means for confirming and establishing themselves better in it, he plainly gives testimony unto it in point of truth and soundness; inasmuch as no man deserveth blame for not consulting or endeavouring the perpetuation of an hypocritical faith in his soul, or such, which though persevered in, would yet have left him in the hand of eternal death. These considerations and discussions are so full of light, evidence, and power, that were not the foot of our adversaries held in this snare to judge of the truth and soundness, and so of the hollowness and unsoundness of faith, by the issue and event of it, as, viz. the perseverance or non-perseverance of it unto the end, they could not lightly stand in the way of their present judgments before them. And yet this rule or method of judging is not of any good accord with their own principles otherwise. Concerning "those helps or assistances of grace," say our English divines present in the Synod of Dort, "which are afforded by God unto men, we are to judge of them," (meaning in point of sufficiency or efficaciousness) "by the nature of the benefit offered," (as attainable by them) "and by the most manifest word of God, *not by the event* or abuse of them."*

The last proof from the Scriptures, which we shall, at present, insist upon and urge for the confirmation of the doctrine under protection, shall be that passage which holds forth these things unto us. "For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those who were *clean escaped* from those who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption; for of whom a man is overcome, of the same he is brought in bondage. For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled and therein overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning: for it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than after they have known it to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb: the dog is turned to his own vomit again, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire," 2 Pet. ii. 18, &c. The possibility

* Ex naturâ beneficii oblatis, et verbo Dei apertissimo judicandum est de illis gratiæ auxiliis quæ hominibus suppeditantur, non autem ex eventu aut abusu.—*Synod. Dordr. Act.* page 128

of a total and final defection in true believers lieth as large and full in these quarters as truth lightly can be lodged in words; the Holy Ghost here plainly supposing that which is clearly consistent with, yea, and equivalent thereunto, viz. that they who by the acknowledgment of Jesus Christ, have clean (or truly or really, *ὄντως*) escaped the pollutions of the world, being again entangled therewith, may be overcome, so as that their spiritual state and condition will be worse at the last than it was at the first, or before they believed. What is this, being interpreted, but that true saints or believers may possibly apostatise from their believing condition so as to perish everlastingly?

But here also our adversaries attempt to hide the truth shining in the recited passage under that old covering or veil which hath been rent in twain already, both in this chapter and elsewhere. These expressions, say they, "who were clean escaped from those who live in error, who have escaped the pollutions of the world through the acknowledgment of Jesus Christ, to have known the way of righteousness," &c. do not suppose the persons spoken of to have had true faith; nor import any thing but what may very possibly be found in hypocrites. But with how little truth, yea, or semblance of truth, these things are asserted, hath been already exposed to open view, when we traversed the Scripture in hand upon another occasion. (Chap. viii. pp. 215, &c.) Nevertheless we here add,

1. If the said expressions import nothing, but what hypocrites, and that in sensu composito, *i. e.* whilst hypocrites, are capable of, then may those be hypocrites who are separated from men that live in error, and from the pollutions of the world, and that through the knowledge of Jesus Christ; and, on the other hand, those may be saints and sound believers, who wallow in all manner of filthiness, and defile themselves daily with the pollutions of the world. This consequence, according to the principles and known tenets of our adversaries, is legitimate and true, inasmuch as they hold, that "True believers may fall so foul, and so far, that the church, according to Christ's institution, may be constrained to testify, that they cannot bear them in their outward communion, and that they shall have no part in the kingdom of Christ, except they repent,"* &c. But whether this be wholesome and sound divinity or no, to teach, that they who are separate from sinners, and live holily and blamelessly in this present world, and this by means of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, may be hypocrites and children of perdition; and they, on the other hand, who are companions with thieves, murderers, adulterers, &c., saints and sound believers, I leave to men, whose judgments are not turned upside down with prejudice, to determine.

2. The persons here spoken of, are said to have *ὄντως*, truly or

* *Reponemus, posse quidem verè credentes eousque prolabi, ut ecclesia, juxtà constitutionem Christi cogatur testari, se, ipsos in externâ ipsorum communione non posse tolerare, neque habituros partem ullam in regno Christi, nisi convertantur.—Contr. Remonstr. in Coll. Hug. p. 399.*

really escaped from those who live in error. Doubtless an hypocrite cannot be said, truly or really, but in show or appearance, at most, to have made such an escape (I mean from men who live in error,) considering, that for matter of reality and truth, remaining in hypocrisy, he lives in one of the greatest and foulest errors that is.

3. An hypocrite whose foot is already in the snare of death, cannot upon any tolerable account, either of reason or common sense, be said to be allured (*i. e.* by allurements to be deceived) or overcome, by "the pollutions of the world," no more than a fish that is already in the net, or fast upon the hook, can be said to be allured or deceived by a bait held to her.

4. Hypocrites are no where said, neither can they with any congruity to Scripture phrase be said, to "have escaped the pollutions of the world" through the acknowledgment (for so the word *ἐπιγνώσις* should be translated) of Jesus Christ, the acknowledgment of the truth, and so of Christ and of God, constantly in the Scriptures importing a sound and saving work of conversion, as we lately observed in this chapter.

5, and lastly, The persons to whom the apostle addresseth himself in this epistle, being looked upon by him as true believers, yea, as "partakers of like precious faith" with himself and the rest of the apostles, 2 Pet. i. 3, it cannot reasonably be imagined that in so short an epistle he should hang so long, as the whole second chapter amounteth unto, upon a subject or discourse which little or nothing concerned them to whom he writes, nor much indeed any other man, if the principles and tenets of our adversaries would stand. If true believers be incapable of any such backsliding, which should make "their latter end worse than their beginning," to what purpose should the apostle make a large discourse unto them concerning such men, who had miscarried by such backslidings? Or would there be, upon such a supposition, any more savour in this discourse, than if Solomon should have made a journey to the queen of Sheba's court, to inform her that thieves and murderers were sorely punished in his kingdom? And for hypocrites themselves, neither would the discourse have been of much concernment unto them, in case such a personal and peremptory election, and reprobation, as our opposers contend for, could be with truth obtained. If I be upon such terms elected, I am in no danger of falling under that heavy doom of hypocrites, "whose latter end is worse than their beginning;" or if I be so reprobated, I am in no capacity, in no possibility of redeeming myself by the tender of any admonitions, cautions, exhortations, threatenings, or examples whatsoever, of persons who have made shipwreck of their souls against the same rock before me. To what purpose then, be I elected or be I reprobated, be I a sound believer or be I an hypocrite, should any application be made, either by God or men, unto me, either in order to my obtaining of that which all my sin and wickedness cannot keep from me, or for the avoiding or preventing of that from which all my care, diligence, faithfulness, cannot deliver me? Therefore, questionless,

the apostle Peter all along that quarter of discourse, which we have lately had under consideration, clearly supposeth that even true believers, such as upon good grounds he concluded those to whom he writes to be, are obnoxious to such an apostasy and declining, in, and from their faith, which is accompanied with the signal ruin and destruction of those, who value holiness and close walkings with God at no higher rate than to cast them behind their back without looking after them any more. Which doctrinal conclusion might be further argued, and confirmed abundantly, from very many Scriptures, besides those insisted upon in this chapter, and particularly from those frequent and pathetic admonitions, cautions, exhortations, encouragements, &c., administered by the Holy Ghost unto the saints to engage them in such ways of care, diligence, and faithfulness to themselves and their own souls, whereby they may be strengthened to persevere unto the end. But of these, at least of some of the most pregnant of them, we shall have occasion to consider in the chapter following, where we shall further plead the cause of the said doctrine by force of argument and demonstration.

CHAPTER XIII.

Grounds of reason from the Scriptures, evincing a possibility of such a defection even in true believers, which is accompanied with destruction in the end.

THE opportunity which error commonly findeth to build herself a throne amongst men, and to reign over the judgments and consciences of those who are debtors of homage and subjection to the truth, lieth not so much in the strength or beauty of those arguments or pleas which she is able to engage in her cause, as either in the weakness or negligence of the friends and professors of the truth; as when they are either not able, or not industrious enough, to show her unto the world, like "Solomon in all his glory," and to spread that light of evidence and conviction round about her which belongeth unto her, and which would commend her like a daughter of God in the eyes of men. Truth, whose native residence and seat is, as the old philosophers were wont to express it, in profundo, in the depths, remote from the common thoughts and apprehensions of men, cannot in many particulars be drawn up into a clear and perfect light, but only by a long cord, well twisted, of much labour, attentive meditation, together with some dexterity for the work. God himself is said to "inhabit a light that is inaccessible," 1 Tim. vi. 16; that is, as I conceive, to be capable of more and more glorious attributions, or of having a greater number of excellent things, and things of a greater excellency, spoken of him, and that with evidence and clearness of truth, than either men or angels are able to discover

or comprehend, much more to utter or declare unto the world. And the truth is that many truths dwell in such a light which is not accessible without much difficulty to the judgments and understandings of men, being only manifestable in their certainty and perfect beauty, by such arguments and considerations which they must dig deep who desire to discover ; and they look narrowly and with a single eye who desire to be made fully capable and sensible of them, being set before them. Whereas error, being of nearer affinity to the corrupt and dark minds and understandings of men, dwells in propinquo, and, as it were, at their right hand ; and though her servants (the reasons I mean which negotiate her affairs with the judgments of men) be all flesh and not spirit, all show and no substance, yet having the advantage of a natural sympathy and compliance in those with whom they have to do, their cause is readily accepted, and approved as just and good. When the disciples saw the Lord Christ by no better light than what the night afforded, and that at a distance, walking upon the sea towards them, "they were troubled," thinking he had been some unclean spirit that would have destroyed them, "and cried out for fear:" but when he came near them, and "said to them, Be of good comfort, it is I; be not afraid," Matt. xiv. 26, 27, they perfectly knew that it was their dear Lord and Master. So many looking upon that doctrine which opposeth the unconditioned perseverance of the saints, and asserteth a possibility of their final fall, by the dim light of some sensual principles and apprehensions, and in an overly and superficial manner, as it were at a distance, are much troubled at it, as if it were a doctrine of an anti-evangelical spirit, that would bring them into a bondage of fear, and torment them. Which doctrine, notwithstanding, would they look upon it narrowly, and with an unprejudiced attention, and this by the clear light of such considerations which exhibit it like itself unto them, they would then soon confess to be a doctrine which was set, not at all to curse, but to bless them altogether.

The sole undertaking of this chapter is to commend the said doctrine unto the judgments and consciences of men for a truth, by a proposal of such worthy things which relate to it, either by way of causality or affinity in truth. In the first place, I plead the cordial sympathy it hath with that righteousness of God which the Scripture calls ἀπροσωποληψία, or a non-acceptation of persons, thus :

That doctrine which rendereth God free from that unrighteousness which the Scripture calls a respecting the persons of men, is a doctrine of perfect consistency with the Scriptures and the truth.

The doctrine which teacheth a possibility of the saints declining, and this unto death, is a doctrine of this import. Ergo.

The reason of the former proposition is plain, inasmuch as the Scriptures frequently assert that principle of non-respecting persons, most worthy "the Judge of all the earth," unto God, Deut. x. 17 ; Gal. ii. 6 ; 1 Pet. i. 17, &c. The latter proposition needeth no laboriousness of proof neither. Evident it is that the doctrine here

spoken of, representeth God as a non-respecter of persons, inasmuch as it rendereth him a Judge of the same righteous severity against the enormous transgressions of his own children and friends which he exerciseth towards his enemies, and those that are strangers unto him, upon the like provocations. This doctrine subjecteth saints as well as others to this righteous law of God: "Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God," 1 Cor. vi. 9; meaning, as is evident from other Scriptures, without repentance. Whereas the common doctrine of perseverance exempteth all such who have at any time been true believers, or children of God, from the penalty or doom of this law; teaching that though such as these should turn "fornicators, idolaters, adulterers," &c., and continue never so long in these abominations, without repentance, yet they retain their right and title of inheritance in the kingdom of God, and that they remain under the greatest love that God can show or bear towards men, the love of election and of children, even in the midst of these deep and desperate provocations. And thus it maketh God the greatest acceptor of persons in the world, rendering him implacably severe towards lesser sinners, and indulgent above measure to the greater. For that such who have, or have had, the knowledge of God, and have believed in Jesus Christ, and made profession of love and service to him, when they turn "fornicators, idolaters, adulterers," &c., are far greater sinners than men committing the same sins "in ignorance and unbelief," is, I think, no man's doubt or question. Certain I am that the Scripture still representeth God as more severe in punishing where greater means of righteousness and well doing have been vouchsafed. "You," said he to his own people, the children of Israel, of old, "only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities," Amos iii. 2. In the Gospel: "And that servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whom much is given, of him shall much be required," &c. Luke xii. 47, 48. It cannot be denied (and confessed) it is by our adversaries themselves, as hath been formerly observed) but that true believers have fallen into the practice of the foul transgressions mentioned, yea, and have remained impenitent in them for a long season. Therefore, if during the time of such practice and impenitency, they should not be in the same, or worse condition, to God-ward and salvation-wise, than ignorant persons, and such who were always strangers unto God, are, when they live in the same impieties, God must needs be "an acceptor of persons" in the highest, and show a thousand times more favour to grand and signal delinquents than to ordinary and lighter offenders, in comparison. So that to pretend, though true believers may, and

oft do, fall into the fore-named sins, and continue for a time in them without repentance, yet God always reneweth them by repentance before their death, (though this was never yet proved, nor ever will be,) it doth not at all save the honour of the said doctrine. Because, such a supposal notwithstanding, the persons contended about may and do, according to the tenor of the premises lately proved, suffer a total eclipse and intercision of the grace and favour of God in the mean season.

Secondly, for a possibility of the saints' defection, either total, final, or both, I thus argue :

If the common doctrine of perseverance rendereth the ministry of the gospel, so far as it concerneth the perseverance of the saints, vain, impertinent, and void, then it is not a doctrine of God, but of men; and, consequently, that which opposeth it is the truth: But certain it is, that the said doctrine is of this unchristian tendency and import: Ergo.

The consequence in the major proposition is pregnant of truth: inasmuch as the preservation of the saints in faith and holiness unto the end, is one of the most considerable ends of the ministry of the gospel, about the effecting whereof it is mainly conversant. Therefore if God, who hath ordained the ministry of the gospel for the advancement of this end, should assert any such doctrine, which rendereth it unnecessary and impertinent, in reference to this end, he should be divided in himself, and pull down with one hand what he buildeth up with another.

The minor proposition is demonstrable, thus: That doctrine which rendereth the labour and faithfulness of a minister in pressing such exhortations, threatenings, and promises, which tend to the preservation of the saints in faith and holiness unto the end, useless, rendereth the ministry of the gospel, as far as it concerns the encouragement or enabling of the saints to persevere, needless and vain: But guilty of such a tendency as this, is the commonly received doctrine of perseverance: Ergo.

The truth of the major proposition here, shineth clearly enough with its own light: or, however, there is this reason for it, viz. because ministers of the gospel can have little else from the Scriptures, but only exhortations, threatenings, and promises, whereby to build or effect the perseverance of the saints. Therefore if the pressing, or putting on of these upon men, be needless, in reference to such an end, certainly their ministry, as far as it relates to this end, is needless also.

The minor is thus proved: The common doctrine of perseverance requireth and commandeth all saints, or true believers, to be fully persuaded, and this with the greatest and most indubitable certainty of faith, that there is an absolute and utter impossibility, either of a total or final defection of their faith; and that though they should fall into ten thousand enormous and most abominable sins, and lie wallowing in them like a swine in the mire, yet they shall remain all the while in an estate of grace, and that God will,

by a strong hand of irresistible grace, bring them off from their sins by repentance, before they die: But that doctrine which requireth and commandeth all this, and much more of like import, to be confidently believed by true believers, rendereth the pressing of all exhortations, threatenings, promises upon them, in order to prevail with them, or to make them careful to persevere, bootless and unnecessary: Ergo.

The major, in this syllogism, is the known voice of the common doctrine of perseverance. The reason of the minor is, because a certain knowledge and persuasion that God will, by an irresistible hand of power, preserve a man in the state of grace, how desperately careless, negligent, or wicked soever he shall be, clearly dissolves the usefulness and necessity of all other means whatsoever, in reference to this end. If I know certainly, that the corn which I have sown in my field will, whether I wake or sleep, grow and prosper, would it not be a very impertinent address for any man to come to me, and admonish me in a serious and grave manner, to take heed I sleep not, but keep myself waking, lest my corn should not grow or prosper, or that it may grow and prosper? If my corn grows, thrives, and prospers, by the irresistible hand of God, in the course of his natural and standing providence, my watchfulness, in order to a procurement of these things, is absolutely vain. This is a truth, which prejudice and partiality themselves cannot lightly but subscribe; viz. that there is no force, power, or authority in such an exhortation, wherein we are pressed to use means, either for the avoiding or escaping of such a danger, which we are upon sure grounds persuaded cannot possibly fall upon us; or for the performance of what we are assured, upon the like terms of certainty, that we cannot but perform, or that God himself will certainly, by an irresistible and unfrustrable hand of grace perform and work in us. So, again, that there is no efficacy or power in such a threatening, which threateneth us with such an evil or danger, which we infallibly know ourselves out of all possibility of suffering or falling under. And, lastly, that there is no weight or quickening power in such a promise, wherein only such a benefit or blessing is promised unto us upon the performance of a condition, which we infallibly know to be ours before the condition be performed, yea, and which we are most certainly assured we shall not, we cannot, upon any terms whatsoever, be deprived of.

That which is commonly pleaded to salve the consistency of the common doctrine of peremptorily-decreed perseverance, with an usefulness or necessity of the exhortations, threatenings, and promises mentioned, hath neither any logical nor theological virtue in it for such a purpose. For, is it any other than this, viz. that the exhortations, comminations, and promises which we speak of, are means appointed by God, and used by him accordingly, for the accomplishment and effecting of that perseverance in the saints, which he hath made simply and absolutely necessary by his decree? Now that such a notion as this is altogether irrelative to

the business, the accommodation whereof it pretendeth, will be made evident, by weighing the particulars severally.

