

THE JUDGMENT SET

**The Judgment Set, and the Books Opened.
Religion tried, whether it be of God or of
Men. The Lord cometh to visit his own, for
the time is come that Judgment must
begin at the House of God. To separate
the Sheep from the Goats and the
Precious from the Vile. And to discover
the blasphemy of those that say that they
are Apostles, Teachers, Alive, Rich, Jews;
but are found liars, deceivers, dead, poor,
blind, naked, the synagogue of Satan.**

**In Several Sermons Delivered by
Mr. John Webster at All Hallows
Lombard Street, London.**

JOHN WEBSTER

A Late Chaplain in the Army & Servant of Christ.

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Brief Biographical Sketch

John Webster was born on the 3rd of February, 1610, in Thornton-in-Craven, North Yorkshire. Very little is known of his personal history, but from scattered remarks from his works and elsewhere, it appears that he studied divinity and medicine at Cambridge, {though there is no official record of his actual attendance there,} and was ordained a minister of the Gospel about the year 1634, becoming minister of Kildwick. {Kildwick, or Kildwick-in-Craven – the parish in which John Wilson and Roger Brierley had preceded him as curate – is a village and civil parish of the district of Craven in North Yorkshire, England.} Apparently he soon thereafter {most likely due to the influence of Brierley} abandoned the Established Church, embracing the essential principles of Puritanism.

Webster describes his experiences prior to his conversion thus, "I have joined myself to the Presbyterians, and I have found their way too short, that would not do; I have come over to the Independents and thought that way seemed before, a better, and more refined way, yet it is too narrow, for I cannot wrap myself in that covering. Well, says thy heart, is there no other, nor no better physicians? So I could but secure myself and prevent this fire and this burning, I would be content to do anything, and take up every yoke, and submit to the strictest forms. Then say the Anabaptists, come over to us and we shall give thee satisfaction; we have the true Baptism, according to the Word,

none so near the Word of God as we. But when thou hast done all these things to find rest, and to quench the fire which began to burn, and to hide thy deformities from men; do you think there is anything of Christ in all this? Is not this rather to run away, and turn thy back upon Christ, and to live by thy own wits and inventions, and by thy own power, merely to prevent death and destruction, and the losing of thy own wisdom and righteousness, and that thou mayest not come into the light of God, lest it should discover thy darkness and blackness."

Thus, being brought to a state of self-ruin, and the discovery that all external forms as severed from Christ were of no value, he elsewhere describes the reaction of other ministers to his findings, saying, "the Lord in his wonderful mercy brought me to the sad experience of mine own dead, sinful, lost and damnable condition in nature. This no sooner appeared but the power of Babel in the Ministers of Satan, transforming themselves into Ministers of Righteousness, then in the Episcopal and Prelatical form, pouring forth all their malice and spite against the truth and those in whom it appears, then throwing dirt upon us in and under the terms of Puritans, Separatists, Grindletonians and Antinomians."

During the Civil War he became a chaplain and surgeon in the Parliamentary Army. Sometime in 1654 he became the officiating minister at All Hallows, Lombard-Street, London. During his life he associated himself with the radical Welshman William Erbery, {COLLECTED WRITINGS, 1658,}

also the mystic John Everard, {GOSPEL TREASURY OPENED, 1657,} adding his personal endorsement to the writings of both. On October 12th, 1653, Webster, accompanied by William Erbery debated two London ministers at All Hallows, upon which some disorder resulted on account that Erbery took such a hostile position against the established clergy. Anthony Wood, in his *ATHENAE OXONIENSES*, has this fascinating account regarding this debate, "Mr. Erbery and Mr. John Webster endeavored," says Wood, "to knock down learning and the ministry together, in a disputation they had with two ministers in a church in Lombard-Street. Erbery declared that the wisest ministers and purest churches were at that time befooled, confounded, and defiled by learning. Also, that the ministers were monsters, beasts, asses, greedy dogs, and false prophets; that they are the beast with seven heads and ten horns; that Babylon is the church in her ministers; and that the great Whore is the church in her worship. So that with him," Wood adds, "there was an end of ministers, and churches, and ordinances altogether. While these things were babbled to and fro, the multitude being of various opinions, began to mutter, and many to cry out, and immediately there was a tumult, wherein the women bore away the bell, but some of them lost their kerchiefs; and the dispute was so hot, that there was more danger of pulling down the church than the ministry." In his book entitled *THE SAINTS GUIDE*, 1653; and more particularly in his *ACADEMIORUM EXAMEN*, 1654, Webster attacked the university

schools, like Oxford and Cambridge, being highly critical of their traditional scholasticism, by which they sought to train men for the ministry, arguing that worldly scholarship was essentially irrelevant to the training of a true minister of the Gospel, vehemently denouncing the notion that such achievements were of any value as a means towards the better understanding of Scripture, whilst asserting time and time again the essential work of the Holy Spirit in opening Gospel Truths. His arguments were much in sync with those of William Dell, who in like manner preached against the Universities involvement in the manufacturing of Gospel ministers. {STUMBLING STONE, 1653.} A few of his sermons were gathered together for print in the book entitled, JUDGMENT SET AND THE BOOKS OPENED, 1654; most of these being preached at the height of his ministry at Lombard Street. In these messages one needs not proceed far before coming to the realization that in every one of these sermons Webster {by engaging the sword of the Spirit, and the marked self-ruin that every believer is brought into} is exceptionally zealous to shred every aspect of self-glory to the full extent that man, whatever his pretensions may be, and in whatever state he may find himself, is brought to a deluge of complete destruction, with every basis of self-worth or self-glorying ground to powder, whilst Christ alone is lifted up.

He says, "this is certain, that man's misery and fall is so deep and so great, that nothing but infiniteness could recover and fetch him up again;

he is fallen into an infiniteness of nothingness, from whence all the creatures, angels, or men could not redeem one soul, but it must be the infinite work of the Creator. Man by sin hath thrown himself into a worse condition than any other creature, and below the whole creation, and he that sees it not thus really, has never yet known what it was to be delivered; and he that thinks that less than infiniteness will redeem him, he undervalues and circumscribes the death and life of the Son of God, and counts it a poor thing, and has never yet been saved."

And again, "he that says that there is any good thing in man, any righteousness, wisdom, power, any endeavors after any good or the like, he is no other but a most abominable blasphemer. And this conceit and presumption the Lord hath cursed and will confound."

And though every child of God will find himself in complete agreement with everything asserted along these lines, one may also sense a somewhat damaging tendency wherein the doctrinal foundations of the Gospel; in fact, the entire doctrinal structure of Divine revelation itself {though never compromised} is quite often given a subordinate or inferior role to those feelings and experiences a believer undergoes in this lifetime. In this one can begin to detect Webster's connections with such men as Erbery & Everard, which associations had an obvious effect upon his own mindset, as many mystical features are scattered about his messages. Alongside these mystical

propensities, there likewise is a continual gravitation in his messages to assign to man in all his religiosity, pretended holiness and feigned ability, &c., the absolute bleakest descriptions conceivable, accompanied with frequent directions for his hearers to look within for things {evidences, signs, &c.,} essentially only found in Christ, at least as far as a believer's confidence and assurance goes. Nevertheless, these messages emit such a distinctive savor of Christ, that those who have been granted a spiritual appetite to relish all things relating to his Person & Work, will not go away dissatisfied! From various reports it would appear that by 1657 Webster was residing at Clitheroe; and that for some reason all his books were seized and taken away from him. By now he seems to have given up the ministry, to devote himself to the study of metals and the practice of medicine. Webster died on 18 June 1682, and was buried at Clitheroe. His writings would indicate that his highly impressionable mind passed through various phases of spiritual life and death, light and darkness, and that he possessed a high valuation of heavenly truths wherever he could find them, which impressionableness at times sadly seemed to lead him astray.

PREFACE

To all those dear and precious souls that have been hearers, and are {in any measure} partakers of the power of those truths delivered in these following discourses.

Dear friends, it was for your sakes that the good pleasure of our Heavenly Father, {who maketh all things work together for the benefit of those that love him, who are the called according to his purpose, Rom.8:28,} carried me forth and made use of me, who am less than a worm, and most weak in myself, yet strengthened through his Almighty Power to manifest these things unto you. And it was for your sakes that the goodness of the Father of all mercies, II Cor.1:3, and God of all consolation kept so long to sojourn amongst you, for I can truly say that what I am or have been unto you in the way of Christ, it was his good pleasure and grace that made me so; for the mutual comfort both of you and me, for I cannot do anything against the truth but for the truth, II Cor.13:8, for I am not able to think or say anything as of myself, but my sufficiency is of God, II Cor.3:5, and I'm able to do all things, yet no otherwise, but through Christ who strengthens me. Phil.4:13.

And therefore it is unto you that I direct and bequeath these ensuing discourses, who have been ear-witnesses to that door of utterance that the Lord opened in delivering these discourses amongst you. And I hope in the Lord Jesus Christ that they are not

only written in your papers, or table books, but in the fleshly tables of your hearts, II Cor.3:3, not with the hand of man, but with the finger of God. And being requested that they might be made public, the Lord led me unto a willingness thereunto, for these reasons that I shall now declare.

1. That you, whom God {in some measure} hath endued with the spirit of discerning, and made you to hear the voice of Christ, and not the voice of strangers, John 10:3-5, may judge and bear witness out of what principle these things are spoken, whether they proceed from that wisdom which is from above, that is first pure, then peaceable, James 3:15-17, or from that which is from beneath, which is earthly, sensual and devilish; for wisdom is only justified of her children, Matt.11:19, and of no others, for it is Christ in you the hope of glory, Col.1:27, who is that quickening spirit, or spiritual man that "judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man." I Cor.2:15.

2. That those who are alienated from the life of Christ through that ignorance that is in them, Eph.4:18, and are the Jew in the mystery, that always resists the Holy Ghost, and as their fathers did so do they, may know that though they gnash upon the saints of God with their teeth, cry out against them with a loud voice, stop their ears, run upon them with one accord, cast them out of the city and stone them, yet do those holy ones of God look up steadfastly into heaven, and see, and behold the glory of God, the heavens opened, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and to freely cry

aloud unto the Lord, that he may not lay this sin unto their charge. Acts 7:51-60.

3. That those poor creatures who are wise in their own eyes, Prov.3:7, and think they know something, when they know nothing as they ought to know, may behold and see, that the stone which is rejected and set at naught, by those who think, and call themselves master builders, and would have others to think also so of them, is become the head of the corner, and that "this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes." Matt.21:42.

4. That those who have spoken evil of these truths, accounted them as blasphemous, erroneous and heretical, may know that according to that way which they call heresy, we worship the God of our fathers, Acts 24:14, and if there be anything in these discourses that the wisdom, learning, or reason of men can overthrow, then it is not of God; for every plant that the heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up, Matt.15:13, but what is of him must stand and will abide. And therefore, if the wisdom of the serpent hath anything to say against anything herein contained, let it be brought forth; for I hope and know that the Lord who hath instructed me, will defend his own truth, so that the gates of hell shall not be able to prevail against it, Matt.16:18, and I can truly say, that if the Lord is on my side, I will not fear what man can do unto me.

5. That the Lord may alone be magnified who hath carried forth my spirit to bear witness against all unrighteousness of men, who withhold the truth of God in unrighteousness, Rom.1:18, and that

without respect of persons; and especially against all those churches, worships, professions, confessions, opinions, covenants, gatherings, traditions of men, observations of times, idol-pastors, hirelings, false teachers, forms, and such like, which are made, appointed, constituted, ordained, set up, and practiced by men; by the carnal wisdom, learning, wit, reason, and policy of the world. For I witness one body and one spirit, even as I am called in one hope of my calling, "one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." Eph.4:6-7. And this is the tabernacle that God hath pitched and not man, in which temple all the saints are living stones, God's building, God's workmanship, I Cor.3:9, and are all gathered into this body by the Spirit and Power of God, and not by man, "for by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one spirit." I Cor.12:13. I also bear witness to One Ordinance, and One Administrator, Mediator, Redeemer and Intercessor, which is the Lord Jesus Christ blessed forever; who is the way, the truth, and the life, and no man comes to the Father but by Him, and it is Christ that is ordained to be judge of the quick and the dead by the Father, Acts 10:42, and that there is no other name given under heaven, by which men can be saved, but the name of Jesus; neither is there salvation in any other, Acts 4:12, for "there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are differences of administrations, but the

same Lord; and there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all." I Cor.12:4-6. And I witness that it is Jesus Christ only, by his Spirit that makes men able ministers of the New Testament, II Cor.3:6, not of the letter, but of the Spirit. And these able ministers do all teach and speak in, and from the power of that Spirit, as the Spirit is pleased to give them utterance. And therefore, all those that claim an ordination by man or from man, that speak from the spirit of the world, from wit, learning, and human reason, who preach for hire, and make merchandise of the souls of men, I hereby witness and testify that they are all of the priesthood of Baal, and idol-shepherds, who destroy the sheep, and are thieves and robbers, John 10:1, who came not in by the door of the sheepfold, but climbed up another way, and are the magicians, sorcerers, enchanter, soothsayers, necromancers, and those who consult with familiar spirits, which the Lord will cut off out of the land, so that his people shall have no more soothsayers; and as "Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth, men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. But they shall proceed no further, for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was." II Tim.3:8-9. "Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture, saith the LORD." Jer.23:1. "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the

flocks." Ezek.34:2. And now brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified. Acts 20:32. Mind and give heed to that meek, still, quiet and silent spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ which is a witness and testimony within you, which testimony is pure, holy, innocent, undefiled, and righteous, teaching and leading into all truth, righteousness and purity like unto itself, unto which as you give heed as unto a light shining in a dark place, it will preserve and present you spotless and without blame before him whose eyes behold no iniquity, which the Lord may fulfill in his due time in you, is the continual prayer of him, who is, yours in the bond of love in the Lord Jesus, John Webster.

TO THE READER

The author of these ensuing sermons, being cast by Divine Providence upon some employment in the Lord's work, in this great city, was much carried forth in his ministration to set up the Lord Jesus Christ in the hearts of men, in opposition to all that is of the flesh, and all that is of man, which caused many out of an impatient spirit to distaste the things that were delivered. But many that heard him, being inwardly acquainted with what was being spoken by him, were very desirous to have that published for the benefit of all, which they themselves had the happiness to receive from his own mouth, apprehending it to be the Bridegroom's voice in him,

and therefore savory to them. He being now at a great distance from the Press, and not in a capacity of overseeing that which the transcriber may have failed in, the reader is therefore desired not to mind the manner of delivery, but the matter of that which is here presented, wherein {if single-hearted} he will doubtless find a lively discovery of many sweet breathings of the spirit of Jesus Christ, from one that appears to have been long inwardly taught of the Lord himself, and that wholly laid aside all those human advantages wherewith he was and is plentifully furnished, that he might commend his message unto the hearts and consciences of men, not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit, and of power. Upon which account and no other, what follows is recommended to the perusal of all that desire to benefit by what they read, by Him that teaches us to profit.

Thine, in the service of our most holy faith, John Cardell, Joshua Sprigg, Robert Bacon.

TO THE READER

Dear friends, having obtained the sight of these ensuing sermons, and having read some of the matter therein contained, they yielded such a relish and savor to my spirit, that I could not choose but to set to my seal, that it flowed from that spirit which is both pure and peaceable, which I do not to praise the person or the matter; for unto man there is no

praise due, and to the matter there is none needful, because it is the Truth, and therefore needs not the shelter, approbation or praise of men, being in itself able to win praise to itself, and to carry forth itself against all the oppositions of men or devils. Here thou shalt not find terms of art, nor quirks of human learning, and fallen wisdom, {though the party through whom it was conveyed, excelled in natural acquirements as much as the most,} but naked truth declaring itself through an earthen vessel in simplicity and plainness of speech, evidencing thereby that our faith ought not, nay does not stand in the wisdom of men's words, but in the power of God.

And hereby thou mayest see {if thou be not blind in the carnal conceits of thy earthly wisdom, as most of the earthen saints of our times are} what self-denial is wrought in this creature through which the eternal Spirit hath breathed forth these ensuing precious truths, that he having and enjoying all those human excellencies of learning and knowledge which are so in the world's account, and looked upon as helps to understand the things of God, but used to help those that have them to worldly honour and preferment, which indeed is the only use which is made of them, and no other, whatever is otherwise pretended; but he in the height of this wisdom is made to become a fool for Christ's sake, and is willing to lose all honour, dignity and preferment, that the world and the wisdom thereof can confer upon him, that he may enjoy his wisdom, knowledge, dignity and preferment in Jesus, the

eternal Saviour of his soul; therefore, I say, here may any that live in the light, see the great work of the Lord, even when the greatest wisdom is made folly, the greatest knowledge made ignorance, and all that God's wisdom may appear.

Oh what a wonder it is, yea a beautiful thing {in this case} to see a rich man spoiled of his riches, a strong man robbed of his strength, and a spirit adorned with all carnal exercises made willing to suffer the loss of all, that it may enjoy and be filled with the fullness of him that filleth all in all. There is none but such spirits that belong to the Lord, that are made willing to suffer the loss of all, that will forsake the world's crown for Christ's cross; yet his spirit hath chosen with poor Moses, rather to suffer afflictions with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures and profits of the world for a season, as doth appear plainly, in that he is not afraid to declare and witness forth to the unbelieving world, what great things the Lord hath done in and for his soul, though he receive nothing from the world but scandal, persecution and reproach, which was and is all the reward that the people of God do or ever shall receive from the world, because they bear forth the witness of the Lord against all its formal, covetous, self-ended religion, which covers itself under the mantle of Christ, thereby to gain the honour, riches, and pleasant endowments of the earth, and makes the mercy and goodness of God which leads into all charity towards all creatures, a cloak for them to hide their carnal and selfish practices under; but this poor heart having cast off and abandoned the cloaks

of shame, and having renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, deals not craftily, neither handles the word of God deceitfully, but declares the truth to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

For first, here is laid open the foundation, declaring that there is no peace, life, power, wisdom, righteousness, nor eternal happiness in any other but in Jesus Christ, and the heart of the Father's love made manifest in flesh; and also that there is no way to attain to the knowledge of this wondrous Redeemer, but by his own life, power, and wisdom; and this is that which makes the professing ones in this {as in all ages} to bend their utmost power and strength against it. For, now cries this religion Babylon {that's hunting after God, on purpose to get worldly power and riches into its hand, that when by its pretended religion it hath got earthly power, it may oppress, persecute, and undo the poor groaning and distressed saints of Jesus Christ, who have relinquished the world that they may serve the Lord, in doing good to all those that are oppressed and forlorn} if this truth {saith thee} go forward, then the hope of all our gain is gone, and we shall no longer be applauded, esteemed or set by; for this teaches all men to deny themselves, to forsake the world, the riches, pleasures and profits thereby, and always to do good, by relieving the oppressed, and paying the debts of the imprisoned, and that every poor captive may go free.

Nay, and not only so, but also it declares the emptiness of all our forms, negative religions, duties, precise walkings, preachings, prayings, and

all other of our customary stipulations; therefore is the force to seek the downfall of it, or otherwise to lose all her self-glory. But, oh you religious ones, let me ask you one question or two, did Christ's Apostles deny all outward gross sins, as drunkenness, swearing, lying, and the like, that they might be, covetous, proud, and powerful in the world? As it is too too apparent by your practice that ye do, as I shall clearly evidence and demonstrate in these ensuing particulars.

1. Are there any that have increased and advanced their carnal and worldly estates more than you in these times?

2. Are there any that flatter men in authority more than you? And if for any other end than earthly preferment, let the effects and fruits themselves speak. I know that your pretenses are, that you aim at the glory of God, but what are the fruits, are they not self-glory? For who the more self-seeking, who more rich, who more high and potent than you? Who are more desirous of worldly honour and rule than you? And why do you say the Scriptures are a rule of life, and make them no less than God, and walk not according to their rule? Do you ever read in Scripture, that Christ or his apostles grew rich and mighty in the world by declaring and witnessing forth the truth and life and doctrine? And wherefore are you not like unto them? And ought not all to follow their examples? If they ought, then why do not you? Where is that self-denial and forsaking of the world that Christ so often commands and exhorts unto, amongst you who are embracing and

thrusting after the world with all eagerness, and love to go in long clothing, to be distinguished from other men, that you may receive greetings in markets, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts? These are the things that please you, so how can you believe, who thus love to receive honour of men, and seek not that which is of God alone? Would it not be a happiness to you to have the Scriptures changed into another form? Where it saith, forsake the world, deny thyself, that it might say, embrace the world, and cleave to thyself; for certain I am, the one agrees more with your ways than the other.

But now to my second question, did ever Christ or his Apostles persecute and hate any that were not of their minds. Yea or nay? If they did not, then why do you? And where is that spirit of love amongst you that is kind to the evil and unthankful? And why do you seek to civil governors to assist you in upholding what you call your religion, and punishing all those that are contrary to it, seeing Christ and his Apostles did not so? Doth it not hence plainly appear that you own the Scripture in words, but deny it in your practice? Oh my dear hearts, are you talking of the Word being a rule, of being frequent in duties, of becoming obedient to God's revealed will, and walk not according to that rule, but in words and outward restraint of some common vices? Have any of you at any time given freely of your goods to the poor, or relieved poor captives imprisoned for debt, or visited the poor widows and fatherless children in their necessities, purely for

Christ sake? Nay this is not with you, and if it were, what would it profit if it should not be from a right principle; yet I know that you can speak well, but alas that helps not.