First, That the exhortations, wherein the saints are exhorted unto perseverance, are no means by which the promises of perseverance, made, as our adversaries suppose, unto them, are accomplished or effected, is thus clearly evinced: Whatsoever is a means for the bringing of any thing to pass, ought not to contain any thing in it repugnant or contrary unto that which is intended to be brought to pass by it; for means ought to be subordinate to their ends, not repugnant: But the Scripture exhortations unto perseverance contain that which is repugnant to the promises of perseverance, if supposed such, as our adversaries suppose them to be: Therefore they can be no means to effect these promises. The minor is evident by the light of this consideration. Such exhortations as these unto the saints, "Take heed lest at any time there be an evil heart of unbelief in you, lest you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, lest you fall from grace, lest you receive the grace of God in vain, lest you fall from your own steadfastness," &c. in their native and proper tendency import a danger, and serve to raise a fear in men, lest the danger imported should come upon them. Whereas such promises as these made unto the same persons, and that unconditionally, as is supposed, that there shall never be a heart of unbelief in you, that you shall never be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, that you shall never fall away from the grace of God, &c. exclude all danger, yea, or possibility of falling away, and tend directly to prevent or extinguish all fear in men of any such danger. Therefore such exhortations are in their very natures and genuine import, contrary to such promises in theirs; and, consequently, can be no means of bringing them to pass.

Again, if such exhortations as we speak of, be a means to effect that perseverance, which our adversaries suppose to be promised unto the saints, then must the act of perseverance in the saints necessarily depend upon them, so as that it cannot, or will not, take place or be effected without them, *i. e.* without the saints' submitting of themselves unto them. But persevering upon these terms clearly supposeth a possibility of a non-persevering. For whatsoever dependeth upon a mutable condition, and which possibly may not be performed, may itself as possibly never come to pass.

If it be said, that the said exhortations are means of the saints' persevering, in this respect; viz., because God by his Spirit irresistibly, or infrustrably, draws and persuades the saints to obey these exhortations, as means of their persevering; I answer,

1. It cannot be proved that God doth draw or persuade his saints, upon any such terms, to obey these exhortations. Nay, frequent experience showeth, and our adversaries' own doctrine (frequently mentioned) expressly granteth, that the saints many times are so far from obeying these exhortations, that they walk for a long time in full opposition to them, as in security, looseness,

vile practices, &c. Nor have they yet proved, nor, I believe, ever will prove, but that they may walk, yea, and that many have thus walked, I mean, in full opposition to the said exhortations, to their dying day.

2. If God by his Spirit irresistibly draws his saints to obey the exhortations we speak of, he thus draweth them, either by such a force or power immediately acted upon their wills, by which they are made willing to obey them, or else he maketh use of the said exhortations so to work, or affect their wills, that they become willing accordingly. If the former be asserted, then,

1. The said exhortations are no means whereby the perseverance of the saints is effected, but God alone, and immediately, by his Spirit. For if the will be immediately affected by God after such a manner, or brought to such a bent and inclination, as that it cannot but obey the said exhortations, *i. e.* do the things which the said exhortations require, then would it have done the same things, whether there had been any such exhortations in being, or no; and consequently, these exhortations could have no manner of efficiency about their perseverance. For the will, according to the common saying, is, of itself, *cæca potentia*, "a blind faculty," and follows its own predominant bent and inclination, without taking knowledge whether the ways or actions towards which it stands bent, be commanded, or exhorted unto by God or no.

2. If the will of a saint be immediately so affected by God, that it stands inclined and bent to do the things which are proper to cause them to persevere, then is this bent and inclination wrought in the will of such a person, after his being a saint; and consequently is not essential to him as a saint, but merely accidental and adventitious. And if so, then is there no inclination or bent in the will of a saint, as such, or from his first being a saint, to persevere, or to do the things which accompany perseverance; but they come to be wrought in him afterwards. Which, how consistent it is with the principles, either of reason, or religion, or their own, I am content that my adversaries themselves shall judge.

3. If God doth immediately and irresistibly incline, or move, the wills of the saints to do the things which accompany perseverance, the said exhortations can be no means of effecting this perseverance. For the will being physically and irresistibly acted and drawn by God to do such and such things, needeth no addition of moral means, such as exhortations are, (if they be any,) in order hereunto. What a man is necessitated unto, he needeth no further help or means to do it.

4, and lastly, for this, The things which accompany perseverance import a continuance in faith and love unto the end. If, then, the wills of the saints be immediately and irresistibly moved by God thus to continue (I mean in faith and love) unto the end, what place is there for exhortations to come in with their efficiency, towards their perseverance? Need they be exhorted to continue in faith and love, or to persevere, after the end? Thus, then, we

clearly see that the former of the two consequences mentioned cannot stand. God doth not by his Spirit irresistibly draw or move the wills of the saints to do the things which are necessary for the procuring their perseverance, immediately, or without the instrumental interposure of the said exhortations.

Secondly, Neither can the latter of the said consequences stand. God doth not make use of the said exhortations to influence or affect the wills of the saints upon any such terms, as hereby to make them infallibly, infrustrably, necessitatingly willing to persevere, or to do the things upon which perseverance dependeth. For,

1. If so, then one and the same act of the will, should be both physical and moral; and so be specifically distinguished, in and from itself. For so far as it is produced by the irresistible force or power of the Spirit of God, it must needs be physical, the said irresistible working of the Spirit being a physical action, and so not proper to produce a moral effect. Again, as far as the said exhortations are means to produce or raise this act of the will, or contribute any thing towards it, it must needs be moral; because exhortations are moral causes, and so not capable of producing natural, physical, or necessary effects. Now then, if it be impossible that one and the same act of the will should be both physical and moral, that is, necessary and not necessary, impossible also it is, that it should be produced by the irresistible working of God, and by exhortations, in a joint efficiency.

It may be objected, They who hold, or grant such an influence, or operation of the Spirit of God upon the will, which is frustrable and resistible, do, or must suppose it to be, a physical action, as well as that which is irresistible. If so, then the act of the will, so far as it is raised by means of this action, or operation of God, must, according to the tenor of the former argument, be physical also; and so the pretended impossibility is no more avoided by this opinion than by the other. I answer,

Though such an operation of God upon the will, as is here mentioned, be, in respect of God, and of the manner of its proceeding from him, physical, yet in respect of the nature and substance of it, it is properly moral, because it impresseth or affecteth the will upon which it is acted, after the manner of moral causes properly so called, *i. e.* persuadingly, not ravishingly, or necessitatingly. When a minister of the gospel in his preaching, presseth or persuadeth men to such and such duties or actions, this act, as it proceedeth from him, I mean, as it is raised by his natural abilities of understanding and speaking, is physical or natural, but in respect of the substance or native tendency of it, it is clearly moral, *viz.* because it tendeth to incline or move the wills of men to such or such elections, without necessitating them hereunto, and so comports with those arguments or exhortations, in their manner of efficiency, by which he presseth or moveth them to such things. By the way, to prevent stumbling and quarrelling, it no ways followeth from the premises, that a minister by his preaching, and

persuading unto duties, should do as much as God himself doth, in, or towards a persuading of men hereunto; it only followeth that the minister doth co-operate with God, (which the apostle himself affirmeth, 1 Cor. iii. 9; 2 Cor. vi. 1,) in order to one and the same effect, *i. e.* that he operateth by one and the same kind of efficiency with God, viz. morally, or persuadingly, not necessitatingly. For when one necessitates, and another only persuades, they cannot be said to co-operate, or to work the one with the other; no more than two, when the one runs, and the other walks a soft pace, can be said to go or walk together. But when two persuade to one and the same action, one may persuade more effectually by many degrees than the other, may have a peculiar act or method of persuading above the other.

But it may be further objected, If that act of God, by which he affecteth or moveth the wills of men, be in any consideration physical, must it not thus far, and in this respect, have a physical effect assignable unto it? If so, what effect of this kind can we assign unto that act of his we speak of, unless it be the determining or necessitating of the will to that action or course whereunto it is moved by it? I answer,

1. They who make the act of God, inquired after in this demand, merely and solely physical, do not suppose the effect which they ascribe to it, I mean the necessitating of the will to that election, whereunto it moveth, to be a physical effect, but moral, affirming (but with what consistency, either with reason or truth, I understand not) that the will, though necessitated by God, is yet free in her election of that whereunto she is so necessitated, whereby they conceive the morality of the action salved. But,

2. The physical or necessary effect which answers that physical act, or efficiency of God upon the will, (now under consideration,) is that inclining or moving impression towards such or such an election, which is acted upon the will by this act of his, together with the persuading force or weight of the exhortation, wherein or wherewith he so inclineth, or at least attempteth to incline it. Thus far and in this sense it is granted, That the act of God, whereby he inclines or moves the wills of men, either to believe or to persevere believing, is irresistible or infrustrable, *i. e.* men cannot hinder or prevent those moving impressions unto good, in one kind or other, which God is pleased at any time to impart unto them or to act upon their wills, though they may hinder and prevent the further and full prevailing of them to that desirable end or issue, which is intended by God in and by them. As the Jews of old could not hinder or prevent God from rising early, and sending his prophets unto them, to call them by promises and threatenings to repentance, but they could and did hinder and prevent the desired event and success of these applications of God unto them which was the actual reducement of them to repentance. It is true they neither did nor could hinder or prevent that secondary end, as we may call it, or intention of God, in these

applications of himself unto them, which was, to render them inexcusable, and more worthy punishment, in case they remained still impenitent. Nor is it in the power of men to frustrate, disappoint, or defeat the like intentions of God in his administrations of grace unto them: If they receive this grace of his in vain, or so as not to believe, not to be converted, not to persevere by it, they will be, will they, nill they, altogether inexcusable, and deeply obnoxious to the wrath and vengeance of God, who will take vengeance on them accordingly.

3. If God makes use of Scripture exhortations unto perseverance, to cause the saints irresistibly and necessitatingly to persevere, then are all his promises made unto them that they shall persevere, or that he will infallibly work perseverance in them, in vain. If a father should first promise with the greatest assurance he could give or make, that he would make his son his heir, and bestow his inheritance upon him, yea, and should earnestly press and persuade this son of his to believe and expect as much from him, would it not be very incongruous, or rather indeed ridiculous, for this father afterwards to exhort, admonish, entreat, and beseech this his son, that he would take heed that he lose not the inheritance assured (*i. e.* made past losing) unto him? Indeed if this father should only purpose in himself, though with a purpose absolutely unchangeable to make his son his heir, and not declare his purpose in this behalf unto his son, it might be somewhat prudential in him to admonish and exhort his son to behave himself so, that the inheritance may not be given away from him. But thus to exhort or admonish him, after a declaration made to him, that he is unchangeably resolved to make him his heir, would be to send him into a far country to fetch that which he certainly knows before he goes is at home. In like manner, if it shall be supposed, that God hath nowhere absolutely promised perseverance unto the saints, though it should be supposed withal that his intent is to work it with a strong and irresistible hand in them, there were some face of reason in it, that he should seriously admonish and exhort them to persevere, though the truth is that even such a dispensation as this, upon due inquiry, will hardly be found a dispensation worthy of God; I mean to exhort men to do that which he intends by a strong hand to necessitate or make them to do. But that first he should enjoin them to believe beyond all question or fear, that they shall persevere, yea, and that he will engage his omnipotency to effect it; and afterwards, with a profession of much love and care over them, shall exhort and admonish them to take heed of falling away, is such a broad solecism in reason, that no considering man can lightly imagine should be incident to a wisdom that is infinite.

Some notwithstanding, to salve the consistency of such a course with principles of wisdom, allege the passage, Acts xxvii., where Paul, notwithstanding the promise which he had clearly received from the angel, which likewise he made known unto all that were with him in the ship, viz. that there should be no loss of any man's

life amongst them, yet when the mariners were about to leave the ship, said to the centurion and the soldiers, "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be safe." From whence they infer that an absolute promise, though declared and made known to the persons concerned in it, doth not take away the usefulness of exhortations for the obtaining of the good things promised. But how irrelative this allegation is to the business in hand, is visible enough by the light of these considerations :

1. It is the generally received opinion of divines, that promises of temporal good things are still conditional, and not absolute; which opinion they maintain upon grounds not easily shaken. Now evident it is, that the promise under question was a promise of this nature and kind, relating only to the preservation of the temporal lives of men.

2. It hath been formerly observed, and that more than once, and confirmed by pregnant instances, that many promises in Scripture, though absolute in form, are yet conditional in matter and meaning. See Chap. x. and xi., pages 292, 301, 310, 317. So that from the tenor or form of words wherein the said promise was represented by the angel unto Paul, nothing can be concluded to evince it absolute.

3. Those words of Paul to the centurion and soldiers lately mentioned, "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be safe," undeniably prove the said promise to have been not absolute, but conditional. For in case God should have promised absolutely, and without all exception or condition, that they should have been safe, Paul had plainly contradicted the truth of it, by affirming, not that they should not, but that they could not be safe, otherwise than upon condition of the mariners' abiding in the ship.

4. The apostle exhorts those in the ship, after long abstinence, and weakness thereby, to take meat, and that upon this reason or motive; *τοῦτο γὰρ πρὸς τῆς ὑμετέρας σωτηρίας ὑπάρχει, ἰ. e.* for this is for your preservation or safety. Which plainly shows, that notwithstanding the promise made unto Paul, that there should not a hair of any of them fall to the ground, they yet might have perished by over long fasting. Therefore the said promise was not absolute.

5. When by receiving sustenance they had recruited their spirits and recovered strength, by the apostle's direction, as is most probable, they lightened the ship and cast out the lading of it, which was wheat, into the sea, and did other things in order to their preservation. Which is a strong presumption at least, that Paul did not understand the promise made to him concerning the lives of these men, in an unconditioned sense; but thus, that if they were careful and diligent to do what was meet for them to do, in order to their own safety, he would stand by them herein, and prosper it accordingly. As when he promised unto the Jews of old, that he would "Bless them in the city, and bless them in the field, bless them in the fruit of their body, and in the fruit of their ground, of their cattle," &c., Deut. xxviii. 3, 4, &c. His meaning only was, that he would bless and prosper their care and industry in and about

these affairs and concernments of theirs; not that he would absolutely bless them in any of them, I mean, whether they minded or looked after their own welfare in such things or no.

6. If those words of Paul be narrowly scanned, verse 22, "And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship," it will appear that the meaning of the promise signified unto him by the angel, was not simply or adequately this, that none of their lives should miscarry; but that though the ship should miscarry, and be lost, which was declared unto him that it would, yet the lives of none of them should hereby, or upon this occasion, miscarry. And the reason why God so ordered the matter that the ship should be wrecked and lost, notwithstanding all the means used to preserve it, was, that they who went along with Paul in it, might plainly know and understand, not only that their preservation was from God, and that more than in an ordinary way, but that it was vouchsafed to them upon such terms for his servant Paul's sake, who was amongst them; which they could not so well have understood, had the ship come whole and safe into harbour. For then they might very possibly have thought that they had escaped by their own labour and skill.

If it be said, that they might as well think such a thought as this upon that escape which they did make at last, some by swimming, others by laying hold on planks and broken pieces of the ship, &c., I answer, No; for when, 1, They had a fresh experiment that they could not by all their diligence and skill escape shipwreck, but that this, according to Paul's word, had befallen them. And, 2, Saw that they were cast upon an island, which Paul also had foretold them. And, 3, and lastly, That now they were all come safe to land, as Paul had likewise pre-assured them they should, and that by way of a gratuity unto him, according to his expression unto them, verse 24, "And lo, God hath given *thee* all them that sail with thee;" they could not lightly but apprehend and conclude, that the preservation and safety of their lives was not the achievement or reward of their own labour or skill, but a special benefit or blessing vouchsafed unto them by God, for his servant Paul's sake. By this discourse it appears how and upon what terms those words of Paul, verse 31, "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be safe," accord with the promise of God made unto him concerning the safety of all that were in the ship with him. The purport of the promise was this, that the ship being wrecked and broken, they should all escape with their lives, because God had given them unto Paul, *i. e.* had purposed to honour Paul by sparing or preserving them in so imminent a danger. This promise was fulfilled and made good, when, the ship being broken, they came all safe to land. Therefore when some of the mariners went about to leave the ship before it was broken, the apostle told the centurion and the soldiers that they took a course to deprive both themselves and them of that hope and certainty of preservation which God had promised unto

him, and he declared unto them; inasmuch as the intent of that promise was, that they should all be preserved, in case they all continued in the ship until it should be broken. So that in case any of them should leave the ship before it was broken, and attempt their safety in any other way, they left no opportunity or possibility unto God to perform the said promise unto any of them, inasmuch as this promise did not assert the safety of any one, or of any lesser number of them, apart from the rest, but of the whole and entire number of them, and that in case they should be all found together in the ship, when it should suffer wreck and be broken. Nor can there any other reason be given, why Paul should say, "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be safe," but only because their non-abiding in the ship, had left no place or opportunity for the promise of God concerning their safety, to take effect. For that their abiding in the ship, being compelled hereunto by the centurion and soldiers, was any instrumental means of their safety, no where appears, nor is it any ways probable; we do not find that they assisted any of those whose lives were preserved, in, or towards the preservation of them; but that every man shifted for himself, and took the best course he could for his safety, ver. 43, 44. So that the allegation of these words, "Except these abide," &c., to prove the usefulness of exhortations, or the necessity of means, properly so called, for the accomplishment of any absolute promise of God, is as broad an impertinency, as is likely incident to ink and paper.

By the way, to search as near to the bottom of the passage in hand, as we can, when the apostle said to the centurion and soldiers, "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be safe," his intent was not simply to deny all possibility of safety unto them, save only upon the abiding of the mariners in the ship; but to deny all probability or likelihood* of safety but upon this condition only; inasmuch as there was very little or no hope or likelihood of their escaping with their lives in respect of the imminent dangers wherewith they were now encompassed on every side, in case they had rendered themselves or suffered themselves to have been rendered by any, incapable of that safety which God had revealed himself willing for Paul's sake to grant unto them. And of this safety, as hath been showed, they had been incapable, in case any one of the company had left the ship, before it was broken.

Other Scriptures there are, by which the teachers of unconditional perseverance conceive they are able to prove a rational consistency between an absolute promise of perseverance, and an exhortation hereunto. Of this sort are these, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall. 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

* "Cannot," in Scripture, frequently notes the difficulty or great unlikelihood of a thing, not always a district impossibility. See Chap. x. p. 274.

ye may be able to bear it," 1 Cor. x. 12, 13. So again, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure," Philip. ii. 12, 13. So the apostle having admonished the Hebrews to take heed of falling away, yet professeth thus concerning them, "But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and such as accompany salvation, though we thus speak," Heb. vi. 4, 5, 9. In these and such like places, say they, exhortations unto perseverance, and promises of perseverance, are joined together by the Holy Ghost; therefore men who deny a regular and due consistency between them, impute folly or weakness to the Holy Ghost. I answer,

1. They are ten degrees nearer to the guilt of the crime specified, who affirm the conjunction mentioned to be found in the said Scriptures, than they who deny the legitimacy of such a conjunction. The incongruity of the conjunction hath been sufficiently evinced: but that any such conjunction is to be found, either in the Scriptures cited, or in any others, is no man's vision but his who hath darkness for a vision. For,

2. That in none of the places cited, is there any promise of perseverance is evident to him that shall duly consider the tenor and import of them. For, 1. It is one thing to say and teach, that God will so limit, as well the force as the continuance of temptations, that the *saints may be able* to bear them: another to make a promise of absolute perseverance. Yea, those very words, "that ye may be able to bear it," clearly import that all that is here promised unto the believing Corinthians, is a sufficiency of means to persevere if they will improve them accordingly, not an infallible certainty of their perseverance. And that caveat, "Let him that thinketh that he standeth, take heed," &c., plainly supposeth a possibility of his falling, who thinketh, upon the best terms and grounds for his thought, that he standeth sure. For that this caveat is not given to hypocrites, or unsound believers, or unto such who please themselves with a loose and groundless conceit of the goodness of their condition God-ward, is evident, because it were better that such men should fall, from their present standing in a groundless conceit, than continue their standing; nor would the apostle ever have cautioned such to take heed of falling, whose condition was more like to be made better than worse by their falling. And besides to understand the said caveat of loose believers, overthrows the pertinency of it to their cause, who insist upon it, to prove a due consistency between exhortations to perseverance and promises of perseverance, as is evident. If then it be directed to true and sound believers, it clearly supposeth a possibility, at least, of their falling, in case they shall not take heed, otherwise their taking heed would be no means, at least no necessary means, of their standing: and further, it supposeth also a possibility at least, of their non-taking heed, or that they might possibly not take heed hereof, otherwise the caveat or admonition had been in vain. Men have

no need of being admonished to do that which they are under no possibility to omit. If then the standing, or persevering of the saints, depends upon their taking heed lest they fall, and their taking heed in this kind, be such a thing which they may possibly omit, evident it is, that there is a possibility of their non-persevering. Again,

2. It is one thing to affirm, that God worketh in men, as to will, so to do, (*i. e.* to enable men to do, or put in execution what they first will, or to assist them in the doing or execution itself,) another, to promise, or work, infallibly and without all possibility of frustration by men, perseverance. There is little or no affinity between these: but how, and in what sense, God is said to be *ἐνεργῶν*, working in men, both to will and to do of his good pleasure, we shall have occasion, God willing, to open more at large in the latter part of this work.

3, and lastly, It is one thing to promise perseverance, another to hope or to persuade ourselves that such or such of our Christian friends will not fall into those horrid sins, from which it is very hard, and next to an impossibility, for them to be renewed by repentance. But such arguments and proofs from the Scriptures as these are, of the two, fitter to harden, or strengthen our wills, in what we hold than to balance our judgments. There is not in all, nor in any one of the Scriptures pretended, the least whisper or breathing of any such promise of perseverance, as our adversaries lift up their imaginations unto. It is true, there are in many places, express promises of such grace, and precious vouchsafements from God unto the saints whereby they shall be enabled, yea, and whereby they are encouraged to persevere; and if men will call such promises as these promises of perseverance, and explain them according to the true intent and mind of God in them, I shall not contend against the appellation. But for any such promise of perseverance, which should import an impossibility of the saints' falling away, either totally or finally, the Scriptures cited are so far strangers unto, that if they were narrowly examined with their respective contexts, they would be found clearly to import, that unless the saints shall *ἀνδρίζεσθαι*, quit themselves like men, in comporting with the grace of God exhibited unto them in order to their perseverance, the great evil of apostasy will be their ruin.

And thus we have abundantly evicted the truth of this position, that the received doctrine of perseverance absolutely overthrows all the usefulness, necessity, and rational congruity of such admonitions and exhortations unto perseverance, wherein the Holy Ghost addresseth himself in the Scriptures unto the saints. There is the same consideration of all those most serious and affectionate desires, obtestations, wishes, and complaints, wherein God expresseth himself in the Scriptures unto his saints, either as desirous of their perseverance, whilst yet they stand, or as aggrieved in himself for their backslidings when they fall. That God should seriously exhort or entreat a man to do that which he hath promised unto

him, that himself will infallibly work in him, or necessitate him to do, and withal hath commanded him to rest assured with the greatest confidence that may be upon the truth of this promise; and much more, that he should affectionately wish that this man would do that which he shall be necessitated, and that by God himself to do, are dispensations or deportments of so notorious an asystasy and incomportment with an infinite wisdom, that consideration must needs cease from men, whilst they ascribe them unto God.

What we have asserted and proved at large, concerning exhortations unto perseverance, viz. that these are dissented by such promises of perseverance as are commonly formed in the minds and writings of men amongst us, we shall now, with what brevity we can, show, concerning such comminations or threatenings also, wherein God threateneth all those with eternal death, who shall not persevere, and shall prove that these also are infatuated, and rendered unsavoury by the principles of the said doctrine, or at least useless and vain, in respect of any efficiency contributable by them towards the effecting of perseverance in the saints. This I demonstrate by the light of this argument:

If the principles of the doctrine we speak of dissolve the efficiency of the said threatenings, towards the end for the accomplishing whereof they are given, then they render them unsavoury, useless, and vain: But the principles of this doctrine are guilty of this offence: Ergo.

The terms of the major proposition are sufficient witnesses of the truth thereof. In order to the proof of the minor, we suppose, 1. That which is evident enough, viz. that the end intended by God, in such threatenings which threaten those that shall apostatise with eternal death, is to prevent apostasy in the saints, and to work, or cause them to persevere. 2. That this is one of the principles of the common doctrine of perseverance; God hath absolutely promised final perseverance unto the saints: and this another; God will certainly, infrustrably, and infallibly work this perseverance in the saints. These two things only supposed, the light of the truth of the said minor proposition breaks forth from between them, with much evidence and power. For 1. If the said threatenings be intended by God, for the prevention of apostasy in the saints, and, consequently, to effect their perseverance, the way or manner wherein this end, intended by God, is to be effected by them, must needs be by their ingenerating or raising a fear or apprehension in the saints of eternal death; it being the native property of fear, mixed with hope, to awaken and provoke men to the use of such means, which are proper to prevent the danger, or evil feared. There is no other way imaginable how, or wherein the threatenings we speak of, should operate towards the perseverance of the saints, or the prevention of their apostasy, but that mentioned, viz. by working in them a fear or dread of the evil threatened. Therefore, 2. Evident it is, that such promises made,

and made known unto the saints, by which they are made incapable of any such fear, are absolutely destructive of that efficiency, which is proper to the said threatenings to exhibit towards the prevention of apostasy in the saints, or for the causing of them to persevere. 3, and lastly, It is every whit as evident that such promises, wherein God should assure the saints that they shall not apostatise, but persevere, are apt and proper to render them incapable of all fear of eternal death, and, consequently, are apparently obstructive of, and destructive unto, the native tendency and operativeness of the said threatenings, towards and about the perseverance of the saints. These threatenings can do nothing, contribute nothing, towards the perseverance of the saints, but by the mediation of the fear of evil in them, upon their non-persevering. Therefore, whatsoever hardens them from this fear, or renders them incapable of it, supersedes all the virtue and vigour which are to be found in these threatenings, for or towards the effecting of their perseverance.

If it be said, that the intent of God in the threatenings we speak of, is not to draw the saints by the fear of the punishment or evil threatened, to do the things which accompany perseverance, but that they are moved and drawn hereunto by a more heavenly principle, as viz. the pure and mere love of God, I answer,

1. By demanding what other intent can it be imagined that God should have in the threatenings specified, but only that asserted? Evident it is, as was lately observed, that they are not directed unto hypocrites, or unsound believers: these are not threatened with the loss of salvation, or with eternal death, in case they shall not persevere unto the end. They are in danger of losing the one, and gaining the other, by persevering (in the way they are in) unto the end, not by non-persevering or by departing from it. Besides, hypocrites and counterfeit believers, being at present in a state of wrath, and in a way of perishing, it is no ways agreeable with the wisdom of God, that he should threaten them with perishing, upon the account of such a sin, under the guilt whereof they were never like to come. And evident it is, from Heb. vi. 4—6, and 9; and so from Heb. x. 26, 27, 29, and other places, that such threatenings as are now under consideration, were directed and administered unto such as were at present true believers, and in a state of life. If, then, the threatenings we speak of, be directed by God unto true and sound believers, it must consequently be conceived, that they were directed unto them for good, or with an intent on God's part to accommodate and bless them in one kind or other. "I will hear," saith David, "what God the Lord will speak; for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: but let them not (or, that they may not: see Piscator upon the place) turn again unto folly." Psa. lxxxv. 8. "He will speak peace unto his people," &c., *i. e.* he will speak only such things which have a proper and kindly tendency to do them good, and to procure their peace and welfare. If so, then must the threatenings we speak of be, in respect of the intentions of God, of a gracious import unto believers, to whom, as

hath been said, they are administered. Which gracious import cannot be conceived to stand in any other thing but only in that powerful aptness which is so apparently visible in the said threatenings, to cause the persons to whom they are directed, through fear of the sore evil threatened, to bethink themselves how and by what means they may escape it, and to engage them accordingly in the use of them; there being no virtue, property, or tendency in these threatenings to affect or work upon those whom they concern in any other way than this. From whence it clearly follows, that it is no ways unworthy the greatest saints, or soundest believers under heaven, to act in order to their salvation out of a principle of fear, lest by their negligence they should deprive themselves of so invaluable a treasure; inasmuch as in such a course and method of acting as this they conform themselves to that gracious counsel and advice which God, out of his signal love and care over them, hath recommended unto them. And upon these very terms our Saviour expresseth himself to his apostles, who were saints of the highest elevation, and the first born of his delight: "And I say unto you, *my friends*, be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do: But I will forewarn you whom you shall *fear*: *fear him* which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, *fear him*." Luke xii. 4, 5. Therefore certainly it is no ways unlawful, no, nor matter of disparagement or dishonour in the least, to the greatest friends or lovers of God and of Jesus Christ, to act righteously out of a principle of fear of being "cast into hell" by God for unrighteousness. That pronoun relative, "who" or "which," ("*which*, after he hath killed," &c.) is not so much descriptive in the sentence as ratiocinative or causal; *i. e.* it imports the reason or motive of that counsel which our Saviour here gives his disciples of fearing God, to be, his "power of casting into hell." Which is further manifest by the force of the same particle in the opposite clause of the passage, "Be not afraid of them *which*," or who, "kill the body," &c. Our Saviour's intent in these words was not so much to describe those whom he would not have his disciples to fear, *viz.* men, but to assign a ground or reason why they should not fear men, *viz.* because they had "power only to kill the body."* In the original, the said relative particle doth not appear in either of the clauses mentioned, but the force and import assigned unto it in both are here more significantly implied by the use of the participle in both; it being a known propriety of the Greek tongue to import the reasons or grounds of things by their participles. See 1 Tim. v. 17; Heb. vi. 6; x. 26, 28, 29.

2. Though the saints and true believers do many things, and should do more, out of a principle of love to God, yet are they not bound to wave or decline the influence or assistance of other prin-

* Τῶν ἀποκτείνοντων τὸ σῶμα, καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα μὴ ἔχόντων, &c. Τὸν μετὰ τὸ ἀποκτείνειν ἐξουσίαν ἔχοντα, &c.

ciples which incline and lead them to the same actions and ways with the love of God. For in this case also that of Solomon is true, "Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow—and if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him," &c. Eccles. iv. 9, 10, &c. The fear of evil threatened is as natural and genuine a fruit of faith as love itself, yea, and of very choice acceptance with God. "By faith," saith the apostle, "Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, *moved with fear*, prepared an ark for the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." Heb. xi. 7. So that men may "condemn the world," and save themselves and others, as well by actions done out of a principle of fear as of love. "Because thine heart was tender," saith God to king Josiah, by Huldah the prophetess, "and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me; I also have *heard thee, saith the Lord*. Behold, therefore, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace," &c. 2 Kings xxii. 19, 20. By these, and many more instances of like consideration, which may readily be added, it fully appears that the holiest and best of men, yea, even the greatest friends and lovers of God, and those that have acted as much and as freely out of a principle of love at other times as any, have yet been afraid of the judgments and displeasure of God threatened, yea, and suffered themselves to be conducted and carried out by the hand of this impression to such actions and ways, for the preservation of themselves and others, wherein they were accepted with God, and found peace and safety for both.

Yea,
 3, and lastly, The present state and frame of the hearts and souls of the saints, duly considered, which are made up as well of flesh and corruption as of spirit and grace, the former having need of bridles for restraint, as well as the latter of spurs for quickening; evident it is, that arguments or motives drawn from fear of punishment are as necessary and proper for them in respect of the one, as incitements from love in respect of the other. "A whip for the horse," saith Solomon, "a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the fool's back." Prov. xxvi. 3. The flesh, even in the wisest of men, is a fool, and would be unruly without a rod ever and anon shaken over him. Nor should God have made such gracious, bountiful, and effectual provision for the perseverance of the saints, as now he hath done, had he not engaged as well the passion of fear within them as of love to be their guardian and keeper. It is true, "perfect love casteth out fear," 1 John iv. 18; but who amongst the saints themselves can say either that his heart is clean, or his love perfect? "Perfect love casteth out" flesh as well as fear; yea, true love, until flesh be "cast out," preserveth fear for its assistant and fellow-

helper. The flesh would soon make love a wanton, and entice her unto folly, did not fear dissolve the enchantment, and protect her chastity. But enough of this.

Notwithstanding, if it be yet further demanded, But doth it not argue servility in men to be drawn by the iron cord of the fear of hell to do what is their duty to do? Or doth any other service or obedience become sons and children but only that which is free, and proceedeth from love? I answer,

1. If the great lawgiver, God, judged it not unworthy of him or his wisdom to persuade and press obedience to his laws, and that as well upon true believers, and such who are his children by faith, as upon others, (as we lately showed from Luke xii. 4,) by arguments drawn from fear of punishment, they have no reason to judge it unworthy of them to suffer themselves to be persuaded and wrought upon accordingly. Nay, doubtless, if the Lord Christ commands or requires of us to "fear him who, when he hath killed, is able to cast both body and soul into hell," and that upon this very account, as we lately interpreted the place, we shall not be found obedient children unto him unless we do fear accordingly.

2. There is a very different consideration of the obedience of children to their natural parents, and of the obedience of the children of God unto their heavenly Father. The obedience of the former, is taught by the inspiration of nature, and is an act, not so much raised by deliberation, or flowing from the will by an interposure of the judgment and conscience to produce the election, as arising from an innate propension in men, accompanying the very constituting principles of their nature or being: whereas the latter, the obedience of the children of God, is taught by precept, and the principle of it, I mean that obediential frame of heart out of which they subject themselves unto God, planted in the souls of men by the engagement of reason, judgment, and conscience, to consider those grounds, arguments, and motives, by which their heavenly Father judgeth it meet to work and fashion them unto such a frame. So that though the obedience of natural children to their natural parents, be the more genuine and commendable, when it flows freely from the pure instinct of nature, and is not drawn from them by fear of punishment; yet the obedience of the children of God is then most genuine, commendable, and like unto itself, when it is produced and raised in the soul by a joint influence, and contribution, not of one, or of some, but of all those arguments, reasons, motives, inducements, whatsoever, and how many soever, they be, by which their heavenly Father desires to plant and work it in them. For in this case, and in this only, it hath most of God, of the Spirit of God, of the wisdom of God, of the goodness of God in it: and upon this account is likeliest to be most free, uniform, and permanent. Therefore,

3, and lastly, That service or obedience unto God, which is exhibited and performed unto him, either out of a desire and hope of that great recompense of reward, salvation, or out of a fear of

suffering the vengeance of eternal fire, upon disobedience, is not to be termed mercenary, or servile, merely or simply because such a hope, or such a fear, are interested in the raising or procurement of it, unless withal all the exhibition and performance of it be burdensome, grievous, and offensive unto those who do perform it. For men may act as willingly, as freely, as cheerfully, as contentedly, out of a principle of hope, yea, and of fear itself also, as from love itself; yea, and more willingly and freely, from the two former, than from the latter, unless the principle of love be advanced to a very considerable degree, height, and power in men. There is no reason but to judge that Noah went about the making of his ark, and continued in the work until the finishing of it, with as much willingness, cheerfulness, and contentment of mind, as he performed any other act of obedience unto God, at any time, notwithstanding, as the Scripture informs us, he was moved thereunto through fear. Heb. xi. 7. Nor is it credible but that Paul followed the work of mortification, keeping under his body, and bring it into subjection, with all willingness, freeness, cheerfulness, and contentment, though he was engaged and provoked hereunto by a "fear, lest by any means when he had preached the gospel unto others, he himself should prove a cast-away," 1 Cor. ix. 27, or reprobate.

If that of the apostle John be objected, "fear hath torment," 1 John iv. 18, and a demand made upon it, how can a man act willingly, or freely, out of such a principle, which hath pain, or torment, in it? I answer,

That fear, of which John speaketh, and which he saith hath pain, or torment in it, is such a fear, which hath little, or no hope, in conjunction with it. For such a fear, which is accompanied with a certainty of hope, that by the use of such and such means, which he is sure he shall, or may have, if he please, especially the use of these means being otherwise honourable and delightful unto him, the evil feared shall be prevented; such a fear, I say, as this, hath little or no pain, or torment, in it at all. Now of this kind is the fear, out of which the children of God many times act, (as with honour and peace, they may;) it is attended with a living hope, that by comporting or co-operating with the grace of God, which they are assured they may, and shall have, for the asking, which co-operation is in itself matter of honour and of delight unto them, they shall be delivered from the great evil feared, which is hell, or the casting out of the presence of God for ever. Though Noah was moved through fear, as we heard, to prepare the ark, for the safety of himself, and his, yet he was as well moved hereunto through faith, as fear. "By faith Noah being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark," &c. Heb. xi. 7. "By faith Noah prepared, &c." *i. e.* out of a settled persuasion and belief that God would preserve him and his from perishing in the waters, by means of the ark, which he had directed him to make for that purpose, he

readily and cheerfully betook himself to the framing and making of it. In like manner, Paul, though he "kept under his body, and brought it into subjection, lest," (*i. e.* through fear, lest,) "when he had preached unto others, he himself should be a cast-away;" yet was he full of assurance, that by this means, by keeping under his body, &c. he should prevent his being a cast-away, and remain for ever in the love and favour of God; upon the account of which assurance, notwithstanding his fear, he rejoiced that "joy unspeakable and glorious, who shall separate us from the love of Christ?—For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Rom. viii. 35, 38, 39. So that that fear and trembling, with, and out of which, the children of God not only lawfully may, but of duty ought, "to work out their own salvation," Phil. ii. 13, or, which is the same, deliverance from condemnation, are not of those kinds, of fear and trembling, which have torment, or expectation of evil, or doubtfulness of safety and well doing, attending them; but of those, which are quickening and provoking to the use of means for safety, upon an apprehension of danger coming upon the negligent and slothful, and accompanied with a peaceable and blessed confidence of obtaining safety thereby. So that we may safely conclude that the threatenings of eternal death in the Scriptures, which are bent against the faces of apostates and backsliders, are a means graciously vouchsafed by God for the preserving of his saints from apostasy, and this by raising a fear of hell within them, in case they shall neglect his counsel for their perseverance: and consequently, that all such threatenings are "turned into stubble and rotten wood," in the dialect of the Almighty, Job xli. 27, I mean are made powerless and useless, by the principles of that doctrine, which teacheth any absoluteness of promise made unto the saints for their final perseverance.