Well, thus have I clearly declared your sad estate; therefore now remains to show unto you, while you do all these things, even because you have not known Christ nor the Father working in you the death to all these devilish deceits, that your souls might come to live to him who is truth itself, and then you would not only be professors, but possessors of that eternal grace which would lead you into truth and goodness in sincerity.

But because this friend of truth will not, nor cannot own, your formal worship, he having by God's power found the deceit thereof, he is therefore by you cast out as a heretic, and so are all those that in truth and uprightness of heart are led and acted forth by God, to work his own works, for wisdom is justified of her children.

The second thing that is breathed forth in this book, is this, that as Christ is the Foundation, so he alone it is that doth build upon this Foundation, that building that will stand when all others shall and must fall; and not only so, but he likewise begins his work of his own power in every particular soul, and carries on the same with his own hand, despite all opposition; causing flesh and all the powers thereof to fall down before his face, into death, misery, judgment, and condemnation, were all the glory of the first creation is sealed down under the covenant of death, never to rise again in its own strength,

power, wisdom, nor righteousness, but if ever it rise again, it may rise in the power, wisdom, and righteousness of Christ, the Eternal Son of the living God.

And thus God exercises his people under the administration of his power, by bringing life out of death, mercy out of misery, fullness out of emptiness, strength out of weakness, sufficiency out of insufficiency, joy out of sorrow, peace out of war, and will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax, until he has brought forth judgment to victory; and as he begins and carries on his own work, so also he it is and none but he that perfects it, as saith the Apostle, he that hath begun a good work will perfect it, for it was the eternal love of the Lord which by his Son planted the righteous seed in every soul that belongs to him, and it is the same power and love that causes it to grow in the spirit of man above all carnal power, strength, or policy, for the pure seed shall reign until all its enemies be subdued, and the spirits of those in whom it is, perfectly redeemed from the shrines and memorials of mortality.

Oh how it doth cheer my heart to see our near and dear Emmanuel springing forth unto the blind world in and through earthen vessels, to the praise of the glory of God's great grace, who has made us accepted in his Beloved. Therefore reader, if thou findest any of these workings in thy own soul, then mayest thou know that they are no fictions, but the real operations of God's great power; but if thou look not on them in the light of truth, there will be no

unity between thee and the party through whom they were uttered; for he lives in the life of that which is here declared by words, and if thou live in the same life, and look upon them in the same light, then will they be matter of rejoicing to thy soul, but if thou look upon them any other way, they will be nothing to thee but parables and riddles. Thus hoping and knowing that God will make this work and every other, work together for good to them that love him, I commend thee to God and to the work of his grace, being thy brother and companion in tribulation, in the Kingdom and Patience of Jesus Christ, Thomas Somerton

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Reader. There are some few faults escaped at the Press, others in some words mistaken, but being only such as an indifferent understanding may perceive, and rectify, we have not set them down in an errata; but tender all as it is, to the experience, love, and acceptance of all, to whom these things shall come, Greeting.

If anything be obscure to the reader, let him reflect into himself, to see whether the cause be not want of experience in the Mysteries of Heaven, before ever he adventures to censure, for until men are really judged in themselves, they are not fit to judge. But if thou canst feed here, fall too, and much good do thee; and if thou canst not, censure not those that can, Farewell.

CLOUD TAKEN OFF THE TABERNACLE that the Israel of God might journey.

Two Sermons preached by Mr. John Webster at All Hallows Lombard Street, London.

"And when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward in all their journeys; but if the cloud were not taken up, then they journeyed not till the day that it was taken up. For the cloud of the LORD was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys." Exod.40:36-38.

This book out of which we have taken these words, is called Exodus, that is, the book of the goings out, or the book of the goings forth, for it shows the manner of the going forth of the children of Israel out of Egypt, being brought out thence by a strong and mighty hand.

But beloved, if we look on the things contained in this book of the goings forth, or goings out, only as an history of the Jews going out of that land of Egypt, wherein they were enslaved in their cruel bondage, we shall fall short of what the Holy Spirit intends, for their going out is the type and representation of all the people of God in all generations, and of their going forth from under the bondage of spiritual Pharaoh, and out of the kingdom of darkness.

When Moses as you may see, had obeyed the command of God, he showing him the form of the

tabernacle, and Moses setting up all the things therein "according to the pattern," Heb.8:5, then it is said that "a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle," Exod.40:34-35, which tabernacle was always to be carried before the children of Israel; and if the cloud was not taken up from off the tabernacle, then they journeyed not, but sat still; then they were to arise and go upon their journey; this rule they must observe, and this was to be their leader, and their guide in all their journeys.

Thus it is the history, and this is the letter; now if there were no more in it than so, what advantage is it to us, but only to deduct and raise some moral observations and directions, which every carnal man may do, and be never the nearer the meaning of the Scriptures, or to eat of the tree of life, and of the hidden manna, or knowing the mind of the Lord? And having no more, we have but the letter that kills, II Cor.3:6, which is no other but the eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Gen.3:3, whereof God hath commanded Adam, that is whole Adam, all mankind not to eat thereof. For to imagine that that eternal, infinite, and most spiritual, and divine wisdom, should have no greater depth, nor any further wisdom to employ itself in than in relating histories of an outward tabernacle, and of silk, blue and purple curtains, and of the pot of manna, and of the outward sacrifices, and

washings, what depth of wisdom answerable to that infinite wisdom in the Almighty Jehovah were this in him? To tell of Solomon's state, and his throne, and his majesty; of his gold and silver, and of the magnificent stately Temple that he built, of the workmanship and great cost and the like; what were all this, if there were not more in it than the letter, and what every man by his study, and reason, and learning may find out? But without all question there is that mystery and depth of wisdom and knowledge, hidden and covered in all these things which none can find or know with all their utmost endeavors, unless we be anointed with that holy anointing which teacheth all things, I Jn.2:27, neither can we ever know them, except they be given us from above, Matt.19:11, and so these things may be spoken out only by that divine teaching in us.

And for that history for which this book is called Exodus, that we are now upon, the book of the goings forth, without all question, and to be brief, Satan is that true Pharaoh, which keeps the true Israel in bondage, which is here held forth by that external Pharaoh, for what is that Pharaoh to us, except we find in ourselves all those things acted and done? And Egypt there, to us, is no other thing but man's bondage, and miserable slavery under the prince of darkness, and shows what cruelty is exercised upon the true children of Israel, and what mighty signs and wonders the Lord is fain to work before the soul can be brought from under this bondage, and without question, he that hath not found it so in himself, was never yet brought out of

Egypt, has never yet found the true Moses, which is Jesus Christ, demanding this spiritual Pharaoh, that the soul may depart out thence, to serve the Lord; for until then, man serves but himself, even in his highest forms and duties.

And likewise the children of Israel's passage through the Red Sea, and Pharaoh pursuing, and their journeyings, and fightings, and meeting with so many enemies in their passage to Canaan, what are all these things but the oppositions and dangerous passages of the soul to the heavenly Canaan, and the pursuing thereof, by the prince of darkness, and the god of this world. II Cor.4:4. What is this but the violence used by the prince of the power of the air, which continually works in the children of disobedience, Eph.2:2, that is, in all the sons of men until they are by a mighty and strong hand brought out of this their Egyptian bondage?

And all this trouble and shaking is that which the Lord promises in Hebrews 12:26, "saying, yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven," for what the Lord did then externally, he will once more do, that is, after the same manner, but now spiritually. And this is that work, and the birth of Christ at which Herod and all Israel is troubled. The spiritual birth of Christ causes the whole power of the natural man to shake and tremble, even those under the purest external forms. And when the people of Israel were led a long and tedious passage to Canaan, being carried up and down, backward and forward, what is all this to us and them, in the substance and mystery, but holding

forth man's lost and miserable condition in the way of his own heart, in the way of sin, showing the desolations, the darkness, the forlorn and lost condition of all men by nature; that even when the heart of man thinks he is upon the borders of Canaan, and he is now in the right way, and shall surely by his travel and industry possess that good land, he is for all this deceived and brought back again to the very borders of Egypt, and is brought down to the very sides of the pit. "For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north, I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit." Isa.14:13-15. And 'tis revealed and made known to him, for all his fair progress in his religion, and for all his forms and inventions, that he is still under misery, darkness, sin, and condemnation; and that all those things which were but things taken up of himself, and were no other but shows and pretenses, and coverings to delude himself and the world, because he could not abide to see the internal misery, and that bottomless gulf in himself; he could not endure to see the smoke of the bottomless pit arise out of his own heart, and those innumerable locusts crawling and covering the whole earth; that there are in his heart, pride, lust, malice, murder, covetousness, idolatry, witchcraft, sorceries, and lies, and everything that worketh abomination which cannot enter the New Jerusalem. Rev.21:27. Therefore I say, because man cannot

abide to see himself thus, nor that any other should see him thus vile and abominable as indeed he is, therefore he gets himself a covering for all these things, he makes himself aprons because he knows he is naked, Gen.3:7, and he would cover himself also to himself, so as to others, and {if possible} from the face and the light of God himself; and having done this with all the art and cunning he can invent, then {he thinks} he hath covered the gulf, he labors having thus seen himself in this gulf, to forget what manner of man he is, Jam.1:23-24, he stops the guilt and cry of his own conscience by these aprons, coverings and forms, and he begins to be secure, and he is holy both in his own sight, and in the sight of others, and he thinks that he shall enter and possess the good land flowing with milk and honey. Exod.3:8. Now for this man to be uncovered and laid open, to be emptied of all this goodness, to be stripped of all his forms and holiness, and to be brought back to the borders of Egypt, and to make him see that he is as far from the promised land as the worst of men, nay that publicans and harlots are nearer than himself, Matt.21:31, this cuts the very core of his heart, this undoes him, and he has no more ability to abide these words than the Pharisees could the preaching of Jesus Christ, who sought in all his teachings to pull off their coverings, and to make them appear as they actually were, and not to be such as they would have the world to believe them to be with all their holy shows and pretenses.

Now every man, the best of men, being in this condition, if they could but be content to see themselves so, that they are filthy, and abominable in all their works, and that they were utterly lost and destroyed and confounded in themselves, and knew not what to do, nor which way to turn themselves, then indeed when the Lord comes in and shines upon them with light and life; and the tabernacle of the Lord should guide them, and it would show them the way, the truth and life; and the Holy Spirit would guide them into all truth. Jn.16:13. The cloud and the darkness should be taken up, and the Lord himself should be their sun, their light, and their guide, Isa.60:19, then they should see experimentally by the teachings of the Father in them, and not by the outward teachings of men, that Jesus Christ is the true Tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man, Heb.8:2, as the Apostle applies all to Jesus Christ in the ninth of the Hebrews, as the beginning, as the sanctuary in all things therein contained, viz., the candlestick and the shewbread, and the golden sensor, and the ark of the covenant, the golden pot of manna, and Aaron's rod that was always green, flourishing and budding, &c., the Holy Ghost signifying that the way into the holiest of all was not yet manifest, which were only figures for that time, and could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience, which stood in meats and drinks, and diverse washings and carnal ordinances imposed upon them, until the time of reformation. But Christ being come an High Priest of good things to come,

by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building, and so he goes on. Heb.9:1-11. Of which things, I must say, as the apostle does that of them, that we cannot now speak particularly. Jesus Christ is the light set upon the candlestick, Matt.5:15, giving light to all that are in the house, and he is the hidden manna to nourish us to eternal life; and it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell, Col.1:19, even the fullness of the Godhead bodily. Col.2:9. Oh beloved, Christ is that true tabernacle, which the Lord hath pitched, and not man; and from this tabernacle must the soul expect all its leadings, all its teachings, and not from the wisdom of man, or the ordinances of man; for here they are all taught of God, "and they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord, for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest." Heb.8:11. And whosoever is not led by this light, and by this star only to behold the Lord Jesus Christ as his only and true Guide, if you look at any other way, he says the same thing that the prophets of old said of them that followed the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of their god Remphan, and followed after lies, and the inventions of their own evil adulterous hearts, Acts 7:42, figures which they have made to worship, saith the Holy Ghost, the fifth chapter of Amos. "Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel? But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun

your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves." Amos 5:25-26.

Now then, you may hence see and take notice, that until the cloud be removed by the Lord himself, there must be no journeying, no going forward by any of the sons of men; and tis only the Lord, and not man that can remove it. The children of Israel must wait the Lord's time, when he pleases. Man is always furnished and ready, "your time is always ready," {saith our Saviour,} "but my time is not yet." John 7:6. There are certain days and times while the cloud is upon the glory of this tabernacle; and until the Lord removes it, man can do nothing but wait; he must sit still in his tent, and that is, when all things are in darkness in man, both within him and without him, and he sees himself lost as to all of his own wisdom, power, endeavors; in this case tis in vain for man to arise and think to create a light, and a wisdom, and a power to himself, for then he goes on in his own power and light, and not in the light and power of Christ. Ye know, that the fire in the tabernacle never went out; there was always light there, Lev.6:13, but if there be a cloud upon it, and thou canst not see it, and yet will be journeying, and doing, and acting, this will be thy fall and stumbling, and a curse will be upon thee, and not a blessing, and thou shalt not prosper. When that fire kindled the word in the mouth of Jeremiah the Prophet, then that word was a light to them and a command to depart out of their captivity, and to return to their own land; until then the cloud was upon their way, and they were as in a wayless

wilderness, where no man passed, the land of deserts and of pits, a land of drought and of the shadows of death where no man dwelt, as in that second chapter of Jeremiah. Jer.2:6. While man is in this condition and in this night of blindness and darkness, and land of death and drought, he knows not his way, until the Lord show him a light; until the Lord remove the cloud, there is no finding the place of rest, nor any feeding on the hidden manna, nor drinking at the wells of salvation. Isa.12:3. When man is in this dark night, how can he arise? But if he sits still as to all his own powers, actually seeing his own weakness, and utter inability, then this light in due time will shine forth; and if he ever stir before this day, he arises, and works, and walks unto his own ruin and destruction. It may be this doctrine may seem harsh and very unwelcome to most men, that they shall not be doing, and going on, and journeying, and working out their own salvation. Phil.2:12. Many are in this much offended, at which I do not wonder, for they not being able to see the mystery of the Scriptures, only rest in the letter, and no not the teachings of the Spirit, and think they must do something by way of condition, or else all is nothing. And herein is the great mistake of most men who though ever so highly esteemed by themselves and others, yet are no other but blind leaders of the blind, both alike falling into the ditch. Lk.6:39. But those who are acquainted with these things in their own experience, know and feel this mystical interpretation to be the truth, and all others in the letter to be but resemblances and shadows

under which the truth is hidden and covered from all except such to whom it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom, Matt.13:11, but to others in parables, that seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand; as in that seventh and eighth chapter to the Hebrews, where the Apostle speaking of the Law, and of many particulars appertaining to that priesthood, he shows that the Law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did, by which we draw nigh unto God; and so there by several arguments he proves that Jesus Christ alone, was the true Priest, and the true Ordinance. Now in the first verse of the eighth chapter, he applies all that he had before spoken to Jesus Christ alone, that perfect High Priest. "Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum," and so he goes on and applies it to Jesus Christ, that true High Priest "who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man," Heb.8:1-2, which things "serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things," Christ having obtained "a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the Mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises," Heb.8:5-6, "Christ being come an High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption

for us." Heb.9:11-12. Christ is such a one whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, II Chron.6:18, and he offers not sacrifices, but himself, his own body; and he and all his members are the true tabernacle wherein the Lord is served and well pleased; for the law made high priests which had infirmities, saith the apostle, but the word of the oath which was since the law, maketh the Son, who only is consecrated for evermore. Heb.7:28.

But what shall we say then of all those things wherein Moses was commanded to be so exact, and to make all things according to the pattern, Exod.25:9, and here he calls Christ the True Tabernacle, Heb.8:2; what was theirs a false one? It was in regard of Christ who is the Son himself; for not any of all those things the Jews themselves were to rest in, though done exactly according to the Pattern. But this MESSIAH was he that they should have eyed through and beyond all those figures and shadows; for that tabernacle was but pitched by man, {note that,} though commanded by God; but the true Tabernacle is pitched by the Lord himself. So that the Apostle there, we may clearly see, expounds this last chapter of Exodus, and reduces all those shadows to the substance, proving that Christ Himself is the true Tabernacle, and the true Ministry, and the true Sanctuary, and that those things are but the patterns and emblems of the heavenly things. Now all things must be according to him; for he is the true pattern, and he is that one and alone Sacrifice, once offered; as in that ninth chapter of the Hebrews, and the 11th verse and so

on, "but Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God, &c." Though all these things were done by Moses, and all done according to the example and pattern; yet, saith he, the things we speak of are not things done by man, not of this building; that is, not done by the wisdom, power or will of man; no, nor those done by them according to the direction of God himself, {and in that sense commanded ordinances,} yet these made not the comers thereunto perfect; therefore saith he, it was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." Heb.9:24-25.

The heavenly things themselves purified, what's that? That is, the souls of men, which possess heavenly natures, and if those external sacrifices must be purified with blood, it is much more

necessary that the heavenly and immortal soul of man should be purified with the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Man having departed from God, and defiled his soul by turning away from him, and having descended down to earthly things, to find himself a god, and a trust, and a refuge; this departure is of such infinite depth, that nothing but this Eternal Priest and Mediator could reconcile and bring together again the majesty and nature of God, and polluted man thus at an infinite distance, II Cor.5:20, but he by himself and of his own mercy and goodwill has reconciled us to his Father, and hath trod the winepress alone and none stood by him, Isa.63:3, and herein was the eternal and infinite love of Jesus Christ our alone Saviour seen.

And by the way, let me mind you of one thing; that when the Scripture speaks of Christ ascending and entering into the third heaven, and far above all heavens, and sitting down on the right hand of his Father, Eph.4:10, Heb.12:2, I would not have you so childish as to be diluted by those tricks and devices of the men of the Letter, who not being able to see through the mystery, do take those things as spoken literally, as though Christ now had a material body, flesh and bones, the same which he had in the flesh, when he was upon the earth. These are very fond inventions of men, that Christ is in a local place and sits upon a throne above in heaven, next to his Father as upon his right hand or the like; and when he comes to judgment he will set himself in the material clouds, and call all nations before him, just as judges do in the court room; and there to sit in a

chair of State above all, or as Solomon upon a glorious throne. Truly the world hath been a long time deluded with these fancies. Now as the Apostle saith plainly, "Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands," Heb.9:24, nor into anything of this nature, nor of this building. But we are when we speak of Him to separate all our thoughts far from all carnal things, and all creaturely beings. For there is no tincture of the creature concernments in those heavenly and divine things; but all those things are done spiritually and in a way far above the thought or comprehension of all creaturely conceptions.

From all this which hath been spoken, hence it is clear, that the Tabernacle here spoken of; is, the glory, wisdom, power, righteousness of Jesus Christ, and whatever is Himself, who is nothing else but majesty, purity, glory, wisdom, love, goodness, fullness, infiniteness, blessedness; and all sufficiency, and all good; he alone is the Lord, he alone is King, his is the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory forever, and no creature can without blasphemy in the highest degree appropriate or assume any one, or any part of this to himself. Here now beloved, we have set before you the Tabernacle, and the fire in the Tabernacle. This is that fire of the Lord which can never be put out, nor extinguished, but is ever one and the same, Lev.6:13, it can never decrease nor increase in regard of himself, but only in regard of manifestation to us; and which cannot be procured one day sooner by all the wisdom, learning, industry of man, but

only when the Lord is pleased to remove the cloud, then had ye liberty to journey, and walk, and work, and not before; whatever the dark and blind and the poor deluded sons of men make you believe to the contrary.

And further be assured, that until you come to possess and enjoy in yourselves, these spiritual and divine things, you cannot know what they mean; and whatever you do, and whatever you see, or adore, below these, you adore nothing but the patterns and the images of them, wherein no man ever yet had any other but a false rest, and they lived in a false light, and enjoyed not the things themselves; nay, though we should know and behold Christ after the flesh, and look upon him in his conception, life, death, crucifixion, burial, resurrection, ascension, yet all these things are but the patterns of the heavenly things, Heb.9:23, and of the Lord himself, which are to pass away and be forgotten when that Christ himself is personally manifested; henceforth know we him no more, saith the apostle. II Cor.5:16. When the eternal majesty and splendor of that which is the Truth comes in, all the glory of all other things vanishes before its presence. These are the things which are purified with the better things than the blood of bulls and goats; nothing could purchase nor purify these things, but only the blood and death of the Son of God. Here the soul comes to see clearly, and to handle, and experiment and taste the heavenly things themselves, which were from the beginning, "which we have heard, which we have seen with our

eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life." I Jn.1:1. Then the soul truly falls in love with Christ, then it eyes him, and surveys him, then it magnifies and adores him, then it loses itself in him, and dotes upon him, for then is he all beauty, and all perfection to it; and then it loses self-seeking, self-interest and self-glorifying and the like, and sees him only to be the Lord of life, life alone, glory alone, riches alone, mercy alone, light alone, precious alone; and nothing in heaven or earth to be desired but him alone. Then it can say experimentally and feelingly with David, and not merely complementally as most professors do, "whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever." Psal.73:25-26. This soul is indeed of the temple of God, and hath in it the true light, majesty and glory of God; but all other men do but play with shadows, and are but exercised about the patterns of these things which are to come, and have not the things themselves, notwithstanding their confidences and strong conceits.