Thirdly, and lastly, as this doctrine evacuateth all the exhortations, and comminations, which the Scripture holdeth forth as means to preserve the saints in faith and holiness unto the end, so doth it all the promises also, which are here given in order to the procurement of the same end: the virtue, efficacy, and power whereof are merely nullified by such a supposition as this, that believers stand bound to believe an absolute impossibility of their final declining, or falling away to perdition. For when men are secured, and this by the infallible security of faith, that the good things promised are already theirs, by the right and title of faith, and that they shall certainly persevere in faith unto the end, what need or occasion is there to persuade or move these men to do that which becomes them, in order to their perseverance, by any argument drawn from the promise of such things? A promise made to

a man of having or keeping that which is his own already, and which he certainly knows shall not, cannot be taken away from him, can have no manner of influence upon him by way of excitement, or inducement, to labour for the obtaining of it, or to do the things by which it is to be obtained. For, as the apostle reasons in somewhat the like case, "Hope that is seen, is not hope," *i. e.* that which sometimes was the object of hope, when it comes to be seen, or enjoyed, is no longer the object of hope, "for what a man seeth, why," or, how, "doth he yet hope for?" Rom. viii. 24. So may we argue in the case in hand: a promise of what is already enjoyed and possessed, is no promise; hath not the nature, property, or operation of a promise in it, especially not of a promise engaging unto action, in order to the obtaining of the good promised. A promise of this import, I mean, that is any ways likely to engage unto action, must be of some good thing so conditioned, in relation to him to whom the promise is made, that he hath no ground to expect the enjoyment of it, but upon condition of the performance of such and such an action, one or more. For if such actions and ways, which are proper and requisite for the obtaining of the good promised, be otherwise, and in themselves desirable, and would howsoever be chosen by him to whom the promise is made, evident it is that the promise we speak of doth not in this case work at all upon him, or raise such an election in him. Again, if those actions and ways which are proper and necessary for the obtaining of the good promised, be in themselves unpleasant and distasteful unto the person we speak of, to whom the promise is supposed to be made, it is a clear case, that he will not lift up his heart or hand unto them, but only for the obtaining of such a good and desirable thing, which he hath reason to judge will never be obtained by him, but only by the performance of such things. For who will trouble himself to run for that, which he knows he may and shall obtain by sitting still? Thus then it every way appears that the common doctrine of absolute and certain perseverance, makes nothing but wind and vanity of all those most serious and weighty exhortations, threatenings, and promises in the Scriptures, which concern the perseverance of the saints, and are directed by God unto them for this end and purpose, that by them they may be enabled, *i. e.* made willing, watchful, and careful to persevere, and consequently the very face and spirit of the said doctrine, is directly set and bent against that high concernment of the saints, I mean their perseverance. For whatsoever nullifieth the means, is clearly destructive unto the end. And thus we have done with our second argument, for the confirmation of that doctrine, which teacheth a possibility of the saints' defection, and this unto death.

A third argument is this. That doctrine which representeth God, as weak, incongruous and incoherent with himself, in his applications unto men, is not from God; and consequently that which contradicteth it must needs be the truth: But the doctrine of perseverance op-

posed by us, putteth this great dishonour upon God; representeth him weak, incongruous, &c. Ergo. The major proposition in this argument is too great in evidence of truth to be questioned. The minor is made good by this consideration; viz., that the said doctrine bringeth God upon the great theatre of the Scriptures, speaking thus, or to this effect, in the audience of heaven and earth, unto his saints. "You that truly believe in my Son Jesus Christ, and have been once made partakers of my Holy Spirit, and therefore are fully persuaded and assured, according to my will and command given unto you in that behalf, yea, according to that ensembling of truth within you which you have from me, that you cannot possibly, no, not by all the most horrid sins and abominable practices, that you shall or can commit, fall away, either totally or finally, from your faith; that in the midst of your foulest actions and courses there remains a seed of grace or faith within you, which is sufficient to make you true believers, and to preserve you from falling away finally; that it is impossible you should die in your sins; you that know, and are assured, that I will by an irresistible hand, work perseverance in you, and consequently that ye are out of all danger of condemnation, and that heaven and salvation belong unto you, and are as good as yours already, so that nothing but giving of thanks appertains unto you, which also you know that I will, do you what you will in the meantime, necessitate you unto; you, I say, that are fully and thoroughly persuaded, and possessed with the truth of all these things, I earnestly charge, admonish, exhort, and beseech, that you take heed to yourselves, that ye continue in the faith, that there be not at any time an evil heart of unbelief in you to depart from the living God, that you fall not from your own steadfastness. Yea, I declare and profess unto you, that if you shall draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in you, that if you shall deny me, I will deny you; that if you be again overcome of the lusts of the world, and be entangled herewith, that your latter end shall be worse than your beginning; that if you shall turn away, all your former righteousness shall not be remembered, but you shall die in your sins, and suffer the vengeance of eternal fire. On the other hand, if you shall continue unto the end, my promise is that you shall be saved. Therefore strive to enter in at the strait gate, quit yourselves like men, labour for the meat that endureth unto everlasting life, and be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." He that shall duly weigh and consider what a senseless, and, indeed, ridiculous incongruity there is, between these exhortations, adjurations, threatenings, and latter promises, and those declarations, applications, and former promises, doubtless will confess, that either the one or the other of them, are not from God, or according to the mind of God. For how preposterous a thing is it to threaten a man with suffering the vengeance of hell fire, in case he shall not persevere, whom we have charged before confidently to believe that God will irresistibly cause him to persevere, and eternally save

him? But the exhortations, threatenings, and latter promises are expressly from God, as our adversaries themselves will not deny; therefore the former applications and promises are the mere notions and conceits of men, and have no foundation in the word of God, and consequently the doctrine of absolute perseverance is to be rejected, as a doctrine rendering the only wise God strangely irrational, and inconsistent with himself.

4. If there be no possibility of the saints' falling away finally, then is their persevering unto the end incapable of reward from God: But their final perseverance is not incapable of reward from God: Ergo. The minor proposition, I presume, contains nothing but what is the sense of those who deny the conclusion: or however, it contains nothing but what is the express sense of the Lord Christ, where he saith, "But he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved," Matt. xxiv. 13. Therefore we shall, I suppose, be excused from further proof of this, without any prejudice to the cause in hand. The consequence in the major proposition stands firm upon this foundation: no act of the creature, whereunto it is necessitated, or which it cannot possibly decline, or but do, is by any law of God, or rule of justice, rewardable.* Therefore if the saints be necessitated by God to persevere finally, so that he leaves unto them no possibility of declining finally, their final perseverance is not according to any law of God or man, nor indeed, according to any principle of sound reason or equity, capable of reward, no whit more than actions merely natural are. Nay, of the two there seems to be more reason, why acts merely natural, as, for example, eating, drinking, breathing, sleeping, &c., should be rewarded, inasmuch as these flow, though in a way of necessity, yet from an inward principle, and connatural to the agent; than such actions, whereunto the agent is constrained, necessitated, or determined by a principle of power from without, and which is not intrinsical to it. It is true, a prince, or great man may, if he please, bestow gifts of what value he pleaseth upon those who live, breathe, eat, &c., but he cannot be said to reward them for living, breathing, eating, &c., because a reward (in the proper signification of the word) imports a relation to such actions or services, one or more, which were in the power of him to have omitted, or refrained, who performed them. In like manner, God, if he judged it meet, may or might confer life and salvation upon those who shall persevere unto the end, though it should be supposed that they were necessitated by him thus to persevere; but upon such a supposition as this, he could not be said to reward them with life or salvation, for or in respect of such their perseverance, for the reason specified. If we speak of rewards promised in order to the moving or inclining of the wills of men towards such or such actions or ways, (of which kind also the rewards mentioned in the Scriptures as yet

* See p. 449 of this Chapter.

remaining to be conferred by God upon men are,) the case is yet more clear; viz., that they are appropriate unto such actions and ways, unto the election and choice whereof men are not necessitated in one kind or other, especially not by any physical or foreign power. For to what purpose should a reward be promised unto me, to persuade or make me willing to engage in such or such a course, or to perform such or such a service, in case I be necessitated unto the same engagement or performance otherways? Or what place is there left for a moral inducement, where a physical necessity hath done the execution, or if the moral inducement hath done the execution, and sufficiently raised and engaged the will to the action, with what congruity of reason, yea, or common sense, can a physical necessity be superinduced? Now, that all the rewards which God, in the Scriptures, promiseth unto perseverance, or unto those who shall persevere, are promised upon this account, viz., to work upon the wills of men, to make them willing and careful to persevere, is a thing so rich in evidence that it needs no proof. When Christ saith to the Church of Smyrna, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life," Rev. ii. 10, can any man reasonably imagine, but that the crown of life is promised by way of motive or encouragement, to make them faithful unto death? In like manner, when in his epistle to the Church of Thyatira, he writeth thus, "And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations," Rev. ii. 26, doth he make this promise of giving power over nations with any other eye or intent, than to raise hereby a spirit of Christian valour and resolution in them, not to give over fighting the good fight of faith unto the end, which would be the victory or conquest here intended? Not to instance more particulars, when he speaketh thus to his disciples, "But he that shall endure," meaning, in the loyalty of his affection unto him and the gospel, "unto the end, the same shall be saved," Matt. xxiv. 13, doth he promise salvation, to him that must or shall be necessitated, will he, nill he, to endure unto the end? Or is there any more savour in the promise, thus interpreted, than there would be in such a promise as this, But he that breatheth unto the end, the same shall be saved? Therefore, questionless, our Saviour's intent in promising salvation unto him that should endure unto the end, was, by this promise of so great a reward to provoke, animate, and encourage men to persevere unto the end. Let all expositors, both ancient and modern, be consulted upon the place. "Although," saith Calvin upon the place, "the love of many, being surcharged with the weight of iniquities, shall fail, yet Christ admonisheth that this obstacle also (or impediment in their way) must be overcome, lest those that are faithful and believe, being wearied (or tired out) by evil examples, should start back (or recoil from the faith.) Therefore he repeats that saying, that none shall be saved but he that shall strive lawfully, so as to persevere

unto the end.* So that his sense clearly is, that salvation is here particularly promised or appropriated by Christ unto perseverance, and consequently, and by way of intimation, destruction threatened against backsliding, to persuade and to prevail with those who do believe so to strive, as to hold out and persevere striving unto the end. The matter is so clear that we shall need to produce no more witnesses. So then, it being evident that final perseverance in the saints is truly and properly rewardable by God, evident likewise it is, by the light of what hath been argued, that it is not any thing physically necessitated upon them, or irresistibly wrought in them, by God, but that it is such a service, or course of obedience unto God, wherein they are volunteers, and the performance whereof is as well in their power to decline as to exhibit.

A fifth reason evincing the same conclusion is this: "They who are in a capacity or possibility of perpetrating the works of the flesh are in a possibility of perishing, and consequently in a possibility of falling away, and that finally, from the grace and favour of God, in case they be in an estate of this grace and favour at the present: But the saints, or true believers, are in a possibility of perpetrating the works of the flesh: Therefore they are in a possibility also of perishing, and so of falling away from the grace and favour of God wherein at present they stand." The major proposition in this argument, viz. that they who are in a possibility of perpetrating or customary acting the works of the flesh, are in a possibility of perishing, &c., is clearly proved from such Scriptures which exclude all workers of iniquity, and fulfillers of the lusts of the flesh, from the kingdom of God, of which sort there are many. "Of the which," saith the apostle, speaking of the lusts of the flesh, adultery, fornication, &c., "I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God," Gal. v. 21. So again: "For this ye know, that no whoremonger, or 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. Yet again: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not ye deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers," &c. "shall inherit the kingdom of God," 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. From such passages as these, which are very frequent in the Scriptures, it is as clear as the light of the sun at noon-day, that they who may possibly commit such sins as those specified, adultery, fornication, idolatry, &c., may as possibly perish, and be for ever excluded the kingdom of God.

Now that true believers are under a possibility of perpetrating

* *Quamvis ergo iniquitatum mole oppressa multorum charitas deficiat, hoc quoque obstaculum superandum esse admonet Christus, ne fideles malis exemplis fracti resiliant. Ideo sententiam illam repetit, neminem posse salvum evadere, nisi qui legitime certaverit, ut in finem usque perseveret.*

and committing such sins as these, which was the effect and sense of the minor proposition, is altogether as evident as the former, as both the Scriptures last cited, with their fellows, being in special manner directed unto true believers, as also the sad and frequent experience of such persons as these falling into such sins, do abundantly manifest. Nor is this proposition denied by our adversaries themselves. Therefore, when they deny that the saints, when they commit such sins, do fall away from their faith, do they not grant the premises in a lawful syllogism, and deny the conclusion?

To pretend that the threatenings of non-inheriting the kingdom of God, in the Scriptures last quoted, are not bent against true believers, or the execution of them intended upon them, though they shall commit the sins specified, but only against unbelievers, is to set up darkness against light. For,

1. The said passages are all directed to true and sound believers, yea, to these only; or at least to those, and only those, whom the apostle judged to be such. If then this saying, or threatening, "They that do the works of the flesh shall not inherit the kingdom of God," concerns only unbelievers when they do such works, and shall be executed only upon them if they come under the dint of it, to what purpose should it be directed, especially with so much seriousness and particularity, as it is, unto true believers only? Or what is it to true believers, that God will shut out unbelievers from his kingdom, for the perpetration of such and such sins, if they, these true believers, may commit them without any such danger?

2. As concerning unbelievers, they are, at least according to the judgment of our adversaries, in an estate of exclusion from the kingdom of God, whether they perpetrate the works of flesh mentioned, or any others like unto them, or no. Their unbelief alone is sufficient matter of exclusion against them. Now how vain a thing, and unworthy the Spirit of God, is it to threaten men with such a punishment, in case they shall commit such or such particular sins, who are at present obnoxious unto it, and shall certainly suffer it, whether ever they shall commit any of these sins or no?

3. There is not in the said dehortations or threatenings the least intimation of any difference of persons, in respect of their present estates or conditions, but only a designation or nomination of such things which exclude from the kingdom of God.

4. To affirm that God excludeth unbelievers from his kingdom for the committing of such sins which, according to the sense of our adversaries, they have no sufficient power to refrain, and, according to truth, have no such provision or furniture of means to refrain as true believers have; and to affirm withal, that yet he excludeth not believers for such commissions, whom they acknowledge to have sufficient power to refrain them, is to render or represent God notoriously partial or unjust. For he that sinneth, having less means to refrain, is a less sinner, than he that sinneth the same sin or sins, having more or greater. Now to punish, and that with the utmost severity, lesser or lighter offenders, and not only to discharge

greater and more heinous-offenders in the same kind, but highly to reward them, the heinousness of their demerits notwithstanding, is an act of the broadest injustice that lightly can be.

5, and lastly, Though the tenor or form of the said dehortations, or threatenings, in the Scriptures mentioned, be indefinite, and not universal, yet from other passages of the same sense and import with them, where the sign of universality is expressed, it may be clearly evinced that they are in sense and meaning universal, and so comprehensive as well of true believers as unbelievers. "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and *all* liars, shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone," &c. Rev. xxi. 8. Again: "And there shall *in no wise* enter into it (the new Jerusalem) *any thing* that defileth, neither *whatsoever* worketh abomination, or maketh a lie," &c., ver. 27. In the former of these passages, "*all* liars, and," consequently, "*all* murderers, and *all* whoremongers," &c., are adjudged to have "their portion in the lake that burneth with fire," &c. In the latter, that "*any thing* that defileth, or *whatsoever* worketh abomination, shall *in no wise*," (ὅτι μὴ,) or, upon no terms or conditions whatsoever, "enter into the new Jerusalem." Therefore, when God threateneth and saith, that "neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers," &c., "shall inherit the kingdom of God," evident it is that he includeth as well believers as unbelievers.

If it be objected, But true believers have a promise from God, that they shall never lose their faith, I answer, 1, That this hath oft been said, but never so much as once proved. 2. Upon examination of those Scriptures wherein such promises of God are pretended to reside or to be found, we found no such thing in them. We found, indeed, many promises of perseverance, but all of them conditional, and such whose performance, in respect of actual and complete perseverance, is suspended upon the diligent and careful use of means by men to persevere. See Chap. xi., page 323. And lastly, to affirm that true believers can by no commission of sin or sins whatsoever, how vile, horrid, abominable soever, how frequently reiterated, how long continued in soever, either make shipwreck of their faith, or fall away from the grace and favour of God so as to perish, what is it but to provoke the flesh to an outrageousness in sinning, and to encourage that which remains of the old man in them to bestir itself in all ways of unrighteousness? And doubtless the teaching of that doctrine hath been the casting of a snare upon the world, and hath caused many, whose feet God had guided into ways of peace, to venture so far in desperateness of sinning, that, through the just judgment of God, their hearts never served them to return. But of these things we spake somewhat more at large, Chap. ix.

Others plead that there is no reason to conceive that true believers, though they perpetrate the works of the flesh, should be excluded from the kingdom of God upon this account, because

what they sin in this kind they sin out of infirmity, and not out of malice. I answer,

1. By concession; that there are three several kinds of sin, in the general, which also make so many degrees in sinning, in point of demerit. There are sins of ignorance, and sins of infirmity, and sins of malice. And sins of this last kind we acknowledge to be far greater in demerit than either of the former. But,

2. By way of exception; to say that true believers, or any other men, do or perpetrate the works of the flesh out of infirmity, in strictness of interpretation, involves a contradiction. For to do the works of the flesh, implies the dominion or predominancy of the flesh in the doers of them; which in sins of infirmity hath no place. The apostle clearly insinuates the nature of sins of infirmity in that to the Galatians: "Brethren, if any man be overtaken with a fault, (*προληφθῆ ἔν τινι παραπτώματι, ἰ. ε.* be prevented, or taken at un-awares in, or with some miscarriage or sin,) ye that are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness," &c., Gal. vi. 1. When a man's foot is taken in the snare of a temptation, only through a defect in that spiritual watchfulness over himself and his ways, which he ought to keep constantly, and so sinneth contrary to the habitual and standing frame of his heart, this man sinneth out of infirmity. But he that thus sinneth, cannot, in Scripture phrase, be said, either to "walk or live according to the flesh," Rom. viii. 4, 12, 13, or "to do the works of the flesh," Gal. v. 21, or "to do the lusts or desires of the flesh," Eph. ii. 3; because none of these are any where ascribed unto, or charged upon true believers, but only upon such persons who are enemies unto God, and children of death.

3. If by sinning out of malice, they mean sinning with deliberation, with plotting and contriving the method and means of their sinning, sinning against judgment, against the dictates of conscience, &c., (and what they should or can mean by sinning out of malice, but sinning upon such terms as these, I understand not;) certain it is that true believers, or at least such as were true believers before such sinning, may sin out of malice. Yea, and this our adversaries themselves, forgetful of their own occasion at this turning, other-while plainly enough suppose and grant. Pareus, observing the difference between sin reigning and not reigning, of the former speaketh thus: "Sin reigning, is all (or every) sin in men unregenerate; or in men regenerate, an error contrary to the articles of faith and against conscience, excluding out of the heart actual belief of remission of sins, and making the sinner liable to eternal death, unless he should be forgiven. In one word, sin reigning is to obey the lusts of the flesh. Even those that are regenerate sometimes fall into this sin, as David, Peter: and this the apostle's exhortation witnesseth."* And afterwards, speaking of regenerate men

* *Regnans est omne peccatum in non renatis; aut in renatis, error contra articulos fidei, aut conscientiam, excludens ex corde actualem fiduciam remissionis peccatorum, et obnoxium factiois peccantem exitio eterno, nisi fiat remissio.*—Uno verbo, est obedire cupiditatibus carnis.

and true believers, he grants that they may "mortally, and against the dictate of their consciences, rush (into sin) as Aaron, David, Peter, did;" and saith moreover, that "when they thus sin, they lay waste their consciences, disturb the Holy Ghost, lose the joy of their heart, and incur the wrath of God." Doubtless these are not the symptoms or effects of sins of infirmity; though the author is pleased to say, that which I think pleaseth few men to believe, that the sins of Aaron, David, Peter, were not committed by them, ex contemptu Dei, out of any contempt of God, but out of a preoccupation with or through the infirmity of the flesh. Concerning the sin of David, certain I am that the prophet Nathan, by the word of the Lord, chargeth it upon his despising or contempt of the commandment of the Lord, 2 Sam. xii. 9. Ursine is yet more cordial and through in the point. "The most sad falls," saith he, "of holy men, as of Aaron, making the golden calf, for which God being angry was minded to slay him; and of David, committing adultery and murder, to whom Nathan said, Thou art a man of death, do plainly show that even regenerate men may rush (or fall headlong) into reigning sin.*" And those of the contra-remonstrancy in the conference at the Hague, held anno 1613, confess and teach, that "True believers may fall so far, that the church, according to the commandment of Christ, shall be obliged to pronounce that she cannot tolerate them in her external communion, and that they shall have no part in the kingdom of Christ, except they repent."† Therefore certainly their sense was, that true believers may sin above the rate of those who sin out of infirmity, inasmuch as there is no commandment of Christ that any church of his should eject such persons out of their external communion who sin out of infirmity only. So that by the confession of our adversaries themselves, even true believers may perpetrate such sins, which are of a deeper demerit, than to be numbered amongst sins of infirmity; yea, such sins, for which the church of Christ, according to the commandment of Christ, stands bound to judge them for ever excluded from the kingdom of God without repentance. From whence it undeniably follows, that they may commit such sins, whereby their faith in Christ will be totally wrecked and lost, because there is no condemnation or exclusion from the kingdom of God unto those that are (by faith) in Christ Jesus, whether they repent or not. And therefore they that stand in need of repentance to give them a right and title to the kingdom of God, are no sons of God by faith; for were they sons, they

Renati etiam aliquando incidunt in tale peccatum, ut David, Petrus: quod testatur hortatio apostoli, &c.—*Par.* ad Rom. vi. 13. Hi enim etiam mortaliter contra dictamen conscientie aliquando ruentes, ut Aaron, David, Petrus, &c.—*Ibid.* in Dub. 7.

* Quod etiam renati possunt ruere in peccatum regnans, satis ostendunt lapsus tristissimi etiam sanctorum hominum: ut Aaronis vitulum aureum facientis, quem Deus iratus propterea voluit perdere; et Davidis committentis adulterium et homicidium, cui Nathan dixit, Tu es vir mortis.—*Ursinus*, vol. i. p. 207.

† Deinde respondemus ad minorem, fieri posse ut verè fideles ed prolabantur, ut Ecclesia, ex mandato Christi, cogatur pronunciare, se eos in externâ communione tolerare non posse, neque eos partem in regno Christi habituros, nisi respiciant.—*Coll. Hag.* p. 399.

would be heirs also, Rom. viii. 17; and consequently have the clearest right and title to the inheritance that is. So that to pretend that however the saints may fall into great and grievous sin, yet they shall certainly be renewed again by repentance before they die, though this be an assertion without any bottom of reason or truth, yet doth it no ways oppose, but suppose rather, a possibility of the total defection of faith in true believers.

Some, to maintain this position, that all the sins of true believers are sins of infirmity, lay hold on this shield. "Such men as these," they say, "never sin with their whole wills, or with full consent." Therefore when they sin, they never sin but through infirmity. That they never sin with full consent, they conceive they prove sufficiently from that of the apostle: "For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil, which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me," Rom. vii. 19, 20. I answer,

1. That the saints oft sin with their whole wills or full consents, is undeniably proved by this consideration, viz. because otherwise there should be not only a plurality or diversity, but even a contrariety of wills in the same person, at one and the same instant of time, viz. when the supposed act of sin is produced. Now it is an impossibility of the first evidence, that there should be a plurality of acts, and these contrary the one unto the other, in one and the same subject, or agent, at one and the same instant of time. It is true, between the first moving of the flesh in a man towards the committing of the sin, and the completing of this sin by an actual and external patration of it, there may be successively in him, not only a plurality, but even a contrariety of volitions, or motions of the will, according to what the Scripture speaketh, concerning the "flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh:" but when the flesh, having prevailed in the combat, bringeth forth her desire into act, the Spirit ceaseth from his act of lusting: otherwise it will follow, that the flesh is greater and stronger in her lustings, then the Spirit of God in his, and that when the flesh lusteth after the perpetration of such, or such a sin, the Spirit, as to the hindering of it, lusteth but in vain: which is contrary to that of the apostle John: "greater is he that is in you," (speaking, as it is clear, of the Spirit of God, unto true believers,) "than he that is in the world," 1 John iv. 4; meaning, Satan, and all his auxiliaries, sin, flesh, corruption, &c.

If it be demanded, But if the Spirit of God in true believers, be greater and stronger in his lustings, then the flesh in his, how cometh it to pass, that in the spiritual duel, the flesh so frequently prevaieth? I answer, The reason is, because the Spirit acts not, at least to the just efficacy of his vigour and strength, but only when his preventing or first motions are entertained or seconded with a suitable concurrence by the hearts and the wills of men; through a deficiency or neglect whereof, he is said to be grieved or quenched, *i. e.* to cease from other actings, or movings, in men.

This truth is the ground of these, and such like sayings, in the writings of Paul: "If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God," Rom. viii. 13, 14. Believers do then mortify the deeds of the body, by the Spirit, when they join their wills unto his in his preventing motions of grace, and so draw, or obtain, further strength and assistance from him, in order to the great and difficult work of mortification. In respect of which concurrence also with the Spirit in his first and more gentle applications of himself unto them, they are said to be led by the Spirit; as by their comportments with him in his higher and further applications, they become filled with the Spirit, according to that exhortation of the same apostle to the Ephesians: "but be ye filled with the Spirit," Eph. v. 18; *i. e.* follow the Spirit close in his present motions and suggestions within you, and you shall be filled with him, *i. e.* you shall find him moving and assisting you upon all occasions, at a higher and more excellent and glorious rate. But this by the way. However, by that which hath been now said, it clearly appears that the reason why believers are so frequently overcome by the lustings of the flesh, notwithstanding the contrary lustings of the Spirit within them before their foil, is not because the flesh hath more strength to lust than the Spirit, but because they, the men, believers, have more will to hearken unto, and to go along with the flesh, in her lustings, than with the Spirit, in his; it being the law, or property of the Spirit, not to advance, or go forward in his exertions of himself, when he is deserted and forsaken in his way, by the wills of men. It is true, after such desertions of him in his motions by the wills of men, he doth not always, wholly and for ever, desert them; but most frequently returns again in his motions and excitements unto them. Only in his first applications unto men, after he hath been so deserted by them, as hath been said, he doth not, I conceive, begin, where he left, but where he began first of all; my meaning is, that he doth not move, or act in them at any such high, or filling rate, as at which he wrought, or was ready to work, when he was forsaken: but according to the line, or proportion, of his preventing motions, which generally are of a cooler and softer inspiration than his subsequent. But thus we see it an apparent error, to say that true believers never sin with their whole wills, or fulness of consent: which yet might be made more apparent, by the consideration of David's case, in and upon his committing of those two great sins, homicide and adultery. For doubtless had there been any reluctancy of will, or renitency of conscience, or of the Spirit within him, when he committed the former of the two, adultery, he would not have added the second, murder, so soon after, to it. Again, had there been any such reluctancy or renitency in him, as we speak of, when he perpetrated, either the one abomination, or the other, doubtless he could not have digested both the one and the other without any remorse, or self-condem-

nation, for so long a time together, as passed between the acting of his said sins, and the time when the prophet Nathan was sent from God unto him to awaken him unto repentance. Which space of time, by the best calculation of divines, was ten months, at the least.* From the consideration of which distance of time between David's sin, and his repentance, P. Martyr makes this observation, that "the saints themselves being once fallen into sin, would always remain in the pollution of it, did not God by his mighty word bring them out of it." Which saying of his clearly also implies, that the saints many times sin with their whole wills, and full consents: because, were there any part of their wills bent against the committing of the sin, at the time when it is committed, they would, questionless, return to themselves, and repent immediately after, the heat and violence of the lust being over, by reason of the satisfaction that hath been given to it. Therefore,

2. To that which was alleged from Rom. vii. 19, to prove the contrary, viz. that the saints never sin with their whole wills, or full consent; I answer, 1. That when the apostle saith, "the evil which I would not, that I do;" his meaning is not, that he did that, which at the same time when he did it, he was not willing, either in whole, or in part, to do: but that he sometimes did that, upon a surprisal by temptation, or through incogitancy, which he was not habitually willing, or disposed in the inner man, to do. But this no ways implies, but that at the time, when he did the evil he speaks of, he did it with the full and entire consent of his will. Or if we shall affirm, that the contrary bent, or motions, of his will at other times, is a sufficient proof, that when he did it, (the evil we speak of,) he did it not with his whole will, or fulness of consent, and so make this doing of evil, or committing of sin, without fulness of consent, in such a sense, a distinguishing character between men regenerate, and unregenerate, we shall bring Herod and Pilate, yea, and probably Judas himself, into the list or roll of men regenerate, with a thousand more, whom the Scriptures know not under any such name or relation; as viz. all those whose judgments and consciences stand against the evil of those ways and practices wherein they walk. Concerning Herod, it is evident, that he did not give commission for the beheading of John the Baptist, with fulness of consent, in the sense mentioned: for when Herodias, to whom he had "promised with an oath to give whatsoever she would ask," had demanded John Baptist's head in a charger, it is said, that "the king was sorry: nevertheless for the oath's sake, and them that sat with him at meat, he commanded it to be given her," Matt. xiv. 8, 9. Which plainly sheweth, that he had a renitency of will against the evil which he

* Per decem minimum menses distulit, (Deus,) correctionem—Quod ad eos, (sanctos,) attinet, perpetuò agerent in sordibus, nisi Deus potenti verbo eos educeret. Quòd ex tanto spatio intelligi potest, quo David ad Deum non est conversus, et isto peccato irretitus non emersit.—P. Martyr, in 2 Reg. xii. 1.

did, immediately before the doing of it: yea, and that he would not have done it, had not the temptations mentioned overcome that inclination. The case is every whit as clear in Pilate; viz. that he gave the sentence of death against Christ, with great reluctancy of mind and will preceding, and so not with fulness of consent, in the sense declared. He would gladly have washed his hands of the business, and desired Caiaphas and the rest of the priests and elders to "take him, and judge him according to their own law:" John xviii. 31: yea, it is said that, before the sentence was pronounced against him, he "sought to release him:" John xix. 12: which how seriously and effectually he did, all the four evangelists unanimously relate. Thus we see of how dangerous a consequence it is, to make this an essential difference between a true believer, and an ungodly man, that the former never sins with his whole will, or full consent, and that the latter sins with both. But,

2. As to the passage of the apostle mentioned, Rom. vii., I answer further, that when he saith, "The evil which I would not, that I do," he doth not speak of what he always and in all cases did, much less of what was possible for him to do, but of what he did ordinarily or frequently, or of what was very incident unto him, through the infirmity of the flesh, viz. through inconsiderateness, and anticipation by temptations to do such things, which, whilst he was in a watchful and considering posture, and from under the malign influence of a temptation he was altogether averse unto. Now what a man doth ordinarily is one thing, and what he doth sometimes, and in some particular case, especially what it is possible for him to do, is another. That true believers, whilst such, ordinarily sin not upon worse terms than those mentioned by the apostle concerning his sinning, I easily grant: but it no ways followeth from hence, that therefore they never sin upon other terms, much less, that it is impossible that they should sin upon other. And thus we see, all things thoroughly and impartially argued and debated, to and fro, that even true believers themselves, as well as others, may do those works of the flesh which exclude from the kingdom of God: and that in respect hereof they are subject to this exclusion, as well as other men.

Whereas some object against this argument and doctrine, that it maimeth or dismembereth the body of Christ, and brings in an uncouth and unseemly interchange and rechange of members between Christ and the devil, that it maketh regeneration iterable, &c. I answer, that all these, with the like, are but pretended inconveniences, and such only to appearance; the Scripture justifieth them, and judgeth them no inconveniences at all: yea, it holdeth them forth as things necessary and comely in the institutions and dispensations of God.

I. For dismembering the body of Christ: is it not the law of Christ himself, in every particular church or body of his, that as any of their members putrefy, and discover themselves to be rotten

and corrupt, they should be cut off by the spiritual sword of excommunication? And doth not such a dismembering as this rather tend to the honouring and adorning the body of Christ, than any ways to maim or deform it? And for such a dismembering of the body of Christ, which the doctrine in hand supposeth to be causeable by the members themselves, as viz. by the voluntary disfaithing of themselves through sin and wickedness, neither is the permission of this, upon such terms as it is permitted, either unworthy Christ, or inconvenient to the body itself. For, as in a politic or civil corporation, it is better that the governors should permit the members respectively to go or be at liberty, that so they may follow their business and occasions in the world upon the better terms, though by occasion of this liberty they may behave themselves in sundry kinds very unworthily, than it would be to keep them close prisoners, though hereby the said inconveniences might certainly be prevented: in like manner, it is much better for the body of Christ, and for the respective members of it, that he should leave them at liberty, (especially upon such terms as he doth, and which have formerly been declared,) to obey and serve God, and follow the important affairs of their souls freely, and without any physical necessitation, though some do turn this liberty into wantonness, and so into destruction, than it would be to deprive them of this liberty, and to cause and constrain them to any course whatsoever out of necessity, though, it is true, the committing of much sin and iniquity would be prevented hereby in many. The reason of the comparison between the one course and the other, as now it hath been stated and asserted, hath been already laid down and argued in this chapter. The dismembering of the body of Christ's apostles, by the apostasy of Judas, was no disparagement, either to Christ himself or it.

2. For the interchange of members between Christ and Satan, the Scripture presenteth it as a thing possible, yea, as frequent and ordinary. "Know ye not," saith the apostle, "that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of a harlot?" 1 Cor. vi. 15. In the original it is, *Ἄρα οὐν τὰ μέλη τοῦ Χριστοῦ ποιήσω, &c. i. e.* "Taking away the members of Christ, shall I make them," &c. meaning, that true believers, who only are the members of Christ, disrelate themselves to him, cease to be members of his, when and whilst they live in a course of whoredom and adultery, and make themselves members of another far different relation, viz. of those harlots, with whom they sinfully converse, and consequently, by such a mediation, of the devil. Calvin himself, commenting upon the next words, "Know ye not," &c. expressly affirmeth, that "He that couples himself with an harlot, hereby becomes one body with her, and therefore pulleth away a member from the body of Christ."* And

* Melius exprimit, quantam injuriam Christo inferat, qui se cum scorto miscet; unum enim corpus efficitur; membrum igitur à Christi corpore avellit.

both Jerome and Ambrose long before him, carried the apostle's meaning in the words the same way as they are cited, and owned in their respective interpretations by Musculus upon the place. "Απαρ, tollens, taking," saith he, "is so expounded by Jerome, as that it is declared, by the apostle, that those bodies which are made the members of an harlot, are taken away and cut off from, or out of, the body of Christ. He takes," saith he, "the members of Christ, *i. e.* he cuts himself off from the body of Christ, who is joined unto an harlot. Ambrose avoucheth the same, when he saith, He," meaning the apostle, "saith thus, Because such members which adhere unto an harlot cease to be the members of Christ, certainly it cannot be that a member of Christ should be a member, also, of an harlot," &c.* And if it be no dishonour unto Christ, to admit and take in such, who have been the foulest and most deformed members of the devil, upon their repentance, for members of his body, which is nothing but what he doth daily, why should it be any disparagement unto him to reject such from being members of this his body, who by their wicked and abominable ways render themselves altogether unworthy the great dignity of such a relation?