And now this light being made bright in the glory of Christ, is to be thy guide, this is to be thy teacher, thy master, and no other can be; until this come in, the Scriptures themselves, nay Christ in the flesh, and all things whatever ye can name, are but dark lanterns without these divine teachings, for he is only a light and a guide, a master, and ruler unto spiritual men; 'tis not those that can talk much of

him, and who have high notions and speculations of him, that can love or adore him truly, but only those who thus enjoy him. He that walks by any other light, or any other guide, than by the light of the Tabernacle, he walks in his own light and in the sparks of his own kindling, Isa.50:11, and they never did, nor never can receive anything at the Lord's hand, but to lie down in sorrow. But this is to lean upon the highest and purest wisdom, to depend and rest on him who is only all-sufficient; this is to be taken off all other things, all other sufficiency's which are so to other men. These can really see that there is nothing in man, nothing in the world, but that all are full of emptiness and vanity, and deceit, this man sees and really knows all this in truth, whilst other men talk much of them, as if they were to them the only excellencies, and that all below them are nothing but shadows and delusions, but secretly in their hearts they do not think so, and their practices tell us otherwise; they are eager seeking them, their close holding and hugging them plainly declares, that they lie with their tongues, and dissemble in their hearts, Psal.78:36, and that they teach to others, that which they never yet touched with one of their fingers, and to them the things themselves, to act in them, to live by them, are those heavy burdens which the Pharisees laid upon other men's shoulders, Lk.11:46, but not touch them themselves.

He that is guided by any other light, or by any other teachers, he forsakes the true light, the life and glory of Christ, and goes down into emptiness,

darkness, misery, sin, and the delusions of his own heart. He that thinks the Scriptures to be a light and a teacher, or a rule, or a guide, without this Heavenly and Divine Teacher, depends upon that which can never teach, nor guide aright without him; and therefore when men talk so much of the Scriptures, and miss this light, they are but in darkness, and merely delude themselves and others. While Adam in the state of innocency beheld this light, he adhered to it alone, he saw no other light, no other fire, no other guide; this was the Tree of life to him, this was riches, glory, fullness, all in all; but, he casting his eye upon the tree of knowledge of good and evil, this false light misled him, and led him down into darkness, death, blindness, irrecoverable misery, and never to return to the tree of life; and this was by following the councils and teaching of his own heart, and indeed this is the condition of all the sons of men, not one excluded, no not one can return; for there is a flaming cherub turning every way to keep the way of the tree of life; and there is none that can remove this cherub, but only the Son of God; man with all his wisdom and power can do nothing therein; man with all his excellencies is gone down forever into the pit of darkness, never to return. Now only Jesus Christ is the new and living way, the gate to life, the true Teacher, the only Guide, the only Undertaker for all those that shall return. He alone sayest to Adam, "where art thou; hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat," for "in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt

die." Jesus Christ alone is he that discovers man to be naked, to see himself undone and miserable by following his own will and wisdom, Christ alone can set up a light in the soul, to show man his folly and madness; he alone can set before him hell, death, the curse, damnation, and destruction. And if man go about to return to his own light, or by his own wisdom, he sets himself more into misery and darkness; and even publicans and harlots shall sooner return than these men, Matt.21:31, who in their own and others' eyes, are the wisest of men, the brightest, the holiest of the sons of men. And these men for all they take so much pains, and are so strict over themselves, {as they would be thought to be,} and require it of others, which compass sea and land to make if possible one proselyte, and when he is made, they make him twofold more the child of hell than before. Matt.23:15.

While Adam lived in that state wherein he was created, in the light of God, and in the glory of God, in the wisdom and life of God, man was not ashamed, though he was naked; for the glory and light of God was in him, which was his life, excellency and glory; but when he went hence and followed other counsel, the whispering of the subtle serpent within him, Gen.3:6, then followed death, hell, misery and condemnation; then he sees his folly and madness in the harkening to and giving way to this false liar, who before told him he should better his condition, and that he should be like God himself. And thus seeing and beholding his nakedness, his folly and misery, he being not able

to behold it, nor live in the sight thereof, for he is not able to behold the wrath of God, and hellfire staring in his face; then he bethinks of some covering, some shelter, some clothes to cover his nakedness; he is not able to behold his own condition, and thus he invents a thousand ways to shelter himself; runs to this duty and that rule, for he must find out something, he must do something to quench the fire in him that is kindled by the breath of the Lord. Isa.30:33. And is not man in this more mad, more vain, and more miserable? For by all these things he doth but add fuel to this fire, for doth he think, till one stronger comes than himself, ever to be delivered? Alas, thus are all the sons of men deluded, but when Christ who is the true Mediator comes, Lk.11:22, when he sets up his light and truth, then he convinces man of his utter emptiness, of his weakness, of his nothingness, and that he cannot arise, nor live, without the loud and mighty voice of the Son of God to quicken him, Jn.11:43, when this light and life comes upon him, then though he be naked in himself, yet is he not ashamed; but he standing in this condemnation, all sin, and darkness and condemnation vanish before the glory of these heavenly things and come to nothing, and empty themselves into their own nothingness, that so the glory of Jesus Christ may come in the room thereof, who is truth, and life, and fullness, and perfection, and all things.

But while man walks by the light of his own fire, Isa.50:11, and in the sparks which he hath kindled, he is holy, and good, and pure, and

excellent, and great in his own sight, and high in his own wisdom; but when once he comes to be guided by the fire and light of the tabernacle, then he is a miserable, empty, bare, and beggarly thing; nothing in him of wisdom, power, glory, riches, goodness, a mere naked, empty simpleton, except he be made happy in the light of God, and in the union with Jesus Christ; wise in the wisdom of God, and holy in the holiness of God.

Here, says the apostle, I permit not a woman to speak in the church, I Cor.14:34, here let her head be covered, I Cor.11:6, that is, let not man speak anything in the church in the presence of the Lord; of his wisdom, of his goodness, of his upright walking, but let Christ be all these in the church; and there let all the weakness and woman-ish of man come upon him, let him be covered with shame in the presence of this Bridegroom; for 'tis a shame for a woman to speak in the church; let not her show so much pride, but let her ask her Husband at home, let him have all the glory. Let not the bride speak anything of her riches and of her beauty in the presence of her Lord; but to see herself in his riches, and glorious in his glory, and wise in his wisdom; let not her meddle herein without her head being covered, so that she sees she hath nothing of glory, nothing praiseworthy, nothing beautiful in her; but that her head be perfectly covered with the righteousness, riches and glory of Jesus Christ. All the men in the world, be they of what parts, learning, strength, or excellencies can be named, are but women in this respect, and are to cover their

heads in the presence of Christ, in the church of Christ; in thy "temple doth every one speak of his glory," Psal.29:9, saith David. If a woman offer to speak in the church, this is but weakness, this is but shame and confusion of face. In the church, what's that think you? Without question the meaning of the apostle is not to be taken merely literally of a material church; nor 'tis not meant of a congregation of men or women assembled, or congregated together {as the wisest of men take it} for this in the Scripture sense is not called a church, much less in the low and vulgar acceptation, of a meeting place built of bricks or wood, or stone; but the church is the temple of God, the house of God, the body of Christ in which the Lord discovers his riches, glory, wisdom, bounty, and the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and his everlasting power and goodness to the souls of believers; and in this church where the Lord is present, let not the weakness discover its pride, insolvency or empty boasting; for, this is the church, and this is the woman that ought not to speak there.

Now this fire of the sanctuary is that which discovers all this weakness, darkness and blindness in the soul, when this light of God appears, then all shadows vanish, then all coverings are removed, and all things in and of man appear as they are to be nothing but darkness, deformity, delusion, lies, confusion and misery, and God appears to the soul to be the only light, life, happiness, and perfection; and the soul is not ashamed to be thus naked, Gen.2:25, because this makes way that God may

have all the glory, all the wisdom, all the excellency, and man may come to be nothing but sin and emptiness. Thus the soul comes with the Apostle to rejoice in and glory in his infirmities, and that the power and wisdom of God is made perfect in his weakness and folly. II Cor.12:5. As a good wife, she is not ashamed to be as nothing in the presence of her husband, but rejoices that He is esteemed, and that He is made all in all to her. So doth the true spouse of Christ, let her be nothing, so that he may be all, for she acknowledges that she is only rich in her husband's riches, and only wise in his wisdom, and strong in his strength; she sees that she lives not by her own care and industry, but in the love and care of her Husband; and thus she glories not in herself, but in her Husband. This is to become naked, and yet not ashamed, as was Adam in his innocency, to have a poor sinner freely to confess to the glory of Christ, that there was a time when I was rich and had high imaginations of myself, Rev.3:17, and I was in my own esteem able to guide, and rule, and direct myself and all my affairs, and I thought myself in a blessed and secure condition, II Cor.10:5, but I find now, that I was nothing but a lie, and a delusion, but even then, the mere love and tender compassion of my Saviour and Redeemer set up a candle and light in my soul whereby I was discovered to be nothing but a sink of sin, a body of death, a bottomless pit of abominations, that I was a fool, and madness was in my heart in all that I did; and that Christ alone is my goodness, mercy, power, wisdom, eternity, salvation and all sufficiency; this

he freely, and with all readiness acknowledges, and this he is not ashamed to declare, as those are that would be esteemed holy ones, but to tell it to all the world, though all the wise and holy men of the world esteem him a fool and a madman, yet this is his glory, to take shame to himself.

But all your wise and righteous man, in all their contriving is to hide all their shame, and they would be thought to be holy men, and strict men, and that they walk exactly, and according to the rule of the word; and this is their glory, that others have this esteem of them, they would not for a word be thought as a vile and sinful as others, they hate that Jesus Christ should so far lay them open to the world and themselves. What, are they to come before the Lord and have no goodness, no endeavors, no watchfulness, no bottles of prayers to offer, Psal.56:8, no sweet incense to offer, Ezek.8:11, no duties thereby to think well of themselves? This would be death and destruction, and desolation to them. When {God knows} once he will arise in them, and set their sins in order, Psal.50:21, then all their delusions and coverings will be removed, and they made naked. Then all their sin and neat contrivances to disguise themselves before God and men, shall be rent and destroyed, when the Lord will arise and come to judgment in their hearts, then all their inward parts shall be laid open, Jn.9:39, and what they have done in secret shall be proclaimed upon the housetop. Lk.8:17. "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place," Matt.24:15,

{whoso readeth, let him understand,} then shall there be in those days great tribulation in them "the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken," Matt.24:29, "then let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house," he shall not go down to fetch any of his riches, or gold, or silver; none of his fine utensils for worship, none of his fine and workmanlike duties, none of his strictness, none of his holy walkings; he is stripped of all, left naked; and how are their houses left unto them desolate, in one moment! Babylon in them is fallen, is fallen, and she that said in her heart, "I shall sit as a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow," Rev.18:7, "therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her." Rev.18:8. Then is the hour of judgment come, and the Lord will arise, and nothing can hinder or stand before him. This will be a miserable day to these men, a day of blackness and gloominess, and thick clouds, the sun turned into darkness, and the moon into blood. A deluge of wrath is now irresistibly coming upon them, and then the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll and the earth shall melt with fervent heat and all their works burnt up. II Pet.3:10.

Then from hence we may conclude that at that day, all men, even the wisest men of the world, will be at their wits end, to cover and hide themselves from the wrath of the Lamb and from

him that sits on the throne. Rev.6:16. Then all those merchants of Babylon shall lament for her, that their whore, their strumpet, with whom they have all their days committed fornication, is made desolate, &c., their trade of religion is quite overturned; those that made merchandise of the word, and preached for money and for hire, Mic.3:11, and to get bread, or to make themselves great, and to that end got into forms and duties, and fellowships, that men might have high thoughts of them, and made long prayers under pretense, and to grow rich by devouring widows houses, Matt.23:14, and yet these things, these pretenses, these prayers and duties they heap to themselves, thinking that they may please God with them, and these things {as foul and abominable as they be} they think to be a goodly sacrifice. But when this day comes that the Lord will arise and plead his own cause, all these things will stand in no stead; all their works must be burnt up, then he will remember how these foolish men blaspheme his name. Psal.74:22-23. And if they should bethink themselves wherewithal to come before the Lord, and to offer thousands of rams, and ten thousand rivers of oil, Mic.6:7, nay if they give the fruit of their body for the sin of their soul, all were to no purpose. For the Father, the Eternal Majesty of Heaven can be pleased with nothing but that One Eternal and all Sufficient Sacrifice, the blood of his own dear Son. For men to call themselves Christians and Saints, and for others to esteem them so, is a poor covering. Now in this day {the day of the Lamb's wrath, when men will be at their wits end to cover and hide

themselves from Him that sits upon the throne,} it will not cover their nakedness. For the bed is too short to stretch themselves on, and the covering is too narrow, they cannot cover nor wrap themselves in it. Isa.28:20. Tis not all their fellowships and congregatings, nor washings, nor external eatings, and sitting down with Christ at his table, nor their persuasions that they do the mind of God, and conform exactly to the rule and letter of the Word. All things of this nature is but of man, and they glory in their own shame, Phil.3:19, for thou dishonorest thy Head Christ, to pray or prophesy if thy own head be not bare; if thyself be not stripped naked, tis a dishonor to Christ, who is the Head of the Church; for all honour, all praise, all wisdom, all goodness, all righteousness is Christ's crown, and no creature is to wear that crown but Himself alone. If thou takest these, or any part of these which are due alone to Him, thou makest Christ ashamed, he is thus dishonored. For there is no goodness, no love, no beauty, no life but only in the Son of God; and whatever is in him, is his for the Church; not that they enjoy it in themselves, but in Him. All glory be to him, and all shame and confusion upon themselves; and hereby is their Head magnified.

Christ alone is their covering, their righteousness, their wisdom, their redemption, their Saviour, their beauty; they have no shelter, no hiding place but in Him. Those that are ashamed thus to acknowledge and confess him before men, he will be ashamed to confess them, or own them before his Father. Matt.10:32. Those that are

ashamed to bear their testimony of him, and to be witnesses and martyrs for him, he will be ashamed of them. He is not ashamed to own thee in thy blood and filthiness; and shall we be ashamed to own him and to ascribe that to him which alone is his due? But instead of giving testimony to the glory of his name, thou contrivest which way thou mayest be something, that thou mayest be esteemed, and that Christ may be nothing, and that he may be debased; but be assured in that day all these things shall be laid open. And God is a jealous God and will not suffer his honour to be polluted, nor will give his glory to any other. Isa.42:8.

Further, from all that which hath been said, it appears that 'tis in vain to seek for, or expect any light to guide any of the sons of men, anywhere else but from the tabernacle. 'Tis in vain to follow any other star but that which led the wise men to Jesus Christ; for he that sets up any other Sun of Righteousness to guide him, Mal.4:2, any other light, any other rule to walk by, that thinks he can teach himself or offer any sacrifices or prayers to be accepted with the Father, but Christ's alone, or assumes any power to command himself in anything; this man is no other but a liar, a thief, and a robber; a blasphemer and a traitor, for he robs God of his honour, and denies Jesus Christ to be King, Priest, and Prophet, which is exclusively his right.

Beloved, happy is that soul who hath forsaken himself, and all other light, and minds only this light from the tabernacle, that cannot follow any other

counsel, that knows only the voice of Christ, and the light and life of Christ from all other lights or lives, and that will not follow the voice of strangers. Jn.10:5. They know the light and shinings forth of God from all other shinings; and these are the true wise men, the spiritual and true magicians, if they see any other star, any other meteor, they can distinguish it and follow his star alone; they have found in experience where they have followed any other light or guide, they stumbled and fell. He knows if he do, he shall be led into a land of darkness, into a wilderness of sorrows and miseries, where are thorns, nettles and brambles, a habitation of dragons and a court for owls. Isa.34:13. And again said he, "ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks, walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow." Isa.50:11.

Man naturally follows that light which he hath found out, not regarding the fire of the sanctuary, and as with a stone and steel, he strikes fire for himself, and gathers up some combustible matter, wood, hay, and stubble of his own finding, I Cor.3:12, some things of his own getting together, and here he makes himself a light and a fire, and he thinks by his wisdom, and by his learning to hammer, beat and find out the truth of the Scriptures; and he thinks that he can teach, and he can counsel, and he is a leader of the blind, which is only Christ's work and office; and he can define out errors, and refrain them by his rules and directions,

Rom.2:19, when alas, poor blind man who has never yet discovered the darkness of his own heart, who has never yet seen the errors of his own heart. Are not these then blind leaders of the blind, as our Saviour saith, and both must needs fall into the ditch. Matt.15:14.

This is the very same thing which Nadab and Abihu did, to offer strange fire of their own before the Lord, "and Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not," Lev.10:1, for when thou bringest all thy duties, all thy parts, all thy endeavors, and though thou offerest them {as pretended} on the true Altar Jesus Christ, yet if offered by thyself, thou art that Nadab and Abihu there described; and the fire of the Lord will break forth to thy utter ruin and destruction; for never anything ever pleased the Father, but that one alone and eternal sacrifice offered only by Himself; for he abhors that any of thy duties, any of thy menstruous rags should be joined in with his most perfect and only righteousness. Isa.64:6. This Garment of linsey-woolsey his people may not wear. Deut.22:11. All things that are done in the world, proceed but from two principles; there is not one action of any of the sons of men, but proceeds either from the power or wisdom of man, or from Jesus Christ. If from man as man, it's loathsome, stinking, abominable, though never so refined; though they bestow never so much labor, industry, learning, all their wits and parts, to put upon it the neatest cut,

and the finest dress, they are all but earthly, sensual and devilish, Jam.3:15, which must be cast to hell, and the earth with all the works thereof shall be burnt up forever.

Every sacrifice that is offered in the world must be kindled with fire from Heaven by the fire of the sanctuary and offered on this Altar, which alone is Jesus Christ, and that alone perfect High Priest; else it is kindled by this strange fire which is no other but devouring fire. Either it is of the earth, earthly; or else it is of the Lord from Heaven. I Cor.15:47. If it be from Heaven, it shall be raised up to heaven. It is sown in weakness, but it is raised in power; if it be from man, it is from the bottomless pit, it is from sin and weakness, and thither it must return; and in this state and condition are all the actions of the world; even all the actions, inventions, forms, industry of men, and they all tend to crucify the Lord of life and glory; that so man and his doings, his contrivances, his idols may stand and be adored. All the sons of man cry out for a Barabbas, that so the wisdom of the flesh and the power of man may be established, and that that everlasting righteous Son of God may be crucified and utterly destroyed. John 18:40. This they may do, and this they do do, and yet may talk much of an outward and external Christ, which once died at Jerusalem, and pretend much love to him. Never any of the sons of men ever received that true Christ we speak of, {though much cried up in the world,} for never any received him, but to them gave He power to become the sons of God. John 1:12. Never any received him, nor

followed him, but he denied himself and took up his cross; which never any man did that is not emptied of himself, made nothing in his own sight, that is not stripped of all his power, wisdom, righteousness and whatever man {as man} adores. All true Saints are brought to see this in experience; they see, all the world seeking themselves, following after the gods that they have made, and crying up their Diana; they all see the whole earth always and continually crying out, "not this man, but Barabbas," and they know them to be all thieves and robbers. Matt.27:21.

But these only come to the light, and walk in the light, and the light of Christ in them hath discovered, that in man is nothing but sin, darkness, misery, and condemnation. This they really see, both within themselves and without themselves, and he that would be exalted, is in them brought low, and he that humbleth himself is exalted. Lk.14:11. Christ alone lifted up, and to them he is all in all, and this is their glory, this is their kingdom, this their pearl of great price for which they have sold everything, Matt.13:46, this is their heaven. Then they come to see, as the truth is, that they have no power, wisdom, excellency; nothing at all but what is to be condemned; and that all their works if they are accepted are wrought in God; that Christ is their wisdom, righteousness, justification, sanctification and redemption. I Cor.1:30. They come to this light, and they walk in this light; they continually see that Jesus Christ hath all power and wisdom in Himself; that he hath not given any part of his excellencies

out of Himself, but whatever is wrought in them, is wrought by Him. John 3:21. They dare not say, I must do and I must act, and I must pray that I may be accepted, nor think as others do; I must perform the conditions on my part to do, and then I shall be accepted. All doctrine of this nature is no other but crucifying the Son of God afresh, and putting him to an open shame, and walking in darkness. Heb.6:6. Those that preach this are those grievous wolves which Paul speaks of, "I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock; also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." Acts 20:31-31. Of your own selves; that is, men that hold forth the same doctrine and preach Jesus Christ too, and hold him forth for a Saviour, yet under that pretense crucify Him, and make him as no Christ, and his cross ineffectual. But those that are in the light, they come to the light, and follow this light, live in this light, that their deeds may be made manifest, whether wrought in God or no. Then he sees that this is the true wisdom from above, Jam.3:17, which is pure, peaceable, easy to be entreated, and full of good works; 'tis not high, and stern, and subtle, and rigid, to keep a distance from all but whom they like; but they are easy to be entreated, meek, ready to do good to all, they see no such excellency in houses, inheritances, money, honour or praise, but for the love of Christ, they are not dear to them; for they know, if they have these, they are not given to make them great, or high, or praised among the sons of

men, but that by them, Christ may make himself great, that they may be of another spirit than other natural men in the world, showing forth the virtues of him that hath called them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God. Acts 26:18.