3, and lastly, For the frequent repetition of regeneration, it is of the same consideration with the two former particulars; there is no inconvenience, nothing unworthy God, or of Christ, in it, and for men it is of a most happy and blessed accommodation unto them. When the Scripture speaks of an impossibility of renewing some by repentance, in case they "fall away," Heb. vi. 6, it plainly supposeth that there is such a thing incident unto men, or whereof some men are capable, as renewing again by repentance. And what is regeneration, being interpreted, but a renewing again by repentance? And if men may die twice, spiritually, (as Jude speaketh of some that were "twice dead," ver. 12,) why may they not live twice, or twice receive the life of grace opposite hereunto? As it is agreeable to the righteousness and holiness of God, to denounce the sentence of exclusion from his kingdom against men, whoever they be, or have been, when they turn adulterers, fornicators, idolaters, &c., yea, and to execute this sentence accordingly, in case they return not from these sins by repentance before they die, and so to leave them no footing or foundation for their faith, I mean, to believe, or to expect salvation by Jesus Christ, but only upon their repentance; so is it no less agreeable to the mercy, patience, and goodness of God, to promise unto backsliding sinners, a re-enjoyment of his favour and love, which is in Christ Jesus, upon condition of their renewing again by repentance, and to exhibit unto them accordingly the full fruits thereof

* "Tollens" ita exponitur à Hieron. ut indicetur ea corpora, quæ scorti membra sunt, sublata esse et abscissa è corpore Christi. Tollit (inquit) membra Christi, *i. e.* abscindit se à corpore Christi, qui junctus est meretrici. Idem ponit et Ambr. cum dicit: ait, quia meretrici adhærentia membra, desinunt esse membra Christi. Certè non potest fieri ut membrum Christi sit membrum scorti, etc.

in the salvation of their souls, if they persevere in a course of repentance unto the end. And how sad and deplorable above measure would the condition of many thousands of saints be, in case there were no reiteration of regeneration, I mean, of all such who at any time fall into such ways and practices of sin, which, according to what we have lately heard from the Scriptures, exclude from the kingdom of God! Doubtless there is no more inconvenience for the same person to be twice regenerate, than it was or would have been under the law, for the same man to have taken sanctuary the second time, in case he had the second time miscarried in slaying a man at unawares. And for regeneration itself, according to the grammatical and proper signification of the word, it imports a reiteration, or repetition, of some generation or other. It cannot import a repetition of the natural generation of men, (the sense of Nicodemus, John iii. 4, in this point was orthodox, who judged such a thing impossible,) therefore it must import a repetition of a spiritual regeneration; unless we shall say, which I know is the road opinion, that it signifies only the spiritual regeneration, with a kind of reference unto, or reflexion upon, the birth natural. But it is the common sense of divines, that the two generations mentioned, the natural and spiritual, are *membra dividenda*, and contradistinguished the one unto the other; and so the apostle Peter seems to state and represent them, 1 Pet. i. 23, as also our Saviour himself, John iii. 6. Now I suppose there can hardly any instance be given, where the introducing of one contrary form or quality into the subject is termed a reiteration, or repetition of the other. Calcification, for example, is never termed a repetition of frigefaction, nor is albi-faction called a reiteration of nigrifaction; nor when a regenerate or mortified man dieth his natural death is he said to reiterate or repeat his spiritual death. Therefore I rather conceive that regeneration, which the Scripture makes appropriable only unto persons living to years of discretion, who generally in the days of their youth degenerate from the innocency of their childhood and younger years, and corrupt themselves with the principles and ways of the world, relates not unto the natural generation as such, (I mean as natural,) but unto the spiritual estate and condition of men in respect of their natural generation and birth; in and upon which they are, if not simply and absolutely, yet comparatively, innocent, harmless, free from pride, malice, &c., and in respect of these qualifications, in grace and favour with God, upon the account of the death and sufferings of Christ for them, as we shall, God willing, prove more at large in the second part of this discourse. In the meantime what we now offer as most probable, touching the reason of the name and relation of regeneration, I conceive our Saviour himself implieth in that passage of his with his disciples: "At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of

them, and said, Verily, I say unto you, except ye be *converted, and become as little children*, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven," Matt. xviii. 1—3. 'Εάν μὴ στραφήτε, "Except ye be turned back," as Calvin interpreteth; *i. e.* unless you recover and reinstate yourselves in that estate, or interest in the love and favour of God, which you are in danger of losing by your ambition, by returning to such a humility, innocency, and simplicity, wherein while you were children you were accepted with him, "ye shall not enter," &c. Calvin's words in English are these: "And the conversion whereof he speaks imports, that his disciples had at this time too much accustomed themselves to the common course and manners of men" (in the world) "and therefore that they might aspire to the mark," (at which they aimed; I suppose he meaneth greatness in the kingdom of heaven,) "they must turn back in their course."* And unless we shall suppose that children, to whom our Saviour saith that his disciples must be like, or else never "enter into the kingdom of heaven," are in an estate of grace and favour with God, we shall make him to say, in effect, that unless they be like unto those who are in an estate of condemnation they cannot be saved. For, as Musculus upon the place well observes, "Our Saviour doth not say unto them, Except ye be converted, and become as this child; but indefinitely, and become as children," (or little ones,) "lest they should conceive that there was something singular in this child more than in others which they were to imitate."† Nor doth any thing that hath been said upon this last account, suppose children to be begotten or born without original sin; only that indeed hath been said, which supposeth that that sin which is in children is taken away by the death of Christ, so that they are generally whilst children in the favour of God through Christ, notwithstanding that sin which is in them. Neither is this any thing more than what Musculus himself upon the place clearly avoucheth in respect of all children, without exception, "that have been baptized."‡ But this only by the way.

Nor doth that of the apostle any ways oppose, either the possibility, or conveniency of a second regeneration: "For 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, because he speaketh here, not of what they were incapable of having afterwards, but of what their state and condition

* Atque huc spectat conversio cujus meminit, quod scilicet ad communes hominum mores jam nimis assuevissent discipuli, ideoque ut ad scopum adspirent, cursum illis retroflectendum esse.

† Non dicit, sicut puer iste; sed, sicut parvuli; ne putarent isti puero singulare quid ab aliis pueris inesse, quod imitandum esset.

‡ Quoddam verò per baptismum dicit tolli peccatum originis, verum est: ita tamen, ut concupiscentia illa prava non idèd extinguatur, sed opus sit ut crucifigatur per omnem vitam. Ita tollitur peccatum per gratiam Christi, ut non condemnet amplius, juxta illud: Nihil est condemnationis illis qui sunt in Christo Jesu. Ut autem nullum sit peccatum in carne nostrâ, non sequitur.

was at present by his means and ministry. That which he remindeth the Corinthians of in the metaphorical notion of his being a father unto them, and the only father they had, is nothing else but that he was the only person that had laid the corner stone, or first foundations of that spiritual building, which was now amongst them; he was the only person that had by the preaching of the gospel, formed them into a church of Christ; and that all those teachers that came amongst them afterwards, however magnified by them above him, yet were they but as tutors and schoolmasters unto them, in comparison of him, building upon his foundations; and consequently, could not in reason be so truly and naturally affected towards them, as he; as it is no ways probable but that the love and care of a father towards his children, should be greater and more genuine, than of a schoolmaster. This is agreeable to what he elsewhere writeth to the same persons: "I have planted, Apollos watered," &c., 1 Cor. iii. 6, and a little after: "According to the grace of God given to me as a skilful master-builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon," &c. ver. 10. And elsewhere, "Not boasting of things without our measure, that is of other men's labour;" and presently after, "To preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast of another man's line of things made ready to our hand," 2 Cor. x. 15, 16. In these expressions of his, not boasting of things without his measure, of other men's labours, of things prepared to his hand, &c., he obliquely taxeth the ambitious vanity of those vain-glorious teachers whom these Corinthians so much applauded with an undervaluing of him, in assuming unto themselves the honour and repute of all that knowledge of Christ, and those other worthy things of the gospel that were found in them, as if they had been the authors, and prime or sole instruments of God, in the raising and working of them; whereas this was his line and measure, and that which of right and according to truth, appertained to him. But his being a father unto them, in this sense, neither implies, but that there might be many particular persons amongst them begotten to the faith through the gospel, by other ministers and teachers besides him; nor but that, in case any of those who had been begotten by him, should apostatise from the faith, they might be again recovered, and so be again begotten by others. The substance of this interpretation is delivered by Calvin himself upon the place. "If any objecteth," saith he, "how can Paul deny those to be fathers who succeeded him, when as there are new children begotten unto God, daily in the church? The answer is easy, viz. that here he speaketh of the first beginnings of a church. For though never so many should have been begotten by the ministry of other men, yet this honour remained entire unto Paul, that he was the (first) founder of the Corinthian church."* So that evident it is that there

* Si quis objiciat, quòd gignantur quotidie novi Deo filii in ecclesiâ, cur patres esse negat Paulus, qui sibi successerant? Facilis est solutio: nempe quòd hic de primordio ecclesiæ loquatur. Ut enim plerique aliorum ministerio geniti fuissent, manebat tamen uni Paulo hic honor illibatus, quod ecclesiam Corinthiacam fundasset.

is nothing at all in the place alleged against a reiteration of regeneration.

Nor is that, which I have sometimes heard alleged in opposition to the doctrine maintained in the digression yet in hand, any whit more considerable; as viz. that it teacheth, or supposeth a blotting and a blurring, a putting in, and a putting out of names in God's book of life, which some, it seems, conceive to be unseemly, and some ways disparaging the said book. But,

1. The Scripture itself frequently speaks of that, which the objectors call a blotting in the said book of God, and that without the least intimation of any disparagement hereby unto it. When Moses prayed God "to blot him out of the book which he had written," in case he would not forgive the sin of the people, *Exod. xxxii. 32*, questionless he did not conceive that he desired any thing that would deface or disgrace his book. So when God returned this answer to that his demand, "Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book," he did not intend any blemish to his book. When Christ from heaven expresseth himself thus to the church of Sardis, "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment, and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life," &c., *Rev. iii. 5*, he clearly supposeth, that there were, or at least, might be, some whose names he would blot out of this book: otherwise it would be no matter of honour, or specialty of privilege, which he promiseth herein. As in case all men were to be clothed in white, and no possibility of any man's falling short of this honour, it had been very impertinent and improper for our Saviour to promise with so much solemnity as the words import, a clothing in white, by way of reward, unto him that overcometh. See also *Psa. lxxix. 28*.

2. To conceive that what the Scripture meaneth by blotting out of the book of life, should be any matter of defacement to this book, or any thing unseemly for God otherwise, savours of carnality of notion about this book: and of a misapprehension of what is seemly and unseemly for God to do. For God's book of life is nothing else, but his general purpose or decree concerning persons to be saved, not by their names, but their capacities or qualifications. So that when he is said to blot out any man's name out of this book, which he never doth, or is said to do, but upon their divesting themselves of that capacity, in respect whereof they are said to have been written in this book, according to what we lately heard from himself, "whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book," it importeth only this, that whereas before whilst he remained faithful and upright with God, God, according to his purpose and promise made to such men, intended life and salvation unto him, now, by reason of his backsliding unto sin and wickedness, he purposeth to destroy him, and that according to his general and impartial decree of destroying sinners and wicked men, if they repent not. So that if it be not unseemly for God to destroy backsliding sinners, who remain hardened and impenitent to the end, neither is it unseemly for him to blot out the names of men,

upon the occasion specified, out of his book of life. Cameron expounding those words lately mentioned, "I will not blot out his name out of the book of life," "To be blotted out of the book of life," saith he, "is nothing else but to be condemned. It is a form of speech where the antecedent is put for the consequent, borrowed from that which is frequently done amongst men, as viz. when any man (or any man's name) is, by command from the magistrate, struck out of the catalogue or roll of citizens, that all may know that he is a condemned man."* There is nothing in the allegation in hand worthy any further consideration: it is all face, and nothing heart against the cause which it pretends to fight.

Another argument, demonstrative of the doctrine pre-asserted, is this: "That doctrine which is according unto godliness, *i. e.* whose natural and proper tendency is to promote godliness in the hearts and lives of men, is evangelical, and of unquestionable comportsance with the truth: Such is the doctrine which teacheth a possibility of the saints' declining, both totally and finally: Ergo.

The reason of the major proposition, though the truth of it needs no light but its own to be seen by, is, because the gospel itself is a "doctrine which is according unto godliness," 1 Tim. vi. 3; a "truth according unto godliness," Tit. i. 1; a "mystery of godliness," &c., 1 Tim. iii. 16; *i. e.* a doctrine, truth, and mystery calculated, contrived, and framed by God with a singular aptness, and choiceness of ingredients, for the advancement of godliness in the world. Therefore what particular doctrine soever is of the same spirit, tendency, and import, must needs be a natural branch thereof, and of perfect accord with it. This proposition then is unquestionable.

Nor can the minor lightly be less unquestionable to him, that shall duly and impartially examine and weigh the frame and import of it. For what doctrine can be more proper or powerful to promote godliness in the hearts and lives of men than that, which on the one hand promiseth a crown of blessedness, and eternal glory, to those that live godlily, without declining; and on the other hand, threateneth the vengeance of eternal fire against those that shall turn aside unto profaneness, and not return by repentance? Whereas that doctrine which promiseth, and that with all possible certainty and assurance, all fulness of blessedness and glory to those that shall at any time be godly, though they shall the very next day or hour degenerate, and turn loose and profane, and continue never so long in such a course, is most manifestly destructive unto godliness, and encouraging above measure to profaneness.

If it be objected and said; Yea, but the assurance of the unchangeableness of God's love towards him that is godly, is both a more effectual and persuading motive unto godliness, and more encouraging unto a persevering in godliness, than a doubtfulness or uncertainty, whether God will be constant in his affection to such

* *Deleri à libro vitæ, nihil aliud est, quàm damnari. Est autem antecedens pro consequenti, sumptâ formulâ loquendi ab eo, quod fieri solet in vitâ communi: verbi gratiâ, cum deletur aliquis è catalogo civium jussu magistratûs, ut eum damnatum, sciant omnes.—Cameron. Myroth. p. 354.*

a man or no. Certainty of reward is more encouraging unto action than uncertainty. I answer,

1. The doctrine which teacheth a possibility of the saints' final defection, teacheth an assurance of the unchangeableness of God's love towards him that is godly, as well as the doctrine contrary to it; only with this difference, this latter doctrine teacheth the said unchangeableness absolutely, and against all possible change by sin and wickedness, in the person supposed, at present, to be godly; whereas the former teacheth and asserteth the same unchangeableness, but conditionally, and upon the perseverance of him that is godly in his course. So that this doctrine teacheth as much certainty of the love of God towards him that is godly as such, and as continuing such, as the other doth. And the truth is, that the other doctrine, rightly interpreted, doth not so much promise absolutely the certainty of God's love to him that is godly, as it promiseth conditionally the certainty of this love to him that is profane, viz. in case, and upon condition that he had been once godly.

2. Neither is certainty of reward, in every sense or kind, more encouraging unto action than uncertainty, in some kind. To promise with all possible assurance the same reward or prize to him that shall not run in the race, which is promised upon these terms to him that shall run, is not more encouraging unto men thus to run than to promise it conditionally, viz. upon their running; which is a promising of it with uncertainty, in this respect, viz. because it is uncertain whether men will run in the said race or no; and consequently whether they shall receive the said prize or no upon such a promise. Certainty of reward is then, and in such cases, more encouraging unto action than uncertainty, when the certainty of obtaining or receiving it is suspended upon the action, not when it is assured unto men, whether they act or no.

3, and lastly, Though an assurance of the unchangeableness of the love of God towards him that is godly, upon any and against any terms whatsoever, suppose such an assurance could be effectually and upon good grounds given unto men, be, or would be, a more effectual and prevailing motive unto godliness, *i. e.* to an entrance into godliness, than an uncertainty whether this love of God would be continued to such a man unto the end or no; yet would it not be any thing comparably so effectual or prevailing upon men that are godly, to persevere in godliness, as such an uncertainty which hath been asserted. Nay, the truth is, that such an assurance effectually given to him that is godly, without any condition of his remaining godly, is no encouragement at all unto him to persevere in godliness, but rather to turn aside unto profaneness. The reason is plain: no reward which is promised unto men simply and absolutely is encouraging to any action or engagement whatsoever. It is true a simple and absolute promise of a reward may be, and commonly is obliging unto action by way of duty or thankfulness unto him who maketh the promise; but is never so obliging unto action simply as such a promise which assureth the reward only upon the

performance of the action. Hence it is that the apostle, encouraging and persuading men unto holiness, holds forth not absolute, but conditional promises unto them in order hereunto. The tenor of the promises we mean, is this: "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you; and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty," 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18; meaning, that upon condition you will come out, &c., and touch no unclean thing, I will receive you, and be a Father unto you, &c. Upon the account of these promises, he immediately subjoins: "Having therefore *these* promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God," 2 Cor. vii. 1. Such promises as these, viz. which hold forth such great and blessed rewards, and withal require and enjoin holiness, by way of condition, for the receiving and enjoyment of them, are of the most sovereign efficacy and import that can be imagined to persuade you unto holiness. Nor can any instance, I believe, be given from the Scriptures, where the Holy Ghost presseth or persuadeth unto action or ways of righteousness, by any other kind of promise than that which is either in form or in matter (*i. e.* in sense and meaning) conditional.

Besides, whether any such assurance of the unchangeableness of the love of God towards him that is godly, as the objection speaks of, can be effectually and upon sufficient grounds given unto men, is very questionable: yea, I conceive there is more reason to judge otherwise than so. Yea, that which is yet more, I verily believe, that in case any such assurance of the unchangeableness of God's love were to be found in, or could regularly be deduced from the Scriptures, it were a just ground to any intelligent and considering man to question their authority, and whether they were from God or no. For that a God, infinitely righteous and holy, should irreversibly assure the immortal and undefiled inheritance of his grace and favour, unto any creature whatsoever, so that though this creature should prove never so abominable in his sight, never so outrageously and desperately wicked and profane, he should not be at liberty to withhold this inheritance from him, is a saying, doubtless, too hard for any man, who rightly understands and considers the nature of God, to hear. For what can it be conceived that he should promise more to such a person, who should remain loyal in his affections, and constant in his obedience unto him without turning aside either to the right hand or to the left all his days? And where now would be the God of judgment? "Ye have wearied the Lord with your words," (saith Malachi, in God's name, unto the people;) "yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied him? When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in them; or, Where is the God of judgment?" Mal. ii. 17. Clearly implying, 1. That to say that God delighteth in them that do evil, is highly displeasing and dishonourable to him, amounting to no less, being interpreted, than a denial of his being

a God of judgment, *i. e.* of his wisdom and righteousness, or that he puts any difference in his affections between the best and worst of men. 2. That, notwithstanding the great offensiveness unto God of such a saying, yet they that utter it are backward to consider any such unworthiness in it.