Then is their tongue touched with a coal from the Altar, Isa.6:6, and they must declare Jesus Christ to make him alone glorious, powerful, wise, mighty, eternal, &c., and then, it is no longer they that speak, but the spirit of their Father that is within them. Mark 13:11. My beloved brethren, if men were but come to the sight of this light, and were able to stand in it, and walk in it, they would not go forth {as they do} in their own name, and in their own wisdom and power, having furnished themselves by their study, and by their books, and by their borrowed matter; but all this is because they have no light in them. How many speakers be there now in the world, and with what confidence do they come unto you? When this spirit from on high never came upon them, for they never yet waited at Wisdom's gates, Prov.8:34, never yet stayed at Jerusalem for the promise of the Father, Lk.24:49, but running before they are sent, having of themselves found a way to be furnished; for they can go to the University and there lay the foundation, and there they have the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery, and then they can study Authors, and then they have wisdom, and eloquence of their own; and thus they come furnished, and are {as they think} able ministers of the Gospel. II Cor.3:6. Alas poor souls, Christ calls them no other

but thieves and robbers which come not in at the door, John 10:1, they come not in by Him, but climb up some other way. These have not made Christ the door and the way, for did they but live in the true light, they durst not do thus; they durst not speak until He had opened the door, they durst not walk till the fire of the sanctuary guided them, till this cloud of ignorance, not knowing themselves, nor the work of Christ, were taken up, else they sit still.

And I say, there would not be so many speakers as there be, they would not covet so much to be somebody that they may be taken notice of, to be wise, to be learned, to be holy, to be sober, to be endued with the gifts of Christ, as they would be thought to be. All this, is but putting new wine into old bottles, Lk.5:37, and both are lost; but if this light of Christ, this Spirit from on high, this fire of the sanctuary were upon them, then this new wine would be put into new bottles, and both preserved. Oh, my brethren, it woes my very heart to see how confident and bold men are in their own light, and he that will say to the contrary, but that 'tis the light of God, he must be a deceiver, and he must be a Schismatic, and Antinomian, anything, yea the most odious of all men. Oh, that these men did but know from whence they speak; oh, that they did but know whether they were life and light in Christ, whether sent from God or the devil, whether from Christ or antichrist, who indeed sits in the temple of God, as if sent from Christ. Nay, let me tell you, they come with such deceivableness of unrighteousness, with such signs and lying wonders, II Thes.2:9-10, that

they are able to deceive the very elect of God, if it were possible; but the truth is, it is only they that can discover them; it is only the Spirit of Christ that can lay them open; only he that hath the true light can discover these hidden deeds of darkness.

He that hath this true light, and this true spirit, he sees he is nothing, nor cannot step one step in this work except the Lord go with them; not only in words to say this, for that is nothing; but really from the light of God to know this. Then he durst not go forth to speak of the things of God, but in trembling and fear. Nature, it thinks itself always ready, it is never unfurnished; call him when you will, he can preach, he can pray, he can fit you for mourning, for rejoicing, for he is well furnished for all occasions, he can indeed manage and order all his affairs, and govern the very Church of Christ by his wisdom and learning, and he is never to seek, but as always ready as Christ saith. John 7:6. These men are become masters of their religion; and I, 'tis true, for the true religion was never yet master over them. But beloved, 'tis not thus with the saints of God, nor with the true ministers of Christ, for they see Christ the sole Master and sole Orderer of the Church, and they dare not awake their beloved until he please, Cant.2:7, they know that none other can furnish them, nor commission, nor command them to go forth, but only him. They know there is no other Master, no other Father, no other Teacher, but Christ alone. Matt.23:9-10. They cannot think it enough that they have University learning, that they have the most Orthodox authors, {as they call

them,} and sometimes most excellent divines, but most blasphemously to rob Christ of his honour; for there can be no Divine, but Christ; no Teacher, but Christ; no Doctor but Christ.

They know that they must have the inward teaching before they can open their mouths, the coal from the altar to touch their lips, or else they dare not speak. Isa.6:6. They know that the Spirit of their Father is an Almighty, Eternal, Free Spirit, like the wind which "bloweth where it listeth," John 3:8, man neither knowing from whence it comes, nor when; for sometimes the cloud is removed, when it pleases Him, and then they may, yea they must go forth, then they may journey; but when the day is cloudy and dark, and the Spirit of the Lord doth not speak, then they must be content to sit still, until the day, that the Lord himself takes up the cloud. Men can never remove it, no not one hour nor minute sooner, but when the Spirit listeth; but in the day of light, then they may go forward, nay then they shall go forth with power; then they shall not speak as the Scribes and Pharisees, but with authority, Matt.7:29, then they shall not regard the honour of men, nor glory in those things that the foolish and vain heart of man does, because they are sent forth by their presbytery, and they have gifts, &c., and they can speak and declare themselves, and that they stand up in a pulpit or high place above all their brethren, and that they are in high esteem and the like. All these things are banished in that soul when the Lord sends forth a messenger. Far be it from me to think that I have wisdom or learning, or

knowledge more than the meanest saint amongst you. What am I? What is Paul? What is Apollo, but mere ministers, and your servants, and the servants of Christ, by whom you believed? For me to think because I stand in this high place, therefore I am ever the better, or have the more honour, or be more esteemed, God forbid; for I am nothing if Christ speak not out by me, any, yea every experience of the truth as it is in Jesus. Therefore look only at him, for what came you out in the wilderness to see, a reed shaken with the wind? Matt.11:7. Oh look not at the weak instrument but behold the wisdom, the power, the majesty, the authority of the Almighty. Rather than I should hide him, let me be as I am, nothing, an empty and light shaken reed, and I confess a hill or a monument in a wilderness, or a stool were more fit for me, or for any man. Oh let no woman be heard in the church, but only the voice of Christ; there everyone speaks of and seeks his glory, even the glory of him that sent him, Jn.7:18, and that same is true, and there is no unrighteousness in him. Let him increase, but let man and all the womanly weakness in man decrease, and whatever is of man; whenever he would have glory or be anything, let him be confounded, and the pit shut her mouth upon him, Psal.69:15, for 'tis not only unseemly, but a shame for the woman to speak in the church.

SERMON II

"And when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward in all their journeys; but if the cloud were not taken up, then they journeyed not till the day that it was taken up. For the cloud of the LORD was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys." Exod.40:36-38.

We have beloved according as God was pleased {in mercy} to be present with us, spoken concerning the meaning of these words; wherein we have manifested that the Holy Ghost holds out higher, and deeper, and more mysterious things than that which is conceived of by the mere history and letter, and we have showed and held forth the same exposition that the author to the Hebrews hath given of them, namely, that these things were but the patterns of heavenly things, Heb.9:23, and that this tabernacle built by Moses was but a shadow, a similitude, and type of the true Tabernacle which God did pitch, and not man; and from thence we have showed that the Tabernacle in the mystery is the riches of that glory, life, mercy and immortality which God makes out to the sons of men, and that Jesus Christ is that spiritual Moses, that spiritual High Priest, who hath once entered into this holy place, even once for all; and that the light in this tabernacle, which is as a fire by night, is that light and fire only that guides and directs the souls of Saints in all their journeying through the desolate

wilderness of their own dark and blind hearts, and that this tabernacle is covered with the cloud, that the eyes of men, nay, nor of Saints cannot see or behold it until God himself withdraws and removes it. And that the souls of Saints are not to go on, but to abide in their tents until the Lord remove this cloud, as we may see expressly and fully commanded in Deuteronomy 9, from the 16th verse to the end. And we have showed that in the day when he does not remove it, they are to sit still until the day and time he pleases to remove it; and even then, in the night, in the dark, when all other things are become darkness, then this fire, this light is a lantern to them in all their journeys or ways wherein they shall go, and whether they shall be led. For in this case, and under this dispensation they are not to walk or work, but their strength is to sit still. Isa.30:7. But I know that these things greatly offend some who are wise and strong in themselves; yet, saith the Lord, "now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever." Isa.30:8.

First, we have showed that the divine fire of this tabernacle is that only which guides and directs the souls of men in their way towards the spiritual and heavenly Canaan; we have showed thereupon the happiness of the soul that follows and keeps with the tabernacle, that always sees and beholds this fire of the altar, that knows the fire that cometh down from heaven, and burns up all things but itself, but that remains and abides forever. And this is the soul that is not a stranger unto the Lord, and the

Lord is his Guide. Oh, happy is the soul that knows this, that waits upon it, is only led, counseled and conducted by it. We have likewise spoken of the misery of all men in offering strange fire upon the Lord's altar, Lev.10:1, and seeking for another star, but not the star of Jacob, but following of the tabernacle of Moloch, Amos 5:26, and the star of their god Remphan, Acts 7:43, and thinking to go on in the light thereof; and showing the misery of those men who are kindling fires of their own, and compassing themselves with their own sparks, and thinking to go on and walk in the light thereof, Isa.50:11, yet this they shall have of the hand of the Lord, to lie down in woe and everlasting sorrow.

The next thing we shall observe is concerning the cloud that is over or upon the Tabernacle, wherein in the first place, this is apparent, that the Tabernacle contains all the mysteries of life and mercy, all the glory of life and eternal salvation; but this tabernacle hath a cloud upon it, that it cannot be seen until the cloud be taken away and removed, which all the power of man can never remove.

And secondly, that the remover and taker away of this cloud is God and not man; that God, I say, is he alone that draws and takes up the cloud from the tabernacle, and again lets it descend upon the tabernacle when it pleases him. 'Tis the Lord that draws away the veil, and man with all his wisdom, learning, industry, &c., cannot pull it off himself. It is the Lord alone that opens the eyes of the blind, and not the holiest man can do anything in this work of himself. It is the Lord that circumcises the heart;

it is the Lord who baptizes the spirits of men with the true baptism; and all by one spirit, into one body, whether they be Jews or Gentiles, I Cor.12:13; and I have showed that one man cannot truly baptize another, as they undertake to do in an apeliike imitation of the thing; for it is the Lord's work only, he alone can remove the cloud from off the tabernacle, and give the true baptism; otherwise it abides and must remain thereupon, and the soul is not washed, nor baptized.

Thirdly, take notice that no man naturally walks by a true guide, and he that {when the cloud is upon the tabernacle} offers to journey or move towards the heavenly Canaan, I say, when he offers or attempts anything in the way of God and Christ, he asked but blindly and presumptuously, and he cannot choose but stumble and fall; for, when the cloud is not taken off the tabernacle by the hand of the Lord himself, then he ought to sit in his tent, and abide in his habitation until the Lord remove the cloud, and then is the time of his travel, and day of his journey, and not before.

First then it is clear that by the tabernacle is meant the mysteries of the tabernacle; for, whether it be the pot of manna, the censers, or rod of Aaron, and the rest, all these be the mysteries of Christ, and all these have a cloud upon them, so that none can see them or discern them, or behold the glory that is in them until the cloud be taken away and removed.

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void;

and darkness was upon the face of the deep," until God commanded the darkness to withdraw, and say, let there be light. Gen.1:1-2. So, until God makes a separation between light and darkness, otherwise there is a darkness on the whole depth, the depth of humanity or creaturely nature; there was and is darkness on it all, until the Lord said, let there be light, and then and only then there is light. There is a darkness on all flesh until the Spirit of the Lord blows upon it and saith, "come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." Ezek.37:9. When the Spirit of the Lord that blows every way, and where it listeth, John 3:8, comes and blows on these dry bones, and they hear the word of the Lord, then they are moved, and sinews and nerves and flesh come upon them, and then they are joined together, and breath enters into them that they may live; so that darkness is upon the deep, and the cloud is over the tabernacle, and none can remove it, take it up, or disperse it, but the Lord alone. When the Lord takes away the cloud from the tabernacle then the tabernacle and the mysteries thereof appears; otherwise they are hidden, and no mortal eye, nor the sharpest understanding, nor the greatest scholar, nor by the use of all external ordinances, are they able to discern them.

Secondly, when this cloud is removed then is the time for the souls of saints to act and walk; when the cloud is upon the tabernacle, then they should sit still; and therefore saith James, we ought not {speaking of the saints} to determine this or that,

we will go this way or that way, threatening a woe to them that say tomorrow we will go to such a city or place, and remain there a year, and there we shall buy and sell, and get gain, James 4:13, but we must from our souls say, only if the Lord will, when we once come under the tuition and tutorage of the Son of God, and come to be of the congregation of Israel, then we go not when we list, or would, but we are to await and recognize the Lord's hand in removing the cloud from the tabernacle, and if he remove it not today, we are to stay until the next day, and whensoever he removes it, then is the day of our journey and going onwards. Therefore the Apostle tells us of a counselor and leader they had, and I know also the world tells us of a guide and rule; but it is a rule which they themselves know not, nor understand when it is crooked, and when it is straight, but the Apostle tells us of another Ruler and Teacher, as many as are Christ's are led by the Spirit of Christ. Rom.8:14. And in the Acts it is said that the apostles would have gone into Bithynia, "after they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit suffered them not," Acts 16:7, for they found trouble and opposition, there was the Lord leading them and guiding them, otherwise they did not set a foot forward, their eye was constantly upon the Lord, so until the cloud be removed from over the tabernacle, the soul will find nothing but trouble and destruction if it go onward, and the Lord hath not discovered the light of the tabernacle and himself going before it.

Then in the first place this discovers unto us, that there are usually two things in the way of Christ which often times in the world are mistaken, and taken for another; therefore I say, that the heavenly things themselves, and there are the patterns of them; now the pattern is not set forth for itself, but in reference and in relation unto the thing of which it is a pattern, and a copy or exemplar, it is not for itself, but in relation to what we should act, imitate or do by it, so there are the heavenly things themselves, and the patterns or types, or similitudes of them. Take special notice of these two things. Now we shall find it apparent if we consider it, that the world hath always been quick-eyed to see the one, but not at all to discern the other. The world and especially the great professors of religion have been quick-sighted to discern the form, pattern and similitude of heavenly things, and there have been satisfied. But I say, to find, feel and enjoy, and to live in the heavenly things themselves, this is that mystery, Col.1:26, that hath been hid from ages and generations; your time, that is, the time of the flesh, is always, John 7:6, but my time, that is the time of Christ is not always {as to man} though always {as to God} I say, the world in all ages could never be found, to be without living upon and in the patterns, forms and shapes of heavenly things, according as they fancied, but to find the sons of men living in, under, and by the power of heavenly things themselves, that is the mystery that hath, I say, been hidden from ages and generations, as Paul saith. We all find the Jews in the time of Moses, they

all lived under the Law in that for us, they also saw the outward form of the tabernacle, &c., had a reverential esteem for that and there they rested. And so how many are there now who rest on the outward form of washing and dipping, &c., and these I take to be Familists that the world so much hates and talks of, for they are all of this family and society, and herein lies so {far as I can see} their church membership which they so much idolize. And for all this, how few are there of them that are of the inward assembly of the saints, that are come to the general assembly of the church of the firstborn which are written in heaven; they are come and brought, but only to the mount that may not be touched and that burns with fire, and unto blackness, and darkness and tempest. Heb.12:18-22. How many of them, I say, are there that are brought to forms, fellowships and washings, which are as they are used, produce nothing but blackness, darkness, fire and tempest, {not into the unity of that one spirit,} but only to be baptized with Moses in the cloud and in the sea, I Cor.10:1-6, for with many of them, saith the Apostle, God was not well pleased, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness, and the text saith, that they entered not into his rest, Psal.95:11, but were overthrown in the wilderness because of unbelief. Heb.3:17-19. Now we shall find no age in the world where the people have wanted their forms and things in one kind or another, but you shall hardly find any age wherein people have lived under and upon the heavenly things themselves. How many patterns and similitudes

have the papists in their church? The Pope himself in imitation of Christ can wash the feet of twelve pilgrims once in the year, and fares no better with those that call themselves members of other churches, to be only apostles in imitation. Some have one pattern, some another; one thinks he hath the true baptism because he hath the similitude, and pattern of spiritual baptism, which was then by some used by way of dipping in water. Another hath the pattern and similitude of eating Christ's body, and drinking his blood in their breaking of bread, which was but the type of the heavenly bread that was the body of Christ. But Christ saith, except a man eat his flesh and drink his blood he hath no life in him. John 6:53. How many churches partake of the patterns and shadows, and whatever they say, they conclude from thence that they are the true Church of God; because say they, we have the right use of the sacraments, which is a sign of a true Church, because they have the patterns, types and shadows; observing only outward rules, forms, and carnal ordinances, which all perish with the using; "wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances." Col.2:20. Yet impudently, and blasphemously will they dare to say they are not the Church of men, but of God; when they know not the mystery, nor live according to the power of the heavenly things themselves; and therefore herein that Scripture comes to be fulfilled, that men shall have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof, II Tim.3:5, for the one may be

where the other is not; and the Apostle tells us, "for he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." Rom.2:28-29. So from hence it is clear, many churches, and many hundred thousands of souls may have an exact pattern, and yet want the heavenly things themselves; they may have the pattern, as the Jews had and were sanctified and washed only with the blood of bulls and goats; but to have the heavenly things themselves; namely, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of life and glory, and to have the purifications and sanctifications that are only by his blood, this they are strangers to. This is the spiritual and living fire; and wherever it is in the soul of man, it cannot but break forth to the destroying of all things of a man and flesh, and magnifying and exalting all things of Christ by the Spirit of God.

So that hence it is clear that it would be the wisdom of the sons of men to see whether they have the heavenly things themselves, and not just the patterns. For saith the Apostle, "when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child, but when I became a man, I put away childish things," I Cor.13:10-11, and henceforth, saith he, "know we no man after the flesh; yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more." II Cor.5:16. Alas, the Apostle had {as

well as other men} known Christ by way of the flesh, and in outward conformity and observations, and in a low carnal apprehension of him, but when Christ was come unto him in the Spirit, then all things were become new. II Cor.5:17. Then he would not have a Christian to be judged in respect of a holy day, new moons, or of keeping Sabbath days and the like, which are but shadows of things to come, for the body is Christ. Col.2:16-17. But there was a time when they were under the type of breaking of bread, which was only to show the Lord's death till he came, I Cor.11:29, but when Christ was come, then he rebukes the Corinthians for using the ceremony of the breaking of bread, and said, that they did not discern the Lord's body. For the eating his body, and drinking his blood, was a thing of a far higher nature.

And from hence will follow the great misery of the sons of men seeking rest and life in the patterns and types, and not in heavenly things themselves, for if a man have the exact patterns or pictures {of any meat} that ever could be drawn in the world, or of wine and drink, would either of these feed or refresh him when he was hungry, or satisfy him when he was thirsty? You will say they could not, and how then can the patterns of heavenly things feed any more than they? So also it is the true manna that feeds the soul, it is not that manna that fell in the wilderness, "your fathers did eat of it, and are dead," saith our Saviour. No it is the spiritual manna, "whereof if a man eat, he shall live forever." John 6:49-50. Then it must needs be a deceit of the devil, and a wonderful and sad delusion on the spirits

of men, and yet notwithstanding this is that great delusion, wherewith Satan is gone forth to feed men, as the prodigal was, with the husks and shell of divine things. He desired the husks and no man gave unto him, but when the poor man had wasted that portion he had from his father, when that divine portion was gone, and he had wasted it among whores and harlots, that is, after his own inventions, thinking they should nourish him, he saith, that he could eat husks, but he found that they would not satisfy. I, he should starve for hunger, yet many thousands think, and accordingly do, could I go into such a church fellowship, and walk as they walk, I should be as well as they, and yet for all that, there is no man can give unto them, &c., had he them to the utmost, alas they would not satisfy and fill him. But he cannot have that others have, he would have their holiness, and be able to pray, hear and speak, and have as much freedom and power against sin and the like, but it is not given unto him; but if he have all these external things, yet alas, they are but husks and cannot satisfy; so that there is a plain and absolute necessity which falls upon him, and he sees that there is no way but to go home to his Father, else he starves and dies, and now he sees his own weakness and poverty, and then he begins to come to himself, and saith, "I will return to my Father." Lk.15:18. So when the soul is brought into this desperate and helpless condition, then it sees that it is not he that hath brought things into any good frame by his own good husbandry, or by a providential care, for now nothing will service his

turn, "no, I must go to my Father," he exclaims, and "I will go to my Father." This shows the misery of the spirits of those men that would feign feed upon husks; and from hence it comes to pass that they run here, and run there, from one to another, even as a poor creature when it is thirsty and dry, and sees many wells or vessels, thinking there is water. He runs to one to see if there be any, and then to another, but they are all empty. So alas, a poor hungry soul, here it picks, and there it feeds, and as long as it can find a crumb, it will never go to God, for it had rather go to any trickster or charlatan, than come to Jesus Christ the true Physician. One day it will be of this church, another day of another membership, to see if these things will feed them. But they whom God intends to bring home find no satisfaction herein, but are ready to starve, and the true reason is, because they live by the patterns, pictures and resemblances of food.

Objection: I know that thou wilt object, although we are to live by the heavenly things themselves, yet we are to make use of patterns.

Answer: I confess that carnal reason will say so, though to me it is not so; or else those Scriptures must be a lie, for, saith he, "when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away," I Cor.13:10, and when the apostle saith, "stand fast in that liberty wherein Christ have made you free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage," Gal.5:1, and bids them that they should not turn again to the beggarly rudiments of the world; and again saith, the shadows and

patterns of heavenly things consisted in washings and rudiments, which was never able to make the doers thereof, and comers thereunto perfect. Heb.9:9. Admit, I say, that breaking of bread, as it is in the external use of it, and admit that using of water baptism were used by Christ, which is hard to prove, they were never, or could be anything else but the pattern of the heavenly things and of the spiritual baptism, or else that text also tells us a lie, that saith, that there was never any but one baptism which is that of the Spirit.

Now the letter tells us of divers, as the baptism of the children of Israel in the Red Sea, and of the baptism of John, and the baptism whereby an unbeliever was baptized, and yet the text saith, that there is but one baptism, Eph.4:5, for these are but the shadows of the spiritual baptism, and when that which is perfect is come, then that which is imperfect is done away. I Cor.13:10. If thou didst really find thus, thou wouldest not then need to make so much of outward washing and breaking of bread; for, to the purer all things are pure, but to the unclean all things are unclean, and to the impure all things are impure, and even their very hearts and consciences are defiled. Tit.1:15.

And from hence this shows that thy soul needs be wavering and unstable, like the waves of the sea, and still casting up mire and dirt, while thou seekest any refreshment in the patterns themselves, whatsoever pattern thou canst imitate, or build upon that which is made by hands, and be sure that God dwells not in them; for saith the Apostle, he dwells

not in temples made with hands, neither is he worshiped with men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he gives breath and life, and being, and motion unto all. Acts 17:25. Whatever tabernacle or temple that man builds, they are but like man, they are fading and perishing, and there shall not one stone of them be left upon another, but when the soul comes to the true assembly of the saints, to the spirits of just men made perfect, Heb.12:23, to the spiritual manna, to the heavenly Jerusalem, to the true Tabernacle Jesus Christ, and eats that manna that doth not perish, but is meat indeed, and life indeed, then it is filled and satisfied, and never before.

So that while the soul is seeking after a life, and to get food in the pattern and shadow and form of heavenly things, it is sure and certain to find nothing but emptiness, bitterness and vanity; he shall be like the hungry man that Isaiah speaks of, who dreams and thinks that he eats, but when he awakes he finds nothing. Isa.29:8. So the carnal men who are praying and reading, and keeping themselves strict to outward rules, and when they have done, they think they find comfort and refreshment by them, and they break bread, and they are speaking one to another, and think they have consolation by it; but alas, this food will all fail; thou thinkest thou hast eaten Christ, when thou hast used these, but when the wrath of God falls upon thy soul, and thou art summoned to judgment, thou wilt find there was no meat to feed thee in these things that thou dost call ordinances, nor is there

any water in these vessels to quench any parched soul, for though God of his good pleasure gave patterns of heavenly things, yet they were not those heavenly things themselves, but are only the type and shadow of that divine and heavenly Tabernacle, which God did pitch, and not man. Heb.8:2. And hence it apparently appears, that the power, life, and the meat and drink of a child of God, is only and exclusively Jesus Christ, for he never eats and drinks, nor moves, out of God in Christ; for he eats and drinks, and does everything in the Lord, and thus he is come to that which is perfect, to the fountain of all fullness, to the mount that cannot be shaken, Heb.12:27-28, now he is gone over and passed by all the similitudes and shadows and patterns, and is come to that living fountain of the water of life itself, of which whoever drinks shall live forever, and it shall be in him a well of water springing up to eternal life. John 4:14.

Then this further discovers to us that the Tabernacle of God is a hidden thing, that the mysteries of God in Christ are covered so that the saints themselves cannot see them, except they be given unto them from above; then much more the natural man perceives not the things of God which are spiritually discerned, in which none of the men nor princes of this world knew, for had they known him, they would not have crucified the Lord of life, and when the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased the Lord by the foolishness of preaching to save those that believe. I Cor.2:8-14. So that I say, it is even now too true, according as we have a

proverb and received as a maxim, but from whence it arose I am not certain, that the place of paradise doth not now appear in the earth, for no man knows where it is; but sure am I that paradise and place of pleasure which is the enjoyment of Jesus Christ, is vanished and disappeared, is gone away, and almost quite removed from the beholdings of all the sons of men. Adam was turned out, and you never hear where it is, nor of any that can describe the way to come to it; and even so is the true knowledge of Jesus Christ in the mystery, so that the light of God and the spiritual manna is a thing that is utterly hidden and removed from all the wisdom and endeavors of any of the sons of men, and unless the Lord himself come forth and reveal it, and make it manifest, the wisest of men in the worlds esteem may do as those wicked men in Sodom, {when the angel was sent to bring out Lot,} being stricken blind, Gen.19:11, they labored to find the door, but could not; so he that is in the dark knows not whither he goes, for this is clear and true to this very day, that the true tabernacle of the Lord is still covered with a cloud, so that no man can see it until God discover it to him.

Now, notwithstanding this being so, yet what are the ways of men? What do they undertake to do? Do not all men that come out under the name of being the ministers of Christ undertake the opening and revealing the tabernacle of God? Yes, but what is that light by which they can show it unto us? Is it any other but what man hath within himself, and what he hath attained by his wits and industry, by

the university, and searching several authors? Yet notwithstanding they will discover this tabernacle, and undertake to take off the cloud that covers it, and they will show how the pattern leads to it, and yet if they be put to it, they themselves must deny they ever saw it truly and really, as to what it actually was or is, but they will be guessing and imagining the way that leads to it. Now for a man to direct another in the way that never themselves understood, may very easily make good what Christ saith, "if the blind lead the blind, both fall into the ditch." And there be other men that are so grossly ignorant, as to tell us that if they go but to a Academy a few years and gather a little philosophy, and although it be that of the worst sort, being instructed by those that hold to the fallibility of the word and the universal goodness of all men by nature, now even these come out as they think furnished, and by this they will undertake to discover to us the heavenly Canaan and the tabernacle of God.

Generally most men whatever they be, though they differ in judgment, yet say, that they are either Papists or Socinians, &c., and they have the boldness to hold forth these things, though they be never so blind and dark in the things of Christ. And I find very few, but generally all take up this for truth, that human learning is the way to discover this by. Now I beseech you to see whether this be any less than the hellish pride of Satan to make man go out in the pride of their hearts, and say, that they have heard the word of the Lord, and they have seen

a vision, when the Lord hath not spoken by them, and they have not seen anything. Jer.29:23. Again, if the blind lead the blind, both fall into the pit, for he that comes out and saith that he can discover the tabernacle, or any can remove the cloud from the tabernacle, but the Lord himself, he is a blasphemer and a liar. "They have seen vanity and lying divination, saying, the LORD saith, and the LORD hath not sent them, and they have made others to hope that they would confirm the word. Have ye not seen a vain vision, and have ye not spoken a lying divination, whereas ye say, the LORD saith it; albeit I have not spoken? Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; because ye have spoken vanity, and seen lies, therefore, behold, I am against you, saith the Lord GOD." Ezek.13:6-8.

But I know that they will object and say, indeed if we consider men naturally in their sinful condition, they are ignorant in the things of God, and are even as the heathens; but we have the Scriptures given to us, and they contain the mind of God; and having this help, we by our wits and learning, and industry are able to know the mind of God; for we know and understand the Hebrew and Greek languages. Truly, if it were so, that they did so, it were well; but that very word to which they appeal, in the very letter of it witnesses against them; for the word witnesses that it is a sealed book, whether delivered to the learned, or unlearned, Isa.29:11-12, and none is found worthy to open it but the Lamb, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Rev.5:3, and that none can so much as say, Jesus is

the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost, I Cor.12:3; and again, that the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life, II Cor.3:6, and to you it must be given to know the mysteries of the kingdom, or you cannot know them, Lk.8:10, and when Christ spake with a lively and audible voice, and spake and preached so as never man did, yet said he very often, "he that hath ears to hear let him hear," Matt.11:15; Mk.4:9; Lk.8:8; and so it is said of the disciples, that Christ opened their understandings when he was risen again, Lk.24:45, although he himself had taught them the same things before his death; yet it is said, "then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures," Lk.24:45, that it behooved him {according as it was written in the Prophets and Psalms} to suffer and rise again the third day. So that hence it is clear, that there is not any wisdom, learning, or knowledge in the world that can open this sealed book; for though it be the declaration of the mind of God through those Saints and Apostles by whom it was written; yet never can any man read the mind of God in it, but by the same Spirit that taught it, and unless the same Spirit that raised up Jesus Christ from the dead do quicken us. Although the most learned men in the world open it, it will not raise up our mortal bodies, nor be any savor unto life. Now from hence, let but the world judge, who are the blasphemers, and what is blasphemy, if this be not? We say that none can truly teach the spirits of men, but God himself, and that none can come to the Father but by the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him. Matt.11:27. They

say, the way to understand the Scriptures is to get learning and the tongues, and to reform their lives, to get into this or that fellowship. I say, this sharply reproves them that say they can open it with the wooden and fleshly key of carnal wisdom and human learning; for we have showed how there is a cloud upon the Tabernacle to this day, that none can remove it but God Himself, not only in regard of men, but of Saints; for although a saint be brought to see into the tabernacle and to behold the glory of the Lord, yet when it pleases the Lord, a cloud shall interpose itself, that this tabernacle shall be hidden and covered again, and again, nay it shall be in hiding and opening continually unto the soul, for the glory of the tabernacle would not be made out, were there not a cloud to make it out to by; the strength of the Lord would not be made out, were there not weakness to make it out by; the light of the Lord would not be made out, were there not darkness to make it out by; and therefore there is a cloud on the tabernacle, and it is the Lord alone that removes it, that they may go on in all their journeys, and when he does it not, they must sit still; and he does it for this very end, that the glory of God may be more made out, and that the soul of man might more fully, more gloriously, and more welcomely enjoy those discoveries.

Light cannot be made out in the light, and wisdom in wisdom, but light can be made out in darkness, and wisdom in folly, and strength in weakness, and fullness in emptiness, and riches by poverty, and grace by sin, all-sufficiency by

insufficiency and nothingness; and even things that are high in things that are low; one depth calls unto another depth, and the deepness of that glory and fullness that resides in our Lord Jesus Christ calls upon that deepness and emptiness, and nothingness that is in and upon the poor creature; and this is that cloud that is still covering and removing from over the tabernacle, that the glory of the Lord may be made out in and by that cloud, and that we may know and behold that glory that was hidden from us, and that we may know how precious it is, by the cloud that withholds and covers it from our view.

And again that we may know that light is not in man's hand, as Peter said, "Master, it is good for us to be here, and let us make three tabernacles, &c.," Lk.9:33, so I say, it is that man may not build a tabernacle of his own, lest he should say, that he was master thereof, and would think to carry the light where he pleased; but with a believer it is otherwise ordered, that he might walk in darkness, and stay himself upon his God, Isa.50:10, so that the condition of a true believer is not like the men of the world with their light, for they are the orderers and masters of it themselves. But it may indeed be said of your ordinary formal Christians, that they have a light which never goes out in regard to their forms of church government, manufactured prayers, formal readings, &c., so that their candle is always burning, and that they are masters of their own light; and if it blows out, they can light it again and recover it by their own pains and industry, but it is not so with those that truly fear the Lord, for when

the light appears, then and only then will they walk and journey, but when their light appears not, then they must stand still, for they dare not go nor stir until the glory of the Lord appears, and leads them forth, so that the Lord himself goes before them.

Further, if this cloud be removed only by the hand of the Lord, then I say, first that it shows plainly the vanity, pride, folly and uselessness of men's laboring to remove it, in their taking upon them that which belongs to God; and first, I say it discovers that horrible pride, robbery, blasphemy, arrogancy and infidelity that is in the heart of man to think that he will do that which none can do but the hand of the Lord; and 'tis infidelity to think God will not do that which he hath promised to do to the ends of the earth; and robbery in it that it takes away God's honor, wisdom and power, and this is man's arrogancy in assuming them to himself.

There is the magistrate who will take upon himself to remove the cloud, for he saith, he is the great man to propagate the Gospel, {which is only and properly the propagation of the Son of God,} and he must plant the ministers of the Gospel. And it may be that perhaps there are some that would have them go with the sword and blood to plant this in other nations; surely, the fruits must needs be good that springs from such a root! The gospel you see is a tabernacle that God plants and pitches, and not man; but ever and anon they will be taking upon themselves to do this, and then it must be their care to know and distinguish of blasphemy, errors and heresies; and this they do merely out of that

principle of error and blasphemy that is in their own hearts, for this shows their infidelity, that God is not able to carry on his own work. And do we say we are Christians, and believe in him, when we have so done, tell him a lie to his face, for he saith, that the government shall be upon Christ's shoulders, Isa.9:6, but saith the magistrate, he hath the government upon his shoulders, and yet when we have made great profession in words, we trample him under the feet of men, for if he cannot do his own work without the power of man, then he stands in need of man, and then it must be weaker than man. Matt.5:13.

Then comes another and saith that the churches, they must do this, and they must send out, and they must remove the cloud off from the tabernacle, and that darkness that is in several corners of the land, for the harvest is great, but the laborers are few. And our Saviour's counsel is, when he tells us, that that harvest was white, even to reaping, John 4:35, saith he, "pray to the Father that he would send faithful laborers." He doth not bid you to go to the men of power, of patrons or magistrates. And truly, then it were needful to pray to the Lord of the harvest when men can send them forth; now is not this pride, infidelity and arrogancy for any of the sons of men to take upon themselves to accomplish it?

But you will say, if that men should not do it, men would become Heathens, Mahometans or Atheists, and of no religion whatsoever. Thinkest thou so? Is religion planted by men? I thought it had

been such a thing as the text saith, "every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up." Matt.15:13. May man then root up and plant at his pleasure? For the truth is, that man's ministry and ministers may send out men and plant churches, that is, they may make proselytes, and they may make them worse, but can never make them better, as the Pharisees, taking great pains that way, to furnish men, as to imitations, notions, actions and external performances; but to fashion the heart of a poor sinner to that of an inward Jew, whose circumcision is of the heart, and not of the letter, this is that plant that alone is of the Heavenly Father's planting, and shall abide; but what plant either the magistrate or churches, either by exclusion or inclusion have planted, shall be rooted up. But what the Lord plants, that tabernacle which he pitches amongst poor creatures, the sons of men that are neither called by the magistrate or churches, that is the church that shall abide, being founded on the Rock of Ages, and shall stand forever.

Nay further, they will themselves remove the cloud off the tabernacle {which God must do and not man} and to do this they will lay heavy burdens upon other men's shoulders, &c., Matt.23:4, and towards this end they will bring forth a doctrine to put men upon it, teaching that men have free will, and may believe if they will, and repent unto life; that so man may be persuaded that he is not fallen so low as some say, that he need but wipe or throw off a little of the dust of his own eyes which he had

received by his fall, and then, he may see presently, and using but his utmost industry, he may work out his own salvation. Alas, this is but a delusion of Satan to make a poor blind man rub his own eyes, who is afterwards a great deal worse off. No, this is not the way; 'tis the Lord which removes the cloud and not man; therefore until the Lord causes the soul simply to go out by believing, there is still a cloud upon the tabernacle, and upon all those mysteries that concern Jesus Christ, and they cannot see the truth as it is in Jesus. Eph.4:21.

Alas, these souls look not at God, but man; the truth is, all men in their religion talk of God, but their hearts are far from him. This people {saith the Lord} "draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men." Isa.29:13. Yet more, though all men's religion talk of God, yet you that have eyes to see, may plainly that their hearts are on man and the creature; they talk of God, of Christ, of grace, of gaining knowledge, of acting by grace; and yet do not but follow the point home in practice and application, and ye shall find these are all laid upon man, and in effect they say, that man must remove the covering off the tabernacle, and he must by his study and pains bring down light, and life, and the like. So I say, though they say it with their mouths, their hearts are far from God; so that when once man really sees that there is a cloud upon the tabernacle, then he looks not to the right hand, nor to the left, thinking that man should remove it, but

alone to the hills from whence his help and salvation comes, Psal.121:1, for when a man thinks his own zeal, performance, duties, belief, repentance and the like be the way to remove the cloud, thinking surely I shall remove it presently, I will go pray, and hear, and watch over myself, and keep close to those rules which I have chosen, and then I shall have light and peace, and joy and so remove the cloud presently; and so he is bragging and boasting thereof in himself, and throwing dirt and mire upon all others that are short of him as he conceives, and so poor man is feeding upon the dead ashes of his own heart, and knows not that there is a lie in his right hand, Isa.44:20, his very light is darkness, and his goodness sin, and his riches beggary, and his life death, and that which he holds in his right hand is a lie. "If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" Matt.6:23. Are thy repentings, believings, actings and workings, {if these be} as thou thinkest, the means to remove the cloud off the tabernacle? Is not this to trust in man, and the power of man, Jer.17:5, and to distrust the living God? "For my people 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.2:13. But is not this rather to repent, to believe, and trust in the living God, to say, Lord I am really blind, open thou my eyes, thou Son of David have mercy upon me. Lk.18:39. Why, now this soul seeing this, it cries too, and waits upon none but the Lord, and then indeed is the heart fixed, Psal.57:7,

upon him {as it should be} from whence cometh all our salvation and deliverance, and whoever waited upon him that is faithful and strong, and that only can deliver, who was not in due time delivered?

And from hence it appears that when the soul walks in the light, he knows full well that it will be in vain for him to think to remove the cloud until the Lord himself remove it. It may be the time has been when thou felt the heat of the Divine displeasure, and thy ear was then bored, and thy uncircumcised heart circumcised; and then light appeared, and thou didst bless the name of the Lord in that day. But now there begins to come darkness over thy eyes again, and thou art beginning to see thyself lost again, and the cloud is upon the tabernacle, and thou art gotten into the pathless way, Jer.2:6, and alas thou art saying to thyself and have concluded, though I am out of my way, I will be up and be doing, I will come to it again, and I will recover it; and so the poor man begins to wrestle and struggle it out, now at this thing and then it that thing; so that the poor saint now having lost the light he once had, runs through mire and dirt, thinking to come to the light by his prayers and holiness, and so recover himself. Then the poor soul thinks that he is running to Canaan when indeed he is going back to Egypt, and therefore it is clear to me both by the Scriptures and by the experience of the most precious saints which I have ever met with, that in this condition it's best to sit still. For "he that believeth shall not make haste," Isa.28:16, but waits until the Lord will remove the cloud; but if thou wilt turn from the Lord,

and go buy another guide and captain, and not by that Moses which God hath sent, and art going to make a golden calf, and an idol to go before thee; if so, thou may indeed expect that thy carcass shall fall in the wilderness for thy unbelief, Numb.14:29, and not waiting the good pleasure of the Lord, for not one entered the promised land, but Caleb and Joshua. Know that this is the condition and disposition of a saint, that he only rejoices in the Lord, and that all his expectations are from him who hath made light and darkness. "I have learned," saith the apostle, "in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content," Phil.4:11, so that the happiness of a saint is when he can glory in infirmities, {as Paul saith,} and rejoice in darkness and misery, II Cor.12:9-10, for he sees that this is his portion, and he cannot remove the cloud, and thus he is willing to sit still there till the day dawn and the day star arise in his heart. II Pet.1:19. Happy is the soul that can sit in darkness, and when he hath no light, can stay himself upon the Lord his God. "Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light, let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God." Isa.50:10. Happy I say, is that soul {though there be a cloud upon the tabernacle} that can sit still, and wait the Lord's good pleasure, and cry unto the Lord until he please to lead him onward toward Canaan. "And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and

night; he took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people." Exod.13:21-22.