It is possible that yet some will further object, against the argument in hand, Unless the saints be assured of the perpetuity of their standing in the grace and favour of God, they must needs be under fears of falling away, and so of perishing: and fear, we know, is of a discouraging and enfeebling nature, an enemy unto such actions, which men of confidence and courage are apt and ready to undertake. I answer,

1. That the strength of this objection hath been already trodden down, and that more than once. See pp. 418, &c. of this chapter: and more upon the same account, Chap. ix. I here add,

2. That the saints, notwithstanding the possibility of their final falling away, have, or may have, such an assurance of the perpetuity of their standing in the grace and favour of God, which may exclude all fear, at least that is of a discouraging or enfeebling nature. The apostle, as we have formerly shown, lived at a very excellent rate, both of courage and confidence, notwithstanding he knew that it was possible for him to become a reprobate. The assurance he had that, upon a diligent use of those means which he knew assuredly God would vouchsafe unto him, he should prevent his being a reprobate, was a golden foundation unto him of that confidence and courage, wherein he equalized the holy angels themselves. Suppose a man hath a deep well or pit of water in his yard or grounds, near adjoining to his house, he is no more afraid of being drowned either in the one or in the other, than he that lives a thousand miles' distance from them. The reason is, because he knows he need not be in any danger of such a miscarriage by them, unless he please. The evil which a man knows, he may prevent if he will, and that which simply is not, or not possible to be, is of the same consideration to a sober and intelligent man; especially if he knows that he may prevent it if he will, without any damage or inconvenience to him. And for courage and confidence, the truth is, that there is no place for them, but under a possibility at least of danger, and miscarrying by an enemy.

3, and lastly, An assurance of a perpetual enjoyment of, or abiding in the love and favour of God, otherwise than upon condition of love and loyalty in the creature towards him, is neither honourable for God to make or grant, nor meet for a creature to expect or desire. Who can judge it much short of blasphemy, to put such a saying as this into the mouth of the most holy God, unto any of his creatures: "Though thou addest drunkenness to thirst, and pollutest thyself with all the abominations of wicked and ungodly men; though thou committest whoredom, adultery, incest, murder, theft; though thou hatest to be reformed, and castest all my commandments behind thy back, &c. yet shalt thou be precious in

mine eyes, and mine heart shall be towards thee in the greatest love and dearest affection for ever; and thou shalt inherit my everlasting kingdom, thy desperate rebellions against me notwithstanding." I know my opposers are not wont to deliver themselves, or express their doctrine in such terms as these, nor will they, haply, well bear such a representation of it as this: but I appeal to their consciences, and to the impartial reasons of all unprejudiced men, whether their doctrine of perseverance doth not, without any wresting, straining, or perverting in the least, directly lead to such a horrid thought or conceit of God, as that presented in the said saying. Certain I am, that the Lord Christ himself resolves his abiding in his Father's love into his keeping of his commandments; and informs his disciples withal that he loves them upon the same terms. "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love," John xv. 9, 10. By the way, had there been an unavoidable necessity lying upon the disciples to continue in Christ's love, there had been no necessity of his exhortation unto them in order thereunto. Who persuades a man to do that which is not in his power to neglect, or not to do? In like manner, had there been a like unavoidable necessity upon the disciples to keep Christ's commandments, doubtless he would not have prescribed it unto them in the nature of a conditional means for their abiding in his love. No man in his right mind makes conditions of things or actions that are unavoidable, or which cannot but be performed by them of whom they are required.

To pretend that, the weakness of the flesh even in the best of the saints considered, and their aptness to go astray, they must needs lie under many troublesome and tormenting fears of perishing, unless they have some promise or assurance from God to support them, that, notwithstanding any declinings or goings astray incident unto them, yet they shall not lose his favour or perish, is to pretend nothing but what hath been thoroughly answered already, especially in the ninth chapter. I only add here,

1. That the weakness of the flesh, or the aptness of miscarrying through this, is no reasonable ground of fear unto any true believer of his perishing, considering that no man loseth or forfeiteth the grace and favour of God through sins of weakness or infirmity. It is only the strength of sin and corruption in men that exposeth them to the danger of losing the love of God.

2. If the saints be willing to strengthen the Spirit in them, and make him willing, proportionably to the means vouchsafed unto them by God for such a purpose, this will fully balance the weakness of the flesh, and prevent the miscarriage and breakings out hereof. "This I say then," saith the apostle, "walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." And again: "If ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law," Gal. v. 16, 18, and consequently are in no danger of losing the favour of God, or of

perishing for such sins which, under the conduct of the Spirit, you are subject unto.

3, and lastly, There is no such aptness or proneness unto sin (sins I mean of a disinheriting import) in saints, or true believers, as is pretended, but, on the contrary, a strong propension or inclination unto righteousness reigneth in them. We heard formerly from the apostle John, that "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. Which passage of Scripture the reader may find unfolded at large, Chap. x., page 274. The same apostle, to the same purpose, had said a little before, "He that committeth sin is of the devil," and, consequently, no saint or true believer. And again, a little after, he saith, "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God," &c. Afterwards thus: "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments (*i. e.* the keeping of his commandments) are not grievous," 1 John v. 3, viz. to him that loveth God, *i. e.* to a saint or true believer: It followeth, "For whosoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" From these passages, with many others of like import which might have been added from the same apostle, it is fully evident that there is a pregnant, strong, triumphing propension in all true believers to walk holily, and to live righteously; so that to refrain sinning (sinning I mean as before, customarily, and against conscience, which kind of sin only is exclusive from the love and kingdom of God) is no such great mastery, no such matter of difficulty, unto such men; and that when they are overcome, and fall into such sins, it is through a mere voluntary neglect of stirring up the grace of God that is in them, and of maintaining that holy principle we speak of in strength and vigour, by such means as God most graciously and indulgently vouchsafeth unto them in abundance for such a purpose. And thus we see, all things impartially weighed and debated to and fro, that the doctrine which supposeth a possibility of the saints' final declining, is the doctrine which is "according to godliness," and the corival of it an enemy thereunto.

That doctrine, whose genuine and proper tendency is to advance the peace and joy of the saints in believing, is of a natural sympathy with the gospel, and, upon this account, a truth: Such is the doctrine which informeth the saints of a possibility of their total and final falling away: Ergo. Our adversaries themselves in the cause depending, will not, I presume, regret the granting of the former proposition, the truth of it being a truth so near at hand. The minor hath received confirmation in abundance from what was argued and evinced in the ninth chapter; where we demonstratively proved that the doctrine we now assert is of the most healthful and sound constitution to make a nurse for the peace, and joy, and

comforts of the saints, whereas that which is opposite to it is but of a melancholic and sad complexion in comparison. The ground we built our demonstration upon was this: That doctrine which is of the most encouraging, quickening, and strengthening import to the Spirit and grace of God in men, on the one hand, and most crucifying and destructive to the flesh, on the other hand, must needs be a doctrine of the best and choicest accommodation for the peace and comfort of believers. The reason hereof is, because the peace, joy, and comfort of believers, do, if not wholly, yet in a very great measure, depend upon the "fruits of the Spirit," and the testimony of their consciences concerning their loyalty and faithfulness unto God, in doing his will, keeping his commandments, refraining "all false ways," as David speaketh, abstaining from the works of the flesh, &c. As, on the contrary, that root of bitterness in the saints, from which fears and doubtings, perplexities, agonies, and consternations of soul spring, is the flesh, when, for want of a sharp bridle still kept in the jaws or lips of it, it breaks out, becomes unruly, and magnifies itself against God and his laws. These things we prosecuted more at large in the forenamed chapter; where likewise we proved, above all reasonable contradiction, that the sense of those who assert a possibility of the saints' "drawing back" even to perdition, is a doctrine of a very rich sympathy with the spirit, or regenerate part in men, of an excellent and high animation unto it, and, on the contrary, a doctrine mortally inspired against the flesh, with all the lusts and ways hereof. Here also we gave an answer in full unto those who are wont to object and pretend, that the best and holiest persons more generally cleave in their judgments to the doctrine of absolute perseverance, as, on the other hand, that persons more carnally and loosely disposed more generally take up that which is contrary unto it. So that we shall not need to add in this place any thing further to give weight or strength to the argument in hand, unless it be to certify the reader, that since the publishing and clearing the doctrine now asserted, some very godly and seriously religious persons have with their whole hearts blessed God for it. We proceed to another argument.

That doctrine which evacuates, and turns into weakness and folly all that gracious counsel of the Holy Ghost, which consists, partly, in that diligent information which he gives unto the saints, from place to place, concerning the hostile, cruel, and bloody mind and intentions of Satan against them; partly, in detecting and making known all his subtle stratagems, his plots, methods, and dangerous machinations against them; partly, also, in furnishing them with spiritual weapons of all sorts, whereby they may be able to grapple with him notwithstanding, and gloriously to triumph over him; partly again, in those frequent admonitions, exhortations, encouragements to quit themselves like men in resisting him, and making good their ground against him, which are found in the Scriptures; and lastly, in professing his fear lest Satan should circumvent and deceive them; that doctrine, I say, which reflects

disparagement and vanity upon all these most serious and gracious applications of the Holy Ghost unto the saints, must needs be a doctrine of vanity and error; and, consequently, that which opposeth it, by like necessity, a truth: But such is the common doctrine of absolute and infallible perseverance: Ergo.

The major in this argument is greater than exception. For doubtless no doctrine which is of an undervaluing import either to the grace or wisdom of the Holy Ghost in any Scripture transaction, can be evangelical or consistent with truth. The minor likewise is evident upon this account. All those actions or transactions ascribed to the Holy Ghost in the major proposition, as, viz. his discovering and detecting unto the saints the hostile spirit and machinations of Satan against them, his furnishing them with spiritual weapons to conflict with him, and fight against him, &c., are in several places of Scripture plainly reported and attributed unto him, particularly in these: Jam. iv. 7; 1 Pet. v. 8, 9; Eph. vi. 11, 12, &c.; 2 Cor. xi. 3, 14; and ii. 11; Matt. xii. 43, 44, &c.; 2 Thess. ii. 9, 10; 1 Cor. vii. 5, not to mention many others. Now if the saints be in no possibility of being finally overcome by Satan, or of miscarrying in the great and most important business of their salvation, by his snares and subtleties, all that operousness and diligence of the Holy Ghost in those late-mentioned addressments of his unto them, in order to their final conquest over Satan, will be found of very light consequence, of little concernment to them. Yea, if the said addressments of the Holy Ghost be compared with the state and condition of the saints, as the said doctrine of perseverance representeth and affirmeth it to be, and be digested or formed into an hypotyposis accordingly, the utter uselessness and impertinency of them will yet much more evidently appear. Suppose we then the Holy Ghost should speak thus unto the saints: "O you that truly believe, who by virtue of the promise of that God that cannot lie, are fully persuaded and possessed that you shall be kept by God by his irresistible grace in true faith until death, so that though Satan shall set all his wits on work, and by all his stratagems, snares, and cunning devices seek to destroy you; yea, though he should entice you away from God by the allurements of the world, and entangle you with them again, yea, and should cause you to run and rush headlong against the light of your own judgments and consciences, into all manner of horrid sins and abominations, yet shall all his attempts and assaults upon you in every kind be in vain; you shall be in never the more danger or possibility of perishing: unto you I say, attend and consider how sore and dangerous a combat you are like to sustain; for you are to wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, the governors of this world, and spiritual wickednesses; against that old serpent, the devil, that great red dragon, who was a murderer from the beginning, and who still goeth about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, who will set himself with all his might to thrust you headlong into all manner of sins, and so to separate between God and you for ever:

and truly I am afraid lest, as the serpent by his subtlety deceived Eve, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity which is in Christ Jesus, lest the tempter should any ways tempt you, and my labour about you be in vain. Therefore watch, pray, and resist him stedfast in the faith; take unto you the whole armour of God, that you may be able to resist in an evil day, and having done all things, stand fast; stand, having your loins girt with the girdle of truth, and the breast-plate of righteousness upon you," &c. Would such an oration or speech as this be any ways worthy the infinite wisdom of the Holy Ghost? Or is it not the part of a very weak and simple person to admonish a man, and that in a most serious and solemn manner, of a danger threatening him or hanging over his head, and withal to instruct and teach him with a great variety of rules, precepts, and cautions, how to escape this danger, when as both himself knows, and the person admonished likewise knoweth, and this with the knowledge also of the admonisher, that it is a thing altogether impossible that ever the danger should befall him, or the evil, against which he is so solemnly cautioned, come upon him? Therefore they who make the Holy Ghost to have part and fellowship in such weakness as this are most insufferably injurious unto him.

And whereas they still plead, or pretend rather, that such admonitions as those lately specified may well stand with an unconditioned promise of perseverance, we have formerly shown (see from page 403, to page 419) that they are not able to make good this plea, nor to give any reasonable account of it. Whereas they add that their sense or opinion is not that it is a thing absolutely or every ways impossible for true believers to fall away totally or finally from their faith; but that they willingly grant, that even true believers, what through their own weakness, and what through the subtle baits and temptations of Satan, may so fall away, &c.; I answer, that this is but a fig-leaf sought out to cover the nakedness of their opinion, which hath no strength at all nor wear in it. For what though it were in a thousand other respects never so possible for true believers to perish; yet if it be altogether impossible in such a respect, which overrules all those other, and which will, and of necessity must, hinder the coming of it to pass, all those other notwithstanding, it is to be judged simply and absolutely impossible; and all those respects wherein it is pretended possible, are not to be brought into account in such a case. The rule in the civil law and in reason is, *omnia invalida nihilo sunt æquiparanda, i. e.* all things, which (together) are invalid, are to be judged as none at all. Yea, the Scripture itself, when it speaks of any thing which God hath promised, or engaged himself to bring to pass, though there be never so many second causes, and these never so potent in their kind to oppose it, nullifies the validity of all these, and asserts the certain futurity of the effect upon such terms as if in no respect whatsoever it were impossible, or obnoxious to a non-being or non-coming to pass. "If God be for us," saith Paul, "who can be against us?" Rom. viii. 31;

clearly implying, that no enmity, no opposition, or interposition of things or persons whatsoever against our comfort and peace, are of any consideration at all, when we have the power of God engaged for our security. And is there not altogether the same reason of the perseverance of the saints, in case God hath made an absolute promise hereof unto them? Or is it reasonable, or any ways considerable, to say, that in this respect, or in that respect, or in a third respect, they may possibly not persevere, in case it be supposed that God hath absolutely, peremptorily, and irreversibly, against all possible interveniences whatsoever, decreed their perseverance?

Whereas some pretend that Christ himself was tempted, who yet was in no danger of sinning or of perishing, the answer is, that this indeed is a truth, but palpably irrelative to the cause in hand. It would have paralleled, in case the Holy Ghost should have applied himself unto Christ in such admonitions, detections of Satan's malice and methods against him, exhortations to be watchful, to pray, to stand fast, and resist him, with professing himself afraid lest Satan should circumvent him, &c., as those, wherein we heard he addresseth himself unto believers; but there being no such applications as these made unto him by the Holy Ghost, the case is altogether different. It is true, Christ, as man, was subject to the whole law of God, and to every branch and particular precept thereof, so far as it concerned him, *i. e.* so far as it concerned men considered simply as men, or as righteous and good men; but as it relates unto men considered as subject to moral weaknesses and infirmities, or as in a capacity of being overgrown and overcome with sinful corruptions, and so liable unto perishing, he was not in subjection unto it. Nevertheless, it is not to be denied but that even Christ himself, considered simply as man, had upon him the image and superscription of a creature or finite being, I mean, mutability; yet so that all potentiality in him in this kind was abundantly balanced, overbalanced, by the hypostatical union and the unmeasurableness of that grace which flowed from this spring upon and into his humanity; by means whereof there is an impossibility, though neither merely logical or natural, nor yet merely moral, but compounded, and, as it were, mixed of both, such as hath no place in the condition of any mere creature whatsoever, that he should be actually changed to the days of eternity. So that in respect of the personal union with the Godhead, even Christ-man is to be looked upon as simply and absolutely unchangeable, a prerogative royal, wherein neither saints nor angels have part with him. And because of such an unchangeableness in him, though otherwise he was a subject capable enough of being tempted, yet was he not a person meet to be entreated, or dealt with by the Holy Ghost, upon those terms of admonitions, cautions, exhortations unto watchfulness, constancy, or standing fast, informations of danger threatening him in case he should not quit himself worthily, &c., wherein he frequently turneth himself unto the saints and true believers, as we heard.

Nor is that necessity of doing righteousness and obeying God, which rested upon the will of Christ by the means aforesaid, any whit prejudicial to the merit or rewardableness of what he did and suffered in the flesh, though it be most true that any such necessity which should cause the wills of men, other men, necessitatingly or unavoidably to act righteously, would be destructive to the rewardableness of what they should act upon such terms. The reason of the difference is, because, in case any such necessity of well-doing should come upon or be found in the wills of mere men, they must necessarily be passive herein, inasmuch as they have no native or inward principle of their own whereby to contract or induce any such necessity upon themselves; and what men are necessitated to do in a passive way, wants the ratio formalis, the essential property, of what is rewardable either by the rules of wisdom or justice. See more upon this account, page 423. But that necessity which rested in or upon the will of Christ of doing righteously, though it was not a mere logical or irresistible necessity neither, as was lately intimated, but such as it was, it was contracted by himself, and that voluntarily and freely, the Godhead or the Divine nature personally united with the human, which was as much, as properly, as essentially Christ as the human nature itself in this union, voluntarily and freely deriving unto the human, so united unto it, such a fulness of grace, holiness, and goodness, from which that necessity we speak of of well-doing, in a way of a genuine and kindly result, arose upon him, and abides with him for ever. No mere creature having the like opportunity or means of vesting the like necessity of well-doing in itself, it followeth upon a very fair account, that in case it were, or could be, supposed that they (mere creatures, I mean) were unavoidably necessitated to do well, such doings of theirs should be incapable of reward, although it be otherwise in the case of Jesus Christ and of that unparallelable necessity of well-doing which was found in him. I shall only add one argument more, and therewith conclude this chapter.

That doctrine which naturally and directly tendeth to beget and foment jealousies and evil surmises between brethren in Christ, or such as ought cordially to love, reverence, and honour one another, is not confederate with the gospel, nor from God; and consequently, that which contradicteth it must needs be a truth: The common doctrine of unquestionable and unconditioned perseverance is a doctrine of this tendency, apt to beget and foment jealousies, suspicions, and evil surmises between brethren, or such as ought to love and respect one the other as brethren in Christ, &c. Ergo. The major in this argument will, I suppose, meet with no adversary; and therefore needs no second. The minor standeth firm and strong upon this foundation. That doctrine which teacheth and persuadeth me to judge the faith and love of those whom I ought cordially to love and honour as saints and brethren in Christ, to be no better than the faith and love of hypocrites, dissemblers, formal professors, &c.,

directly tendeth to beget jealousies and evil surmises in me against them, and is of the same tendency to occasion them to measure back again the same measure towards me: The common doctrine of peremptory perseverance thus teacheth and persuadeth both me and them: Ergo. The major here also fears no contradiction, and so craves no assistance. The reason of the minor is, because I cannot reasonably judge either the faith or love of those whom I stand most bound by the law of Christ to love, reverence, and honour as saints and brethren, to be better, greater, or more sincere than sometimes I judged, or at least ought to have judged, the faith and love of those to have been whom the doctrine we speak of teacheth me to judge to have been hypocrites and false-hearted, even then when their faith and love were at the best. For the very truth is, that among all the professors of Christian religion that are at present any ways known unto me, (and I make no question but that every other Christian of any considerable standing in the world, may with a good conscience profess the like of himself,) there is not any one whom I can reasonably judge to be either more sound in faith or sincere in love, both towards God and men, than I sometimes judged, and that upon competent grounds, yea, the best that either I then was, or yet am capable of, some others to have been, whom now I know to be wretched apostates, and to have given up themselves to work all filthiness, and that with greediness. Therefore, if upon or because of their apostasy, I stand bound to judge them to have been in the best of their spiritual standings no better than hypocrites, it is impossible but that I should be jealous and suspicious at least lest the best and greatest professors of Christ that are known to me in all the world should be no better than hypocrites also, notwithstanding any account or satisfaction they give, or possibly can give unto me, of their sincerity.

If it be replied, that even that doctrine which I teach, in opposition to that other, hath a like tendency to create and nourish amongst the saints reciprocally, if not the same jealousies and evil surmises, which have been charged upon the other, yet others every whit as bad, or however, not much better then they; inasmuch as this doctrine itself, teacheth saints to look one upon another, as those that may apostatise, and turn enemies unto Christ and the gospel: and is not such a jealousy as this concerning any person, every whit as unchristian, hard, or uncharitable, as to look upon him as a possible hypocrite? To this I answer;

That a jealousy or suspicion of a present vileness, or unworthiness in a man, especially when he that is suspicious, hath all the best grounds that can be given why he should not be suspicious in this kind, is a far worse and more unchristian jealousy and suspicion, than that which is conceived against a man touching any future unworthiness, that only possibly may be found in him. The doctrine which teacheth a possibility only of a total and final de-

fection in the saints, doth not invite, or occasion any man, to judge concerning any saint or true believer, that he will, or that he is likely so to fall, but only that it is possible for him so to fall. Nor is such a judgment, or thought as this, concerning any man, yea, or creature whatsoever, any jealousy or suspicion at all concerning him, nor hath it any thing reflective, or disparaging in it, to the worth, honour, or repute of that creature, how great and worthy soever he be, concerning whom it is conceived; it being no disparagement at all, no, not to the first born of creatures, I mean to the angels themselves, not to partake, or not to be thought to partake, in any incommunicable property of God, such as his unchangeableness is. To look upon a saint, or a true believer, as one who may possibly apostatise, is but to look upon him as being a creature, and not God: nor would such an eye as this offend the greatest angel in heaven, considering that he never gave, nor is capable of giving, any competent ground or reason unto any man to look upon him with any other. But to look upon a saint, or true believer, especially when he hath given all the Christian satisfaction that reasonably can be desired, or expected, of his uprightness and sincerity, as one, that for aught we can tell, or have any sufficient ground to judge the contrary, may be a hypocrite, and rotten at the core, is a high strain of unchristian unworthiness, and what reason itself, competently informed, cannot lightly but abhor.

The premises concerning the subject yet in hand, the doctrine of perseverance, duly considered, it fully appears, that that doctrine, which for these many years last past hath magnified itself in the tongues and pens of men, not only or simply for a truth, but with many great eulogiums, and titles of sovereign dignity, as that it is a fundamental article of the reformed religion, one of the principal points or heads of Christian religion, wherein the reformed churches have purged themselves from the errors of popery; that it is the foundation of all true assurance of salvation, without which true faith itself cannot stand; that it contains that promise of God, which all ministers of the gospel stand bound to commend, and inculcate with all diligence into all true believers for their comfort; with many such like studied and strained-for commendations; this doctrine, I say, in whose praises the friends of it have risen up so early, and lifted it up so near unto the heavens, as hath been shown, upon a strict and impartial inquiry and examination, hath been found a mere impostor, an appearance of Satan in the likeness of an angel of light, a tenet which cannot stand in judgment with the sound and wholesome doctrines of the gospel. We shall further, God willing, show unto you, in how little request the said doctrine of perseverance was with those, who are to this day counted pillars of the Christian faith in the primitive and most exemplary times; and likewise how unstable and uncertain, if not unsatisfied also, the greatest friends, and learnedest

abettors of it in latter times, or at least those, who are commonly taken for such, have been in their judgments about it. In the interim we shall only, in order to the further clearing up of the truth against the mist of the said doctrine, give you a brief account from the Scriptures themselves of some examples, who with their own declinings sealed the truth of that doctrine, which hath been maintained hitherto, concerning the possibility of a total declining in the saints.

CHAPTER XIV.

Exhibiting from the Scriptures some instances of a total declining, or falling away, from the grace and favour of God, in true believers.

THE contents and undertaking of this chapter, is a surplusage, or overmeasure to the demonstration of the doctrine under defence. For to prove a possibility that true believers may totally fall away, it is not necessary to prove, either that any such will so fall away: this would be a very presumptuous engagement: nor that any such are wont to fall away, though this be extremely probable, and a borderer to that which is evident and unquestionable: nor yet that any have actually and de facto so fallen away, which is our present engagement: but only to evince the truth of such grounds and reasons, whether from the Scriptures, or from the nature and consideration of the things themselves, from which, being granted, the said possibility perfectly appeareth, and becomes visible to the eyes of the judgments and understandings of men. Nevertheless, since the eviction of this assertion, that some, formerly saints and true believers, have de facto totally fallen away, is so pregnant a proof of the possibility that such may so fall away, I judged it both worth my labour, and the reader's consideration, to present what the Scriptures hold forth upon that account.

Let us first insist upon the example of David; concerning whom no man, I presume, questioneth, but that he was as true and real a saint and believer, before the perpetration of those two horrid sins, one upon the neck of another, murder and adultery, as he was after his repentance of, or for, those perpetrations. For, 1. that signal testimony of being "a man according to God's own heart," was given unto him by God himself, before he committed these sins, as appears from Acts xiii. 22, compared with Psal. lxxxix. 20; 1 Kings xiv. 8. In the first of these places it is said: "And after he had taken him away, he raised up David to be their king, of whom he witnessed, saying, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which will do all things that I will." This, with the other places mentioned, clearly speak of the frame

and temper of David's heart, and of the acceptableness of his person unto God, at the time of his anointing, and investiture into the kingdom: whereas it is evident that the two great sins specified were committed by him many years after he had been king. Besides, there are many pregnant arguments in the Scripture, of David's integrity and uprightness before God, before that great eclipse of the glory of them, whereof we speak. But we shall not need to insist upon any thing in this kind: our adversaries themselves, in the cause depending, generally acknowledge him to have been a man truly godly and regenerate, before the guilt of the two enormous sins mentioned clave unto him. The question is, whether he continued such, truly godly, under the guilt of the said sins, viz., from the time of the perpetration of them, until the time of his repentance: They affirm, I deny; and give this account of my denial in opposition to their affirmation.

He that commits murder and adultery, not only against the clear light of his conscience, but with deliberation and premeditated contrivance, and remains under the pollution and guilt of these sins without repentance, is not a man truly godly, or accepted with God: But this was David's case; he committed murder and adultery, not only against the light of his conscience, but, &c. Ergo. The minor proposition is in all points evident from the tenor of the story laid down in chap. xi. and xii. of the second of Samuel, where the Holy Ghost very particularly and at large reporteth the manner and method of David's actings and behaviour, in order to the committing of the said sins. But this proposition, I conceive, hath so much light of truth shining upon it from the Scriptures, that they who deny the conclusion will not deny it.

For the major; this hath been sufficiently argued and proved in the former chapter, in our traverse of the fifth argument, there propounded to prove a possibility of a total defection in the saints, pages 425, 426, &c., where likewise all the pleas of exception, commonly made against it, were largely debated and answered to the full. I shall here only add this brief argument for the further confirmation of it. Whosoever is truly godly, hath by grace and promise from God, a right and title to the kingdom of God. This proposition is current doctrine amongst our adversaries. Therefore I assume: But whosoever commits murder and adultery, and this against the light of conscience, with deliberation and premeditated contrivance, and remains impenitent under the guilt of such commissions, during such his impenitency, hath no right or title to the kingdom of God: Ergo. This is proved *ex abundanti*, from Gal. v. 21; 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. (places formerly argued.) Touching the former, the apostle, after a large enumeration of the works of the flesh, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, envyings, murders, &c. subjoins, "of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, *that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*" The other place is of the same import. So likewise are the passages, Ephes. v. 5, 6. It seems this was a

doctrine frequently inculcated by the apostle into the minds and consciences of such as were saints, (at least so judged and reputed by him,) and therefore such as we ought to judge to have been none other. Now if those who formerly had been saints, and in this capacity heirs of the kingdom of God, should have retained the same capacity, under the doing of the things mentioned, and before any remorse of soul or repentance for them, the apostle could not, either with reason or truth, have pronounced this heavy doom against them, that they should not inherit the kingdom of God. So that David having done two of the most notorious and vile works of the flesh, in the practice or perpetration of murder and adultery, and that, as hath been said, with circumstances of greatest aggravation, doubtless for the time whilst he remained impenitent, in or under the defilement of them, was obnoxious to that law of death, by which the workers of iniquity or of the works of the flesh, are sentenced with the deprivation or loss of their right and title to the kingdom of heaven: and consequently was not a godly person, or accepted with God. We have already profaned all those lawless sanctuaries, at which men being pursued by the Scriptures lately mentioned are wont to take shelter, as viz. 1. That the said places are not to be understood as applicable unto the saints, (they mean such as at any time have been saints,) but unto natural or unregenerate men only. 2. That saints have an absolute promise from God, that they shall never totally lose their faith. 3. That the saints sin only out of infirmity, and not premeditatedly, or with full consent: these allegements, with their fellows, we have once and again, in several places, upon occasion, clearly detected to be of the spurious and ignoble race of shifts and evasions, sought out by men for the gratification and relief of error, and to obstruct the truth in the course of it, that it might not run and be glorified.

But some object, that David prayed unto God, during his impenitency under the said sins; and that this is a sufficient proof that he was all the while a person truly godly, and endued with justifying faith. I answer,

1. It no where appears that David did pray unto God during the term of his impenitency, or until Nathan the prophet came unto him, to awaken his conscience unto a consideration of them. The 51st Psalm, which is indeed precatory and penitentiary, is in the title said to have been made by David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him, (*i. e.* upon his coming unto him,) after he had gone in to Bathsheba. Which implies, that David was now in a posture of repentance, when he conceived the prayer expressed in this psalm.

2. Neither from one act of prayer, nor from many, can the truth or soundness of any man's faith be concluded. Our Saviour himself supposeth that hypocrites pray, and that often, Matt. vi. 5; yea, and that the scribes and pharisees were wont to make long prayers, Matt. xxiii. 14; and affirmeth, that they were liable

to the greater damnation, upon the account of these prayers, in respect of the wicked ends intended in them. Yea, men may pray unto God with some degree or kind of acceptance with him, whilst they are yet but unregenerate men, as some of our adversaries themselves, more considering than their fellows, do acknowledge. Nor doth that of the apostle, "Without faith it is impossible to please God," Heb. xi. 6, any ways contradict it: of which place we shall, I conceive, have occasion to speak more at large hereafter.

3. It is yet further the doctrine and sense of our adversaries, that reprobates themselves may have, and many times have, some excellent gifts of the Spirit conferred upon them; and among others the gift of prayer itself. So that were it granted, or could it be proved, that David, under his impenitency for his crying sins, did pray, or was wont to pray unto God, it cannot be inferred from hence, that therefore he was not in an estate of reprobation, or destitute of the saving grace or favour of God. It is not necessary that he that totally falls away from saving faith, should be especially, on the sudden, divested or dispossessed of any, much less of all such gifts of the Holy Ghost, which are consistent with an estate of reprobation or unregeneracy.

4. If David was a true believer during the time of his "wallowing in the mire" of those two foul crimes, oft mentioned, then was not his "washing" by repentance necessary to his salvation. The reason is, because true faith giveth a sufficient right and title to salvation; and it is the main stream and current of the gospel, that "whosoever believeth shall be saved." But if David's washing by repentance was not necessary to his salvation, how can the Holy Ghost be justified in ranging "murderers and whoremongers" amongst those who "shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death?" Rev. xxi. 8; or in saying, that "no unclean thing shall enter into it, (the new Jerusalem,) neither *whatsoever* worketh abomination?" ver. 27; or, that "without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers," &c.? ver. 15. Certainly "blood defileth" a person as well as a nation, or "land," Num. xxxv. 33, when it is unrighteously spilt in it, and maketh as well the one as the other "unclean," until it be atoned. And for the sin of adultery, it is sufficiently known that the Holy Ghost presents it almost every where as polluting and defiling. So that David, during his impenitency aforesaid, was cut off from all right of entering into the new Jerusalem, both by the general irregularity of uncleanness, as also by the particular incapacities of murder and adultery.

5. If David were a true believer during the time of his departure and absence from God, then may the testimony of former and by-past works of righteousness be accepted by way of proof for the truth and soundness of any man's faith, against the testimony of later and more present fruits of unrighteousness against it. If so, then, 1, No man that hath approved himself a good Christian formerly ought upon any change whatsoever, upon the most unchris-

tian miscarriages that can be imagined, to be judged an apostate from Christ, or, consequently, be upon any justifiable grounds cast out, by the sentence of excommunication, from any church of Christ whatsoever. Which supposed, no church, duly and regularly deporting itself in the admission of members, is in any capacity of using the said spiritual sword, in any case, or upon any occasion whatsoever. For certain it is, that no person who either is or ought to be judged by the church a true member of Christ, ought, by this church, to be cut off from his body, or to be delivered unto Satan; and as certain it is, that no person ought to receive admission into any church which is not looked upon by this church as a true member of Christ. 2. The said position admitted for truth, whereas the apostle James demandeth, "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and *have* not works?" James ii. 14, he might as well, or rather, have said, "and hath not had works." For by the tenor of the said doctrine, though a man wants present works, or works of a later edition or performance, whereby to show or manifest the truth of his faith unto men, yea, though his later works give never so pregnant or loud a testimony against the truth of his faith, yet if he can but say, and make proof, that formerly, though never so long before, he hath been fruitful in well doing, this must be looked upon as sufficiently demonstrative of his faith. Which is notoriously contrary to the manifest bent and scope of the apostle's discourse in that place. 3. If the case were so, that men's former works, if good, must be heard against their later works, though never so bad, there is no place or possibility left either for hypocrisy or apostasy amongst men, especially not for this latter. For no man is to be judged an apostate but he that declines from the faith of Jesus Christ, which sometimes he professed, and gave sufficient ground unto men by his works to conceive and judge that he really was possessed of and held. So then, if such a man's former good works be still to be judged valid in their testimony concerning the goodness of his faith, how evil and vile soever his after works shall be, evident it is that such a man ought not to be esteemed an apostate, but a perseverer in the faith, though his ways and actions should degenerate into the highest strain of wickedness or ungodliness that can be imagined. 4, and lastly for this, That passage from God himself by his prophet Ezekiel, formerly opened, "But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned; in his *trespass* that he hath trespassed, and in his *sin* that he hath sinned, in them shall he die," Ezek. xviii. 24. This passage, I say, plainly evinceth that the estimate which is to be made of men in point of righteousness and unrighteousness, and, consequently, of faith and unbelief, is not to be made by the import or rule of their former works, but of their latter; no, not though the former have been many, and the latter but few. For the text saith, "In his

trespass (in the singular number) that he hath trespassed shall he die;" implying that any one sin of that kind of sins which the Scripture calls "abominations," whilst unrepented of, translateth him from life unto death, casteth him into the state and condition of an unbeliever.

6, and lastly, If David's repentance, after the perpetration of the foul and horrid sins mentioned, was not simply necessary to his salvation, (and, consequently, himself, during his impenitency, a man of death,) God's sending his prophet Nathan unto him to awaken him, and raise him up by repentance, will be found to have little grace, love, or mercy in it, or at least far less than such a necessity of his repentance supposed would derive upon it. Evident it is, from the tenor of the message which the prophet brought from God unto him, that his repentance did not exempt him from temporal judgments: "Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight? Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now, therefore, the sword shall never depart from thine house.—Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. For thou didst it secretly; but I will do this thing before Israel, and before the sun," 2 Sam. xii. 9, &c. From whence, together with the event every ways answering, as the process of David's history makes manifest, it is clear that David's repentance did not sanctuary him from "troubles in the flesh" and outer man, no, not from such which were very sore and grievous to be suffered. Nor can it be supposed that it did deliver him from the wrath which is to come, in case it be supposed that he was a true believer immediately before, and at the time of his repentance; because, this supposed, he was not liable unto this wrath, nor in danger of suffering it; in which case, his deliverance from it is to be ascribed, not to his present repentance, but to his precedent faith.

Nor can it be said that God's sending Nathan unto David upon such terms of grace as have been mentioned, argueth any election from eternity of David, personally or particularly considered, though it be true that he doth not vouchsafe the like terms of grace or means of repentance unto all other sinners. Because, 1. If David was a true believer, and so in an estate of grace, when Nathan came unto him, he was under the wing of election, and in the way of life and salvation; and consequently this sending to him by God did neither argue, pro nor con, such his election. 2. There might be some equitable consideration on David's behalf, though not known unto us, on which God might ground a dispensation of more grace and mercy towards him than towards other sinners, in whom the like consideration is not to be found. For though we affirm and hold, that reasons in the general may be given, even by men, to evince an equitableness or reasonableness in all the ways of God,