Know this further from hence, that in the time of a saints greatest light, there is often still a cloud upon the Lord's tabernacle at the greatest height of light, liberty and enjoyment to his own feeling and apprehension, even then there is some darkness upon the tabernacle, especially immediately after such great light and glory. When Paul was wrapped up into the third heaven, II Cor.12:7, there was a messenger of Satan to buffet him, lest he should be exalted above measure; there was again a cloud fallen over the tabernacle when he was in the height of his joys, a prick was sent from above, in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him; and therefore he concludes in another place, that we walk by faith and not by sight. II Cor.5:7. 'Tis so with every believer in the day of his light, and the time of his greatest shinings, usually and then especially there is a cloud upon the tabernacle, and why? To let man know thus much, that he must not live upon the gift but on the Giver, that man must not gather today, forever, but he is to gather tomorrow, and every day, as the children of Israel in gathering manna, for if thou layest up store, it will be dead the next time thou comest to feed on it, it will all stink, and it will not nourish thee, but wait still on the Giver, and then his mercy will be sweet, fresh, flourishing and green.

Lastly, from this, that the fire shined on the tabernacle by night, we shall only note, that when the light of the tabernacle shines upon the souls of

men, all things else become dark; 'tis night in that soul to all things but the light of the tabernacle. In the night there was a fire, and in the day a cloud. Now, I say, when the fire shined all things were dark round about it; and herein observe these two things; first, when man's spirit is shut up, not being able to discern or see the light, then is the time for the appearing of this light. And secondly, this light never appears, but when all things are dark in man, for light discovers darkness; and if anything else be light to thee, and all things else be not darkness, thou hast never yet discovered this true light. To this soul there is nothing in the whole creation that seems to be glorious and excellent, but when the Sun of righteousness shines upon him, for then it appears to be all darkness. When the light of the tabernacle shines in the souls of men, then riches, honor, pleasure, preferments, all things below Christ are darkness; then the light of his reason, wit, morality and holy qualities that seemed to be a great light and shined before gloriously, being compared one with another, or with things inferior; now, when the light of the tabernacle appears, then all these things appear to be nothing but darkness, emptiness and blindness, and are all as mere vapors before the Sun of Righteousness, as the prophet saith, therefore thy "goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away," Hos.6:4, so that I say, whensoever the fire in the tabernacle shines on man, then this will be the sure effect in that soul, that he shall look upon all things in himself as nothing but darkness; and man will then no longer

call light darkness, nor darkness light, but he will say, woe is me, verily I thought that my righteousness, my holiness, my performances and duties, and my worshiping of God, I thought these to be bright things; but now the Lord hath appeared upon me, and I see that all my goodness is as the morning dew, and as the cloud that passes away; and that Christ alone is my help, my deliverer, my holiness, my sanctification, and my redemption; he alone is my song and my salvation, and of him alone will I make my boast.

FINIS

THE SAINTS PERFECT FREEDOM

or

**Liberty in Christ Asserted, in opposition to
all yokes of Bondage.**

**Preached by Mr. Webster at All Hallows
Lombard Street, London.**

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." Gal 5:1.

The Apostle, beloved, that he might establish the hearts of the Galatians upon that foundation which is eternal, unalterable and unmovable, uses in this epistle many arguments to confirm their faith, and among many other arguments in the latter end of the fourth chapter, he speaks there of the roots or of the two seeds that are in all the sons of men; and the one are the children and offspring of the bondwoman, being always in bondage as Hagar was with her children, and are not to inherit the blessing, but to be cast forth; and in the mystery this is that outward Jerusalem, wherein the Jew so much boasted, viz., of his forms and outward worships, and because they were the outward and carnal seed of Abraham, and were circumcised and the like; all of which was nothing, for all those things did typify and hold forth the true seed, and the children of the free woman, and the seed of the promise; for these also are like their mother which bore them, even

that Jerusalem which is above, Gal.4:26, which is free, and is the mother of us all; that is, of all the children of the promise; and though this mother be a long time barren, and bears no children; yet she shall bring forth; then it shall be said of her as it is written, "rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not, for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son; for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman," and then he concludes in the last verse, "so then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free." Gal.4:27-31. We, that is, those who believe are not now tied unto ceremonies, nor live in the form and shadow of the heavenly things, or in bondage to external and worldly rudiments, resting in them as the outward Jew did, "for he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." Rom.2:28-29. This kind of doctrine, the Jew and he that idolizes his outward forms could not endure, but as then, so now, this divine teaching and the teachers thereof could never be endured, but have been persecuted in all ages, and most of all by these who have pretended most

strictly to worship God according to the rule of his Word. These ever had and ever will have a contrariety thereunto; the children of the bondwoman are always at enmity, and have a continual hatred against the children of the freewoman. And these are Hagar, as the Apostle there saith in verse 25, "for this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children." Gal.4:25. If men go no further, but here stick in shadows and forms and the outward worship of that at Jerusalem, {though it be never so glittering and glorious,} yet but all this is but Mount Sinai and gendereth to bondage. But saith our Saviour, "the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father," but "the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth." John 4:21-24. These two mountains always stand in opposition one to another, because the one is to bring men into bondage, and the other is still labouring to set men free. The one kind of worshipers are always busied, exercised and are very zealous for worldly ordinances and external worships, duties, and forms; and conclude that those who submit and take them up zealously and constantly are the true worshipers, and exclude all others. Now the other worshipers, who worship the Father in spirit and truth, they see and bear witness against these outward forms, {as rested in,} and as generally all the other worshipers do, whatever they say to the contrary; for their great zeal for them is, because they derive, suck and draw life from the

exercise of them. True worshipers know that there is no power, no life, no excellency in them, neither could they any longer live or depend upon them, but they see that their life, power, righteousness and freedom is in those things which are from heaven; heavenly in the spirit, not in the letter. I Cor.15:48. They receive their nourishment and influence from the Heavenly Jerusalem, not from the outward and external, not from carnal ordinances, {as the Apostle calls them,} but they suck the breast of the true mother, whose milk is spirit and life; and here they live, and here they feast, and here they dwell; and have not their life, nor their abode with the bondwoman which in them is cast out with her children; for she can never inherit the blessing, nor the life, nor the power, nor the liberty, but is with all her children always in bondage. And the Apostle appeals to all believers, to their own experience, "did ye receive the Spirit by the works of the Law," Gal.3:2, that is, by whatever man {as man} could do, with all his learning, power, strivings, acquirings, &c., but only by the hearing of Faith?

So that you may see from these and many other arguments that the Apostle draws this exhortation by way of conclusion in the verse now read, "stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." Gal.5:1. Some of the Galatians had seen and felt this true liberty, which he had cleared out to them, and they had lived in it and enjoyed it. But some false apostles crept in after his departure, and told them that they must

still hold the forms of the Law, and they must be circumcised and observe outward and carnal ordinances. Heb.9:10. Now the Apostle very earnestly presseth them to stand fast in their liberty received, and not to suffer themselves to be entangled with those yokes of bondage; for Christ is their liberty, and Christ alone is their life, and their freedom, their peace, their joy, their salvation; and herein to stand against all those who would set up anything with him; and upon that account the Apostle calls them carnal Ordinances though appointed by the Lord Himself, and so is it a wonder the men of the letter which stand so much for outward forms, do cry out blasphemy and heresy. All those other things being included in naming Circumcision, because that was the most high, absolute and unquestionable ordinance ordained by God himself to Abraham, and which none could remove or abolish but the Son himself, the Heir himself, who being come to age, must inherit and take possession of his own, of his inheritance, kingdom and glory. And shall any servant resist and keep out the Lord, the heir of all things, and all these things saying, "prepare ye the way of the Lord," Matt.3:3, for whom all things were made and created; and all other excellencies and glories whatsoever are but to usher in this great and mighty King; and shall any harbinger or servant say that he will not, or he must not remove, or be so impotent to say that the inheritance is his? No, says the Apostle, "I testify to every man, and I Paul say unto you, if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you

nothing; and ye are under the Law, and under bondage, and he is a debtor to do the whole Law, and Christ is become of none effect, and ye are fallen from grace." Gal.5:3-4.

This is that which so much moved the Apostle, that they being once set free and had tasted of the liberty which came by Jesus Christ, that they should be again entangled with the yoke of bondage. That they who had received Gospel teaching, and Christ to be the Teacher, should now hearken to false teachers; and having begun in the spirit should once think to be made perfect by the flesh, as if Christ were not enough, but they must join with Him the corruption, and rudiments of men, their rules, and their forms, and their precepts; these and these things they must do if they will be perfect, and so join man with Christ, and so make Christ and his cross of none effect. Nay the Apostle, he did so magnify, and set up, and adore Jesus Christ, and esteemed him so full, so rich, so large, so all in all; that he not only abhorred the rudiments and the inventions of men, but the Ordinances and the very Law of God as by man, to come in competition with Jesus Christ; for never any man observed the Law, in the least tittle. It was only Jesus Christ, and them whom he embodied, and in whom he works. For verily the Law was not given to tell man what he should do to get peace and life, but to condemn him, to disable him, to slay him, to convince him that he is miserable, and weak, and cursed. And therefore in vain did those false apostles, or any other in any generation put men upon doing this or that by way

of condition, to enable man to act or do anything on his part by his own power so to please God. But every true believer is a man lost and destroyed in himself, and he is born anew of this divine seed, and he is settled not on himself by his own doings, but on the Rock of Ages, I Sam.2:2, and he harkens to the spiritual counsel given here by the apostle, to stand fast in this liberty, {whatever men say,} and will not suffer himself to be bewitched by the plausible teachings of men, tickling the flesh with acting and doing that by themselves which shall bring peace, but which tends to no other end but to keep men in bondage, and to hold them under the old Jerusalem, because that's very pleasing to man; for there are many glorious forms and worships, and man showing out himself to be something, which things please the outward man and the flesh; and this is that which man esteems highly of, and much prides himself therein; and indeed, all this is nothing but to seek life in death, and for the living to seek to the dead, as the prophet speaks, Isa.8:19, for all tends to death, to bondage, and to remain under the curse, but that which the apostle here holds forth in the truth, the power, the life, the inheritance, the resurrection, the glory; and shows that there is no other power, life, glory, inheritance, peace, rest, but only here; there is no other spirit, no other baptism, no other breaking of bread, for Christ alone is the true bread which came down from heaven, Jn.6:51, and he alone can give it, and he alone is the means, the only ordinance by which we receive it; he is the way, and he is the door.

This bread is given down from heaven, as Christ shows at large in John 6:31, &c., "he gave them bread from heaven to eat," Moses himself could not give them that bread. "Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead." That bread which Moses gave could not keep them from death, but for all they ate of that bread which came down from the elementary heaven, yet they are dead. "But my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life, he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

So that you see, the Apostle here sets the opposition between the entanglements of men and the yoke of bondage, against the pure, free, and full liberty by Jesus Christ. Whatever it be but this liberty given us by Jesus Christ, that gives the least joy, the least peace, the least rest to the soul of man, but purely Jesus Christ, he is entangled in the yoke of bondage; for, the liberty of Christ consists not in anything below himself in any ordinances, {as men call them,} in any duty, in any form, in any mode whatsoever, but only in himself; for all things else are too low, too poor, too mean, too base to stand in the room of Christ, they cannot give the true bread, but only Christ himself, who is the Bread. There are but two principles from which all men work, either from Christ or antichrist, either from the bondwoman or the free woman; either from the

wisdom that is above, which is pure, peaceable, gentle, easily to be entreated, full of mercy and good works, without partiality and without hypocrisy, Jas.3:17, or else, 'tis from the wisdom which is from beneath, which is earthly, sensual and devilish, which is full of envying, strife, confusion and every evil work.

And though this wisdom of the world will undertake to show us Christ, and the true bread, and they cry ever so loudly, lo here, and lo there is Christ, he is in our way, he is in the wilderness, or he is in the secret chambers, go not after them, Matt.24:26, for the kingdom of Christ comes not with outward observation; for whoever shall say he is in this outward form, or in that way of walking, or breaking of bread, believe them not, go not after them, for they know not that the kingdom of God is within you. Lk.17:20-21. All men that think to be helped by cleaving to a particular church, or a certain fellowship, and are still going out of themselves to find Christ, they are deceived; for if any man direct you to find Christ anywhere, but as revealed in the oracles of heavenly truth, and sealed by the Spirit as made known, and impressed within, he is deceived; for all these ways are but ensnarements and delusions, if men think to be helped by anything in heaven or earth, but only by the pure, perfect and all sufficient righteousness of Jesus Christ, which is only manifested in thy heart by his own Spirit; for if thou think that simply Jesus Christ external in the flesh, as dying at Jerusalem, will help thee, thou art utterly deceived; 'tis Christ

only who is begotten within thee, all other ways of men's devising are mere lies, delusions and ensnarements.

In the words {for the sake of order only} take notice of these four things. 1. That the state of a believing soul is a state of liberty. 2. That believers are only made partakers of this liberty by Jesus Christ. 3. That the safety of standing is only in abiding in this liberty and freedom. 4. That when any man goes out from this liberty and freedom by Jesus Christ to anything else whatsoever, he goes out to be ensnared and entangled, and it cannot be otherwise.

For the two first, it is clear, that there is a state of freedom and liberty belonging to the people of God, and that Christ only is their Deliverer; for he who is delivered by Jesus Christ he only hath true freedom, and he is the true freeman; all others, however they talk of freedom, and boast of freedom, if Christ does not set them free, they are still bondmen, they are still in snares, and locked fast in their fetters; for, who else can deliver and set free the soul of man, but he that is Lord of all, and is subject to none? He alone hath the keys of hell and death, Rev.1:18, he alone is the soul's Captain and Deliverer. This is that which all the saints have some experience of, when they find themselves delivered from the bondage of flesh, of self, of the world; as they perceive this work done within them, they know experimentally that this is the very finger and power of Christ, and that he is only Christ's freeman; that none hath brought it to pass, to set them at liberty,

to knock off their chains, and lead them out of prison, and set their feet upon a rock, but only the almighty power and mere mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ; they know that it hath been he which hath opened their eyes and their ears, that hath raised them from death, and given them feet to walk, Psal.40:2, and there is none that know this truly, but only those that have tasted of the heavenly gift, having been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come.

And for proof of this point, though I might prove it by Scripture very plentifully, to show how many, yea all the saints there spoken of, have found it in their own experience that they were indeed delivered from death, and from prison by the power of God, and by the hand of Jesus Christ; yet what is this to thee, except thou find their experience true in thyself; else their experience is but notions and riddles to thee, and such things whereof thou hath no knowledge, except thou see and know thyself to be under death, and kept fast in prison; and except thou hast found Jesus Christ restoring, recovering, delivering and redeeming thee from this death; and that thou dost find that he hath said to thy soul, "arise and stand upon thy feet," Acts 14:10, and hath given thee strength and life, to what end is it to bring all the examples in Scripture, and in the world, if this death and life be not experimented in us? Insomuch that thou canst say, this word is true to me, because accomplished in me, as the Apostle saith, "God, who at sundry times and in divers

manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things." Heb.1:1-2. Those truths, which he spake before by the prophets, he hath now spoken to us by his Son, so that we now know them to be the word and language of God himself. But, as our Saviour saith, "an evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign." Matt.12:39-40. They expect that every speech should be made good by an external word, and you must go no further; so that the truth is never witnessed to in their hearts, but as he says there, "and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas; for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." Except you find the same things done in you, the same miracles, the same death, the same lying in the grave three days and three nights, except you find Jesus Christ taking thee by the hand, and restoring thee to life, thou art of an evil and adulterous generation, seeking after an external sign, and thou art a mere stranger to these things. But I shall for their sakes who perceive the work of Christ within them, give you two or three places of Scripture, being the experience of the saints of old that you may see how the saints bear witness to each other in experience.

First Scripture, Isaiah 61:1-3, speaking there of Christ being the only Deliverer, saith, "the Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek;

he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified." Christ alone is he who breaks open the souls prison doors; he alone gives deliverance to the captives, and he alone brings them forth from prison and sets them free; and this he is to his people in all ages; for he "the same yesterday, and today, and forever," Heb.13:8, and when the same word appeared in flesh, he testifies the same of himself, Lk.4:18-21, where he rehearses the same words and applies them to himself, saying, that "this day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." And this was that which he still held forth in all his teachings; that there is no other Saviour nor Deliverer but himself, never was, nor is, nor ever shall be to the end of the world. Moses was only an outward and external captain or deliverer; but Christ's leadings and deliverings are spiritual, and there is none can be delivered but by him, as he is a better mediator than Moses, Heb.12:24, so he is a better deliverer; tis he alone that frees the soul from the pit, from death and hell; his kingdom being within us.

The Jews and Pharisees still expected an outward deliverer, and could not own Christ as a

Prince and a Saviour, but were blind and saw not what he held forth in all his teachings. They could not see the truth that they were blind and miserable and full of hypocrisy, and were no other but painted sepulchres, glorious indeed outwardly, but within were full of rottenness, stench, and dead men's bones, Matt.23:27, they could not endure to stand in the light of this truth, but hated it, and persecuted him to the death for holding it forth. "What are we blind also?" John 9:40. What are we the learned, the wisest, the holiest; what we that are strict ourselves, and call upon others to be so too? This was death to them. But now had they but seen this and owned it, that he himself was set forth as Righteousness, the Deliverer, the Redeemer, their only hope for freedom; but because they said we see, therefore their sin remained, and their fetters and bondage were not taken off. John 9:41. And again Christ tells them that believed on him, "if ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:31-32. Now these things they could not see, nor understand that they were in bondage, but answered to him, "we be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man; how sayest thou, ye shall be made free?" Then Jesus answered them, "verily, verily, I say unto you, whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin, and the servant abideth not in the house for ever, but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." John 8:33-36. They were in perpetual bondage to sin, servants to sin,

and rejected him, who was their only hope of freedom, being ignorant, justifying themselves, so that Christ as their only hope of deliverance was set at naught; notwithstanding he continually preached this doctrine in their ears, often calling, though none answering, Isa.50:2, abandoning any hope of their deliverance.

And this freedom is beyond all other freedoms; this is that perfect law of liberty which James speaks of, Jam.1:25; all other deliverances are but imperfect deliverances without this. And in Romans, says the Apostle, "but now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life," Rom.6:22, "for when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness." Rom.6:20. From all which Scriptures it appears that never any were or could be made free and set at liberty, but only by his power, and by his eternal right-hand; 'tis not all the power, wisdom, righteousness, endeavors, rules, strictness, conformity that all or any of the sons of men could use, could ever deliver them from their bondage to the least sin; though they may pretend a godly reformation {forsooth} and strictness of walking, and sticking close to God, and walking up to their knowledge, and to their strict rules; yet they were never yet freed, nor delivered from any one sin by Jesus Christ, nor ever left any one sin from any good end, but the devil in them hath only shifted shapes, and left, or put off some particular sins which were not profitable or convenient, or stood not with their credit, but he has caused them to take up

forms to cover the defilement of their hearts, and of their inward man, which notwithstanding all their shows is full of rottenness, hypocrisy and all iniquity.

And again the Apostle, "he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman, likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant," I Cor.7:22, therefore "ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men." I Cor.7:23. All that are once made free by Christ, they cannot be servants to men, that is to those things men are so subject to yield obedience to; they not only ought not but cannot serve those lusts that men serve, when Jesus Christ has set the soul free, they can be only servants to him. They will not be servants to the world, nor servants to their own will, they cannot go where they list, but they are girded to wait upon the will of their Master, as Christ told Peter, I say unto thee, "when thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest, but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not," John 21:18, Christ insinuating thus much to him, that while he was young and in the state of unregeneracy, he followed his own will, and girded himself, and did what himself pleased; but hereafter he should not do so, but he must serve his Master, and his commands should gird him and rule him, he should be girded by Christ, and should cross his own will, and follow his Master's in whatsoever service he should command.

And truly brethren, he that is thus made a servant by Christ, he is truly a free man and a citizen

of heaven; and thus to have experience of Christ as our personal deliverer, to know him, to abide in him, and to rejoice in his salvation, there is none like this; to see his mighty power and his strong arm delivering thy soul from the powers of hell and darkness, and holding this forth not only by the prophets and their pointing at him, but chiefly in holding this forth in himself by all his external actions; what a mighty mystery this is! Yea such a mystery as none knows but only he who is delivered. Indeed men may talk of it, and run over it in their words, but this is that mystery that neither the Pharisees, nor all the learned, nor all the wisdom, nor industry of man could ever yet comprehend, for it is only spiritually discerned.

In this sense the whole Scriptures are a book sealed, Rev.5:1, and a garden walled about, Cant.4:12, and a fountain shut up. Few can make this out in their own experience; they can tell you a story of Abraham, and of David, and Peter, and Paul, but that they are the men, no such matters; they can neither make out the way, the manner, nor the means, how their souls were brought out and delivered from the pit, nor from out of the mire and clay, nor how their fetters were broken off, nor how their eyes were opened, nor how their ankle bones received strength, Acts 3:7, for how can they, when they never found they were in prison or under death or condemnation. They were never blind, nor deaf, nor dumb; but this only the scribe that is instructed in the kingdom of heaven that can bring out of his treasures things new and old, what Christ did at first

and how he carried him on, and how he brought them out and set him at liberty.

And truly beloved, there is one thing among others that I would gladly speak out, that every man may examine himself, for the world hath made a great noise, and made great boast of what they have received by Jesus Christ, and what freedom he has purchased for them; what a mighty and wonderful redemption he hath wrought by one act of his sufferings and dying upon the cross in the days of his flesh, or at least, as some say by all his actions and sufferings. And this is their anchor hold, their hope and their trust, because he hath purchased thereby heaven and salvation for them, and if they do but perform the condition on their part, viz., to believe, then all is theirs, all his riches, glory, peace, redemption, salvation, heaven, and all that is in Jesus Christ; but alas, alas, what's all this to any man, if he has no experience of the truth in himself, and hath not Christ formed in him, Col.3:1, and be not baptized into his death, and hath not experience of his resurrection, to be risen with Christ, and to seek those things that are above? In a word, what is all thy external faith and believing if thou dost not know the mystery of that appearance? For he is the Lamb slain from the beginning, he is yesterday, and today and the same forever, Heb.13:8, he is that eternal sacrifice which was once and forever offered up and presented to the Father; he is to this day, from the foundation of the world, not only crucified at Jerusalem, but is crucified in all ages, in Sodom and Egypt, as John witnesses, "and their dead

bodies {speaking of those two eternal witnesses, which ever stood before the God of the whole earth} shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified," Rev 11:8, which cannot be meant literally, for Christ in the flesh was not crucified in Sodom nor Egypt. But all these are spiritually to be understood, and they are great mysteries, which the world hath not been acquainted with, but hath generally received a notion of God-man dying at Jerusalem; and indeed they have contented themselves with the shadow of the truth, and little or nothing else. "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." Matt.1:23. There have been very few that have seen beyond the shadow, nor looked beyond the veil; they have not seen Emmanuel in themselves, and that he dwells in his people, not merely amongst us, as your literal men {to justify their literal and external knowledge} have translated the word, because they have seen no further, but 'tis properly God in us.

Wherever Christ is, he brings a new birth, works a change upon the whole man; this did not, nor does Christ do by any of his actions that he did at Jerusalem, neither by his holy life, nor his meritorious death, for was ever any of the sons of men conformed to him by that act? 'Tis true, his death was infinitely meritorious, and one act in him, as being God equal with the Father, was a sufficient sacrifice and atonement to pacify the infinite wrath

of God; but yet know that Jesus Christ is not only a sacrifice for an hour or two, only for the time he suffered in the flesh under Pontius Pilate, but he is that one eternal, everlasting sacrifice, which is continually offered up to the eternal Father in the behalf of all the elect. And also we grant, by that act, the eternal purpose and decree of God was fulfilled in bringing forth the true Emmanuel, God and Man in one person who should more fully reveal the Father, and in revealing the Father reveal himself; for 'tis said, of Herod and Pontius Pilate, "him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." Acts 2:23. Not by his coming in the flesh, and by his holy life and cruel sufferings and death, nor by his external presence or company, or eating and drinking with him, or handling, or touching him, or externally believing on him, by nothing of this nature was any good done spiritually upon the souls of men, nor had anyone his person transformed or regenerated. No, but the true coming of the Messiah and the fulfilling of all the promises concerning him, was by being made Emmanuel to us, and being made known, {by sheer revelation,} as the Christ, the Son of the living God. Matt.16:16-17. This is the life and mystery of the Word, and of Christ in being made flesh, and his true coming in the flesh; and he that denies Christ thus come in the flesh, the same is Antichrist, I Jn.2:22, although he do acknowledge the external coming and dying of Jesus Christ at Jerusalem. If Christ be not come in the sheer light of heavenly truth as

revealed and sealed to thy own heart, by the Spirit of truth, he is not yet come, as to thee; and there is no difference between thee and the external Jew, for thou hast never yet truly confessed him by receiving him, for he is not a Jew which is one outwardly, that is, that only makes a profession of Christ, but circumcision is that of the heart, wherefore saith the Apostle, "wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed, and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." I Cor.12:3.

This my brethren, is not done by an outward profession and conformity to some Gospel precepts, but when Christ is in us made Lord and King, and that nothing within man, nor anything without him sits above Christ, nor is esteemed comparable to him. This man and no other hath acknowledged Christ come in the flesh, and this man only saith, that Jesus is the Lord; otherwise he is Antichrist, and calleth Jesus accursed, and hath with the Jews scorched, disdained, hated him, spit at him, and crucified him, for there is no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Spirit of the Lord. I Cor.12:3. But all that are Jews, do to this day crucify the Lord of life, and say, we will not have this man rule over us, and cry out, away with him, and release unto us Barabbas, but let Jesus be crucified. John 18:40. And this is the language of all the world, except those who have received him. But whom say ye that I am? Thou art Jesus the Son of the living God, and verily those that can thus say experimentally, of them we may say that "flesh and blood hath not

revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven," for this is that truth which never any man could teach, but it is heavenly and spiritual, and herein lies the spirit, and the mystery, which is hid from ages, but revealed unto us only by the Spirit.

But all outward things, though they were really done, yet they are typical and representations still in all ages, more and more lively brought forth, and more near, and more like unto the truth, and whenever Christ came spiritually and was received, to them he was come, and was the Messiah, but all others were ignorant of him, and therefore crucified him; and therefore saith Peter, "I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers," Acts 3:17, for had they known him, they would not have crucified the Lord of life. Where Christ is thus come, there it may be said indeed, "it is finished," but where he is come but externally, it may well be said, it is not finished, for Christ is the author, the end, and the finisher of faith; and when he is come, then it is accomplished, completed, and it is finished, for there is nothing beyond him, nothing better than him, nothing higher nor brighter, nothing more glorious, nor more excellent, nor more full than him.

Beloved, let no man be offended at these things, and think that they go about to reproach or vilify anything done by Jesus Christ, who in all he did fulfilled his Father's will, and all things done by him or unto him, were done by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. Acts 4:28. But, all that we labour to do is more to exalt and magnify the Truth, and the mystery of the Gospel of which so

many, {though professing it,} are altogether ignorant of it, and set up idols instead of God, and worship shadows, and indeed are to them no more but fancies and images, for the substance; and {in that case} I know none that doth more reproach and vilify Christ in the flesh, than they, though they pretend so much for him; for himself often testifies, "it is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing," John 6:63, not those that eat a little bread, or sup a little wine, that eat or receive me, but "he that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood," for "my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed," and no man can give or take of this bread, but my heavenly Father only giveth you of that heavenly bread. 'Tis not the outward flesh of Christ or his external body which was the life of the world, but that same mind that was in Christ Jesus, Phil.2:5, is to be in as many as do receive him; this and no other is the life of the world, viz., Christ coming into the souls of men, discovering them to be of the seed of that evil one, and to be deceived, to be lost, to be in darkness, and unveiling the works of darkness, making manifest the works of the devil, and that he often dwells in the soul under a disguise, pretending himself to be Christ, when he is a devil and antichrist, and is no other but the father of lies. Now Christ simply professed outwardly, never accomplishes this; but when the Spirit doth take of the things of Christ and open them to our understanding, then is fulfilled that of the Apostle to the Galatians, "before whose eyes Jesus Christ have been evidently set forth crucified among you," or in

you. Gal.3:1. The seeing of him then or now crucified outwardly was nothing, that was but the shadow of the life and substance, but really to see themselves to be those who crucified the Lord, this was the lively crucifying, set out before them.

Then beloved, from hence it is clear, against all gainsayers, that it is of the incoming of the power of God in our spirits by which alone our freedom, deliverance and salvation is wrought. 'Tis not all the holding forth of a crucified Christ that the mere letter of the word can do, although all these things as set forth in the Scriptures are absolutely sure and certain, yet they are nothing to us, if we be not saved, delivered, and redeemed from our bondage and captivity. Therefore it is, that we see many thousands in the world that can profess Christ, and tell large stories of his external life and sufferings, who yet never felt the power of his death or life in themselves; for they can follow their own wills, and they can love the world, and extol and magnify themselves, and are as great in their own eyes as others who profess him not. Therefore Christ is not salvation nor deliverance to them, "we have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets," Lk.13:26, and we have cast out devils in thy name, Matt.7:22, we have cast away swearing, lying, whoring, and drunkenness, and we have taken up this duty and the other, and we have held forth thy name to the world, and we have been sober, grave and austere in our conversation; but for all this, Christ will profess, I never knew you, for ye are workers of iniquity. Matt.7:23. For Satan had

his full possession still, and ye are no other but painted sepulchers, fair and glorious indeed without, but full of all rottenness, stench, loathsomeness, and dead men's bones, and nothing can stink more. Therefore 'tis not holding forth the highest profession, or Christ in the letter, or externally, that sets us free, except Christ come into the heart and makes us free indeed; else 'tis not freedom indeed, 'tis but the profession and the show, but it must be even the same almighty power that raised up Jesus Christ from the dead, we having the same spirit of faith, as the Apostle saith, "we having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak; knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you," II Cor.4:13-14, and again in Romans 8:11, "but if the spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you."

And therefore how woefully hath the professing world been mistaken in all ages about Christ without them, and of Christ according to the letter! For if they do but ascent to that, and say that Christ suffered for them, and therefore they must apply him by an external believing, and so that he is made their righteousness, sanctification and redemption; and though they sin and fall, if they can but cast their eyes upon Christ suffering upon the cross, as the Israelites, by looking up upon the brazen serpent, John 3:14, they shall be healed and

pardoned, and saved; and yet we know withal, that all those things were done and were necessary for the accomplishing of the Father's purpose and the mind of God, but in all those things it was not finished; and yet here the world sticks and builds their religion, and this {they think} is as much as is required, and he that shall speak against it and say, they fall short of Jesus Christ, they cry out upon him as a seducer, and a heretic, and they are as mad against him, as they were against Paul, when he preached that they were no gods which were made by men, and are ready to burst out upon them as full of wrath and madness as the Jews upon Stephen, when he ripped them up and spoke home to them, "when they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth," Acts 7:54, yet for all that, know that all this believing will not serve thy turn, but it must be Christ manifested, seeing him by the eye of supernatural faith, as truly crucified and risen again, and sitting in heavenly places; else whatever thou talkest of Christ and of his miracles, if thou hast no witness, no evidence of the truth of them in thy own heart, what is all that he ever did, and what is all that he ever suffered to thee? It may be that thou mayest have a notion and an opinion of the things of God, and that thou hast them by history, and by relation or education, perhaps by example, or custom, or by tradition, or because generally all, or most men have received them for truths; but if thou hast no evidence of his mighty power exerted on thy helpless behalf, and a transforming efficacy in thine

own soul; how, or which way canst thou be a witness, that they are the very things thou has heard and seen; for all those outward things are but representations, figures, and patterns of the heavenly things themselves. Thou mayest indeed have a strong opinion, but yet no vital acquaintance with these heavenly things in thy own heart, that Jesus Christ hath freed and delivered thy soul.

Again, take notice hence, that as Christ delivers not but as the Spirit reveals and seals the merits of Christ to believing hearts; so it is not opinions, nor notions, nor forms, nor washings, nor disciplines, nor any external rules, or conformities that can work deliverance for the soul, but it must be God by the operation of his almighty power; for every man is spiritually in Sodom and in Egypt, Rev.11:8, where our Lord is spiritually and most truly crucified. And as the world is deceived in their forms and in their notions, thinking these shall help and save them, so likewise they take a great deal of satisfaction to themselves in making of books and catechisms, and prescribing of rules; in mending this way and the other form, and are still in mending and altering, and making their ways and forms better and more reformed, {as they think,} but alas, all this is nothing but man taking upon himself to cut, pare and mend the worship of God. This man thinks to cut out a neater way than his neighbor-gathered-church, and another thinks to mend and make his way more handsome than he, and another than both, for every one hath a doctrine, a psalm, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation,

and none done to the edification of the body of Christ. I Cor.14:26. For all this is but to mend and tear the seamless robe of Christ, in that man would fain be something, do something by his own wisdom and power, and his righteousness must not be slighted nor vilified, nor all his glory must not be laid in the dust; all these worshipers and pretenders to Christ, they live on the shadow, and rely on the shape and form of Christianity, but not on the life and power. How have men beat their wits, and laid their councils together to form and model religion, to make it pass for current in the world, that they may be accounted artists, pastors, and doctors according to that finely invented word 'orthodox' and some adding that blasphemous title 'divine.' They will prescribe Rules and make Articles of Faith for all men to believe and receive and conform to, and still they are new modeling to cut it and square it to be ever nearer the letter of the word as may be, and then they are pleased indeed, and others applaud them as wise master builders, and yet we may say of them as the Apostle Peter saith, they are those "which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness," "these are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever. For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them 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 is he brought in bondage." II Pet.2:15-19. They are always learning and teaching others to do this and do that, and yet they themselves are the servants of lust and corruption. Therefore be not deceived, but if they cry unto you "see here; or, see there," Lk.17:23, go after such a man, and such a man, join with this Church, or that Fellowship, and you shall find Christ, but go not after them, believe them not, for they do but deceive; they cannot deliver nor redeem themselves. And therefore this point is clear, that none but Jesus Christ could ever free the soul, or deliver it from bondage; and this is a truth against which the gates of hell shall never prevail. Matt.16:18.

Therefore we may conclude, that whatever spirit goes out any other way, or to any other thing to find rest, or liberty, or redemption by and only in Jesus Christ, he is deceived, for it is only in Immanuel, God with us; there is no Redeemer, no Deliverer, no Saviour but only He. All the Saints who have all experience thereof in themselves, know this to be true and give out their witness, that in vain did they run out to anything else, and these only are the true waiters for the kingdom of God, and the consolation of Israel, Lk.2:25, here was the true waiting and the true using of ordinances. Oh that men did but know what this waiting upon the Father was, that they were brought to the realization that there was no life but in Christ, no power but in Christ, that they had no wisdom nor goodness, nor

that they could never be delivered but by and in the power, light and life of Christ.

Oh that men knew in experience, as they pretend in words and notions, that all judgment is committed to the Son, John 5:22, and that in Him alone is the power of life and death, and that he alone has the keys to unlock the mysteries of Salvation; then whether {if they were persuaded of this} could the heart of man go for relief? If it saw its own utter emptiness, nothingness, and that all creatures and all ordinances, and forms were broken cisterns, Jer.2:13, how could they depend and wait on them? If then Jesus Christ be the only fullness, the only power, the only riches, the only joy, the only treasure, then would they sell all to buy this One Pearl. Matt.13:46. Mens running out to this thing and to that is because they are unsatisfied, and are in want of peace and rest, and this makes them go out and walk through dry places to find rest, but can find none, Lk.11:24, this want makes them heap to themselves so many varieties of things to give them peace; their souls fly to and again from flower to flower, but cannot rest anywhere; they fly to this duty, and to that form, but they are all empty, they are no other but dry places.

Oh wonderful to see how that Satan hath deluded the sons of men, and all is, because they cannot be content to sit down in their own poverty, to see themselves naked and miserable, and then to wait upon him, who would certainly come in due time, with true peace, riches, rest, power, righteousness, satisfaction, fullness, and whatever

is good. But because men are not able to stand in the sight of their own nothingness, how doth Satan continually carry them out, for they cannot endure to stay within to see themselves; but either they are carried out to lust, or luxury, or wantonness, or drinking, or company and the like, and if that will not hide and cover them, so that the mouth of conscience will be stopped, then it runs out to duties, and forms, and ways of worship, and things that will do it, when alas they are mere delusions, and things which the soul hath invented to play withal, to get peace and liberty by, to make it forget its misery, poverty, and emptiness; but the end of this peace is death and misery, and the end of this liberty is confusion. "What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?" Rom.6:21. But oh, happy is that soul that can say from heart experience and not only in words, that these are all miserable comforters, Job.16:2, and that all below and besides Christ gender to death and bondage; and that he hath found the bed too broad, and covering too narrow, so that he could not wrap himself therein, Isa.28:20, and that he is resolved never to run out to anything to relieve or stay his spirit, but only to the riches, power, and fullness of Christ. Not to the gross lusts of men, nor to the riches of the world, to honor, or praise, or the like; nor to the religion of the world, nor of the Nation, as ye know many usually do, and if that will not do, then they fly higher, and they will be of the strictest sort of the Pharisees, and join themselves with men of learning, gravity, and religion, and men esteemed

Orthodox and sound in the Faith, and he will follow their ways, in hearing and reading, and praying, and walking without offense, and the like; but all these do but sow to the flesh, and of the flesh can reap nothing but corruption. Gal.6:8.

Do but examine thyself, although thou hast joined thyself here and there, and gone from one Church society to another, and put thy neck under the yoke of such a form or such a religion, what was the cause? Was it not thy fears, thy terrors within? Or was it not, that you may cover thy filthy and corrupt heart from the sight of others? Hast thou not for all this conformity, the same heart, the same nature still, though thou hast hid and covered it by these inventions; and when the fire hath still broke out, and thy misery and undone condition could not be concealed, hast not thou said within thyself, is there not some other way, some better remedy; is there no better physicians than these? I have joined myself to the Presbyterians, and I have found their way too short, that would not do; I have come over to the Independents and thought that way seemed before, a better, and more refined way, yet it is too narrow, for I cannot wrap myself in that covering. Well, says thy heart, is there no other, nor no better physicians? So I could but secure myself and prevent this fire and this burning, I would be content to do anything, and take up every yoke, and submit to the strictest forms. Then say the Anabaptists, come over to us and we shall give thee satisfaction; we have the true Baptism, according to the Word, none so near the Word of God as we. But when thou

hast done all these things to find rest, and to quench the fire which began to burn, and to hide thy deformities from men; do you think there is anything of Christ in all this? Is not this rather to run away, and turn thy back upon Christ, and to live by thy own wits and inventions, and by thy own power, merely to prevent death and destruction, and the losing of thy own wisdom and righteousness, and that thou mayest not come into the light of God, lest it should discover thy darkness and blackness.

And now, seeing these things are so, how dare any of the sons of men boast of these things, when they cannot free nor deliver the soul, but rather increase their misery, and lengthen out their bondage. I say, dare any man stand forth and call these the Ordinances of Christ, as they use them? What greater, what higher blasphemy! An Ordinance of God is a thing of another nature, wherein the wisdom and power of God is effectual to bring in the heart, to cause man to renounce his own wisdom, power, &c., to empty him of all his resources and goodness, and to cause the soul to submit to the Righteousness of Faith; else it is but an ordinance of man, and the word is but a dead letter, and it is nothing else but the word of man, except it come with authority and power upon the heart, bringing every high thought, and every imagination into the obedience of Christ. II Cor.10:5. "But unto the wicked God saith, what hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?" Psal.50:16. Truly friends, there are many pretenders to Christ, and the world

makes a great noise of serving, and worshiping him; and there is a great talk everywhere of fearing God, in notion, and opinion, and delusion. For who else more does persecute and crucify Christ, and hate, and oppose the true power of godliness, and the teachings of the Spirit, and the work of Christ in redeeming and delivering the souls than these men?

Therefore beloved, these things that men so much cleave to and magnify cannot be the rest of a Christian, nor the Ordinances of Christ {as used by them} but of Antichrist, because they may be used, and lived in, and admired, and prized, and yet they are without any power; they let those that use them and live in them to be carried away with them, II Tim.3:6, pretending liberty, but themselves being the servants of corruption, II Pet.2:19, and enemies to the power of Christ, and the life of Christianity; and are acted by antichrist, who as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God, II Thes.2:4, though he be a devil and antichrist, yet he would not be known, for all his policy is to conceal himself, and be thought to be righteous, pure, and to be the very Christ, the Son of the living God. May not one be dipped and receive water baptism and yet be a sorcerer? Acts 8:13. Yes, was not Simon Magnus so? May not one be at breaking of bread with Christ, and yet be a devil? Yes, for so was Judas, though he was not there when Christ gave them his body to eat, and his blood to drink, which was himself, which he gave to all the rest, yet he was at supper with him, as the Paschal lamb, and externally broke bread with him.

May not a man be full of good words and make great professions of strictness, and yet be far from the kingdom of heaven? Matt.23:14. Yes, for so were the Pharisees, they were the only learned men, and the interpreters of the Scriptures, and used much and long praying, and uttering many outward good words, sweet and smooth in their carriage, and were very strict as to the outward commands, and were generally taken for the holiest and the gravest, and the soberest of men; if any lend to them, they would lend to them again, yet know what Christ says of them, that they were but painted hypocrites and compares them to loathsome and stinking sepulchers. Matt.23:27. As the Apostle saith concerning charity, though a man go never so far in actions of love, though he give his body to be burned, and have not true love, all is nothing. I Cor.13:3. Men that may come so far as to burn for religion, and yet have nothing of Christ at all. Therefore these outward external actions of men do not truly declare a Christian, whether be activated from the power of Christ exerted on his behalf, for he may do the same acts by the way of imitation, that a true saint may do.

Therefore beloved, it necessitates us very much to discover and find out wherein the truth lies, how we may know it from all forms, shadows, pictures, patterns; to know that which is true, real, unchangeable, and cannot deceive; for there can be no true peace, nor no real satisfaction but where Christ revealed to the soul, were all of man ceases to act, and he be made as dead, as nothing, as

emptied to all things in themselves, so that they cannot say nor think that they have any wisdom, power, or goodness, or that by them they can act anything toward the worship or acceptance of the Father, but are reprobate in themselves to every good work. Thou who hast chosen any other saviour, any other deliverer, any other help but Jesus Christ, where wilt thou appear when the Lord shall come to judgment? Then all thy saviours will forsake thee, and not one stand by thee. When thou hast said of thy forms, and fellowships, and thy ordinances {as thou callest them} these be thy gods that will save thee, Exod.32:4, these shall give thee rest and peace; and though with your tongues you do not say thus, yet this is the very end of thy cleaving to them, to be rest for thy spirit here, and to save thee from the wrath to come. What is all this, but to rob Christ of his Glory, and to set the crown upon thy own inventions? And it is true we in words say Christ is all in all, yet in practice we must bring in something of man, he must act and he must do something, else he cannot expect that Christ should do his part; how then is Christ all in all? How is he the author and finisher of faith? Heb.12:2. These are therefore those which Christ and the Prophet speaks of, that have eyes and see not, and ears and hear not, and hearts which cannot understand.

Now if thou wert able {I say} to stand in this light of God, and there rest quiet, and sit down under hell, and wrath, and covered with damnation, and the curse, as being thy right and thy portion, this were the way to come to life, this is Christ his way,

for life always springs out of death, and light out of darkness, and fullness out of emptiness, and all sufficiency out of nothingness; and this is the great mystery of the Gospel, which the whole world, and all literal and great knowing professors, neither will nor can understand, because they cannot endure the light of God to destroy, confound and undo them, for they are seeking out any covering to keep them from this discovering light, for they must be something in themselves, and hate this making nothing, and would by no means that their deeds should be made manifest, nor the foulness of their hearts laid open.

And know also that this light is within thee, if thou wouldest let it shine out, there is a voice within thee saying, "this is the way, walk in it," Isa.30:21, so that thou needest not say in thine heart, "who shall ascend into heaven, that is, to bring Christ down from above; or, who shall descend into the deep, that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead, but what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith, which we preach." Rom.10:6-8. But man he is still looking to external things, and thinking he must be doing something to procure peace and life, or else he thinks that if he can but believe on an external Jesus Christ, who died at Jerusalem, and fetch Christ from the grave, or bring him down from above, this is his righteousness, but what is all this, but the righteousness of the Law, which Moses describes to be on this wise, "that the man which doeth those things shall live by them." Rom.10:5. And this covenant of works, man can never get from under,

for the law was given to show man his weakness and inability to do the least, and this never works effectually until Christ come in with his light to make man see himself as he is, poor, wretched, blind and naked, to slay man and to make him miserable to himself, for he is miserable, and lost, and undone, but he hates to see it, or acknowledge it, and by running from the discovering light, man thinks to save himself, and to avoid hell and wrath, and the pit of eternal condemnation; when indeed this very thing is his misery, and death, and condemnation; that he must be something in his own esteem, and he cannot lose his life; yet all this is no other, but seeking to make a covenant with death and hell, but this covenant will be broken, and will {and does in time} break in upon him, to his everlasting condemnation, and none of all his coverings, shelters, forms, or any of his fortifications, nor his strongholds will secure him or keep off the deluge of wrath and vengeance due unto him.

Now Jesus Christ being, as I said, nigh thee, in thy mouth, in thy heart, he by his light, as thou dost hearken to his teaching, does direct and guide thee in all thy ways. Psal.91:11. From whence come those secret whisperings and checks within thee? When thou thinkest to do this and that evil, and it tells thee, no, do it not, for it is evil to wrong or hate thy brother, to persecute him, no says this light, "all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them," Matt.7:12, and thou ought not to do the least hurt to any creature, because thou wouldest not be hurt thyself. He did

evil {thou wouldst verily think} if he should do so to thee, and is it not the same in thee? This very light in thine own breast, as lit by the flames, and in direct harmony with our perfect law of liberty, will be a sufficient judge and teacher, if thou wouldst but still mind it, and eye it, and be guided by what it teaches you. This light would bring thee to see how weak thy strength is, how much folly is in all thy wisdom, what confusion is in all thy peace, what rottenness of bones in all thy health, what poverty in all thy riches, what sorrow and misery in all thy joy and pleasure. But this is thy condemnation, that thou wilt not be condemned, but as this light within thee discovers darkness, thou art still using thy utmost inventions to cover thyself, and make thee seem otherwise, namely, good, holy, wise, righteous, and worthy of all praise and admiration; and this is the epidemical misery of all the sons of men; as they cry out against this light and hate it, and persecute it, and those that profess it and hold it forth. No blacker devil to man than that this light would show them themselves. And in all ages, those whom God hath made instrumental to hold this light forth in expositional and experimental truth, they have been hated and persecuted by the most and greatest professors of truth; no names black enough to smite them with, nor no death bad enough for to cut them off by, to express their inexpressible hatred and bitterness to them, to the utmost of their power. What, to take away their life, their peace, their glory, their god, their goodness, nay the very crown of their glory. Away with such a fellow from the earth,

for 'tis not fit that he should live. Acts 22:22. And all this comes from hence, that man dare not stand in his own condemnation, he dare not let this light shine on his works, because they know that they are evil, therefore they must hate it, be preaching against it, cry out against it as a damnable doctrine, and call the professors thereof Seducers, Antinomians, Quakers, Jesuits, anything to make them the most odious to the sons of men, and they themselves resolve to smother it in themselves, and will not be guided or directed by it, for they are resolved not to be weak, not to be poor, not to be fools, not to be vile, but to make the world still think that they are wise, strong, holy, sober, grave, regular in all that they do, and obedient to the very smallest and strictest rules of Christ, and he that shall tax them, or convince or declare otherwise of them, is to them a fiend, a serpent and a devil.

Lastly, from this oneness of the Deliverer, we may conclude, as there is but One Deliverer, so there is but one way of deliverance; though there may be in the world thousands of inventions of men, some worshiping this way, and some that, some after one form, and some after another; yet this is certain, there is but one Deliverer, and one way of deliverance. As the Apostle saith, there is a unity in the spirit, which is the bond of peace, for "there is one body, and one spirit," one Lord; that is, One Deliverer, "one faith, one baptism," that is, one way of deliverance, "one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." Eph.4:4-6. One Saviour, and only one way of salvation; and

there is no more, and this way is Christ alone! Christ in bringing forth the light of God, to empty, kill, and destroy the glory and wisdom of man, to make a man as poor as Job, having lost everything, and lying upon the dunghill, full of boils, scabs, and sores from the crown of the head to the soles of the feet; and as miserable as Lazarus, with his sores, which the dogs came and licked, and to make them lie begging for the smallest crumbs to relieve them. Whosoever thou art, if thy deliverance be not wrought this way, let me tell thee freely that thou never hast been truly delivered, however thou dost flatter thyself to the contrary. You may talk of forms, and disciplines, and dippings, and of eating and drinking with Christ; and breaking of bread, and of baptism and all other external things. But this alone is the true Baptism, and the true eating of Christ his body, and the drinking his blood. This is the one way wrought by this One Deliverer; and whoever he be that lives in a multiplicity of forms, and diversity of worships, or holds these things forth as Christ's way, without this baptism of the Spirit, he holds forth a lie, and a delusion, and misery and wrath and desolation of spirit will come in the end; for this is that one, and only way which Jesus Christ hath used in all the Saints from the beginning of the world, and will do to the end to bring man low in himself, that he alone may be exalted. As there is but One God and Father of all; but one Husband, who is rich unto all; so there is but one Church, but one spouse, but one body; and this one spouse, body, or church are all joined, married, or brought home to Christ but in

this One Way. And there is but one power, but one wisdom, but one strength, whereby all the people of God were and ever shall be delivered.

Beloved, what a stir does all the world make about setting up a world of several inventions, with a variety of washings, rules, dippings, and forms; and every individual fellowship says that we are in the right way, our way is the best way, and we are nearest the rule, and the primitive practice; and our way is the way of peace and rest; such and such, they mist the rule of the word in this, and in that, but our way is the most exact, and most perfect of all; all which, is no other but that which Christ foretells shall come, when they say, "lo here is Christ; or, lo there," Lk.17:20, but Christ's command is, go not after them, for the kingdom of God comes not with observation, nor consists in outward observances, nor in eating or drinking, nor in dipping in water, nor in meats and drinks, nor in obeying the commands and rules of men, as touch not, taste not, handle not, which all perish in the using, Col.2:21-22, for all things of that nature are far below those spiritual things in which consists the kingdom of God, which is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, and being baptized with the Spirit, and with fire. Rom.14:17. There is but one eating of Christ's body and drinking his blood, and this is no other but what is given by Jesus Christ himself, and whosoever eats not, nor drinks not of this, he it is that eats damnation, not discerning of the Lord's body, I Cor.11:29, and though men eat and drink, and break bread together never so often,

and be never so constant and observant therein, yet the Apostle says plainly, this is not to eat the Lord's body, but 'tis only the eating of the hidden manna that can nourish to everlasting life, 'tis only the eating of the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God that can make us live forever. Rev.2:7. And of this bread all the saints do eat, and what one saint is fed with, the same are all saints; and, what a saint lives by, he eats daily, and this is his food and nourishment, the bread that feeds them is not eating for an hour, or the like, but forever, this is his daily food by which he is nourished and fed to the kingdom of God. He does not one day feed like a saint, and another day like a devil, he does not only examine himself to eat a little bit of bread, and drink a sip of wine, but he daily examines himself, and he daily and continually eats of this bread, and drinks of this cup, for they being many are one bread, and one body, for they are all partakers of that one true bread, I Cor.10:17, and whatever they do, and whenever they eat, they do all in remembrance of him. Lk.22:19. They live upon Christ in all things, they see him to be their life, their motion, their rule and ruler, their righteousness, wisdom, and complete redemption; they see that there is not one creature that acts or moves, nor is there one change of providence, but they see Christ do it more truly than they see the creature doth it. They see Christ the sovereign Lord and Commander, ruling and doing all things as in themselves, so in the whole creation of heaven and earth, and this is that they live by and feed upon, they have such heavenly

meat to eat, which none knows the virtue thereof, but only they who eat it, such meat it is the world knows not of, nor can conceive of. And therefore all the world, whether professing Christ or not, they not eating of this divine food, they starve, and die, and eat nothing else but death, the curse and damnation; and yet what a noise, and a bustling there hath been in all ages about the forms and shadow of things, and what censoring and condemning each other for not having a uniformity, which can never be; for they only dwelling in the letter, and upon external things, they see not the spirit, and the mystery, and the life and the true bread; but those who eat of the true bread, they are one body, and one bread, for they are all partakers of that one bread, I Cor.10:17, with them there is a unity and a uniformity, and nowhere else there can be; of which men have heard a talk and a report, and they speak of such a thing, but they know not what it means, nor how to come by it, for, none can come at it, but those to whom this bread is given, and they only can say that his body is bread indeed, and his blood is drink indeed. John 6:55. And these alone can give witness to the true communion of saints, and know the happiness and true pleasure thereof, and what heavenly sweetness is therein, all harmonizing and giving testimony to this One Alone Great Deliverer. No unity like this unity, nor love, nor peace like this peace, which they have in Jesus Christ their Only Deliverer. I Cor.10:16.

FINIS

THE SAINTS PERFECT FREEDOM
Or

**Liberty in Christ Asserted, in opposition to
all yokes of Bondage.**

SERMON II

**Preached by Mr. Webster at All Hallows
Lombard Street, London.**

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." Gal 5:1.

We have already spoken something from these words according as God was pleased to give them forth to us. The Apostle in the former chapter having spoken of the difference between the two seeds, showing that the one that was of the heir, the son of the promise, and the seed of the freewoman, which was to inherit all the blessings; the other was the son of the bondwoman, who was always in bondage with her children, and was to be cast out and rejected, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. Now the Apostle with these Galatians had taken great pains, and he had, as it were travailed in birth with them to bring them to Christ, Gal.4:19, and to have him formed in them, and they being made children of the freewoman, he comes in this verse to exhort them

to stand fast in that deliverance wherewith Christ had made them free, and to stand fast under the true obedience of Christ, and not to be entangled or to give ear to any other doctrine; for all doctrine, and all government was no other but a yoke of bondage. And the point we then stood upon was this, that Jesus Christ was the only deliverer from bondage; wherein we showed that every believer was Christ's true freeman, and that no man was ever delivered and set free from bondage, but only and alone by Jesus Christ. And we spake something to show you how Christ was the deliverer, whom I showed you was Emmanuel, God with us, Isa.7:14, he being manifested and brought forth on the behalf of his children, that he was the hope of their glory, Col.1:27, and never till then; for man is set free by no other, nor any less power than the power of the Father, even the very same power which raised up Christ from the grave, Eph.1:19-20, the very same sets every believer at liberty; and was that which freed him from his bondage, broke off his shackles, loosed him from his chains, and delivered him out of prison. We showed hence the folly and madness of all those who went about, or had any hope or expectation of freedom by any other way but only by Jesus Christ alone; and how vain all the endeavor of man was, till Christ was pleased to set him free; for where the Spirit of Christ is, II Cor.3:17, there is true liberty and nowhere else; and this liberty will abide, and men may stand fast in it, but all other liberty is but a delusion, and will fail and come to nothing. Whatever peace, or power, or

righteousness is brought into any soul by any other means, it will fail and deceive him that puts confidence therein. But were Christ has set man free, there is real freedom, and his work will abide and shall receive a reward. I Cor.3:14.

In the next place we showed this Deliverer, that all his works were spiritual, that they were not wrought in a carnal and fleshly way. It was not external forms, nor outward rules, nor disciplines, nor gathering into fellowships, nothing of this nature could set the soul free, but only the infinite power of Jesus Christ himself. And having laid these down, we would now come nearer to ourselves, that every soul here may examine himself, to see what witness he can bear to this doctrine, whether they can testify, and bear out their witness in experience, that Christ hath been their Deliverer or not, and whether this deliverance hath been wrought in them. I do not here come to ask any, what he can say in words, or what he hath by notion, by reading, or hearing, or by custom or education, but art thou come to thy deliverance by the Spirit and Power of Christ? Hast thou found in thyself, that all thy wisdom, power, endeavors, all thy rules and strict walkings could never deliver thy soul from one lust, but that thou wast forced to renounce all as weak and abominable, being utterly lost and stripped naked in thyself, being made as weak as any other man, Judges 16:17, and that all thy power, working, acting, reforming, was but a mere forced thing, and nothing therein done by the power of Love and by the Spirit of Christ as wrought in thee; but all thy glorious

shows of faith, and holiness, and strictness in conversation were but mere shows and pictures, and that thou thyself wert as sounding brass, and as a tingling cymbal, I Cor.13:1, and all thy profession and religion mere air, apparition, emptiness, and in truth a lie and no such thing! However thou hast been carried out upon divers considerations, and hast had many glorious speculations, and high expressions, which to thyself and others have seemed rare and glorious; yet, I say, except thou canst make these things out, as done and acted in thyself by Jesus Christ alone, be assured that all thy words and high profession is nothing! But, hath Jesus Christ been thy Saviour, thy Deliverer? Hath he opened thy eyes, and thy ears, raised thee from death to life? Hath thy ankle bones received strength from him? Are those miracles {spoken of} which he accomplished in the days of flesh done spiritually in thee? Are thy bones broken, and thy soul escaped from the snare of the hunter? Hast thou really seen thyself lost, undone, and made miserable? Hast thou seen that thyself wast in captivity, and that thou wast deaf, and dumb, and blind, and lame? That thou wert shut up in darkness and death, and that there was none in heaven and earth able to help thee in the least, but thou seeing thyself so miserable and hopeless, that thou wert at thy wits end, with no help at all appearing? If this has not been thy condition, though thou couldest speak ever so exactly of the letter and of the history, and though thou dost submit to the highest forms, and to the soberest, and most strict course of life, being

constant and austere in observing thy rules for hearing, and reading, and set times of prayer, and a constant examination of thyself, to keep thyself up to the strict letter of the rule; alas poor soul, all this is nothing, though thou couldest speak with the tongues of men and angels, I Cor.13:1, and pray with such sweet words and language as might ravish all the men of the earth; yet if thou dost not find Christ Jesus, breaking every bond and loosing every yoke, and that no one in Heaven or Earth could do it but he himself, thou wert never yet delivered, but are still under wrath, death and bondage.

The chief thing that every soul is to mind in reading and hearing is to examine whether the same thing be wrought in them. If that which we find in the letter be not made good in us, what good are these words to us? We must see how Christ is crucified and buried, and how he is risen and raised from the dead in our experience of his grace and power; the chief thing, I say, is to look into our own hearts. All generally that hold forth a profession of Christ say in words that Christ is the Deliverer, but that is not the same thing; but is he the Deliverer to thee? Is that glorious Messiah which was promised, and the Deliverer out of Zion come with power into thy soul? Hath he exalted himself there? Hath he made bare his arm, and been a glorious conqueror in thee? Is he the King of kings and Lord of lords in thee? "And so all Israel shall be saved; as it is written, there shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." Rom.11:26.

Beloved, all preaching, and reading, and praying, and duties are to be to this end, to examine the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, accompanied by observing thine own heart and affections; that is, thy inward man, and thy spiritual relation to this one who is altogether glorious! Thou joinest thyself in fellowship, and walking conformable to all thy rules, and thou art washed, and thou dost break bread with them, and herein you think that you have obeyed the commands of Christ; but alas this is nothing, if Jesus Christ hath not joined thee to himself and made thee a member of his spiritual body. What good do all these things? For by all these outward actings thou dost not discern the Lord's body. To discern the Lord's body is to eat him, to be united to him, to be made one spirit with him, that so he may be truly made a Saviour and a Deliverer to thee; to know that he had taken thy soul out of the mire and clay, and out of the horrible pit, Psal.40:2; and that thou canst indeed say that it was an horrible pit, and that thy soul stuck fast, and thou hadst no hope whatsoever to get forth; and if Christ hath set thee free, thou knowest full well, that no power could of done this but his alone, only the same power which raised Jesus Christ from the grave, and no less. "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what

is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power." Eph.1:17-19. And thou, whoever thou art, who hast experience of this effectual work of grace, thou art in one of these two conditions, either thou art set free and delivered by the power of Jesus Christ, or else thou seest thyself in the pit, and in straights, in misery, and a hopeless condition, and art fighting and groaning for deliverance, and waiting until Christ doth deliver thee. And if thou indeed art in either of these two conditions, then thou art in a safe and good condition; but if thou hast been in this misery and condemnation, and thou hast used all means to put this off, and have sought out deliverance for thyself, and by thy own wisdom, strength, conformity and holiness hast got thyself a covering by anything under heaven, then Jesus Christ never was a deliverer to thee, but though thou thinkest thyself delivered, yet thou art for all thy peace, and for all thy coverings, under a worse bondage than before.

Therefore I say, that I would have every soul before me examine himself, whether he be a true seeker of deliverance, which is to examine in which of these conditions he is in, whether he has been under these terrors and death, in hell and condemnation, seeing himself lost and miserable, and that instead of seeing any wisdom, or power, or righteousness in himself, that he hath seen and doth still see himself to be a mere sink of sin, and a cage of unclean birds, Rev.18:2, and that in him is nothing but weakness, wickedness, and all

abominations. Let me ask thee, when thou wast in this condition, whether didst thou run to for help? Whether to dumb idols that could not help, that have eyes and see not, and ears and hear not, or to the living God, in whom alone is help and deliverance? And if thou art at present in this condition and distress, thou art as one that lies waiting at the pool till the Angel stir the waters, John 5:4, expecting when Christ will put thee in. Thou wilt not run to this duty and that form to ease thyself, and to allay these terrors, and to quench these flames; but if help come not, there thou dost wait, and there dost thou stand, and remain in this condemnation, and goest up and down sighing and mourning all the day long, and thou findest that it is not in the power of all the ministers under heaven, not in all the forms and rules that can be invented, but only in the tender mercy and goodwill of Jesus Christ. All other ways that thou dost look upon but as going out to Asher, and to Egypt, and to seek after dumb idols that have a picture of eyes and ears, and hands, promising as though they could help, but they can neither see nor hear, nor help; though to others they appear glorious and goodly things, they bless themselves in using them, yet to thee they are dead, cold and helpless; so that now here thou dost wait and sit alone like the pelican in the desert, Psal.102:6, and here thou dost mourn and moan thy condition, and with David thou hast no rest in thy bones because of thy sins. Psal.38:3. Try thyself now, in which is thy condition; if in neither of these, thou art in a most sad and miserable condition indeed, and so much

the more sad, because thou seest it not; or it may be that thou hast cured thyself, and healed thyself, but thou are not cured nor healed, but the prophets "have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, {as the prophet speaks,} saying, peace, peace; when there is no peace," Jer.6:14, and have not thoroughly discovered their iniquity to turn away their captivity.

Oh, that men were but to come to this condition, to be made sensible of their misery, that they did but really see that they were in Babylon in captivity. Oh then what mourning, what hanging their harps upon the willows, sitting down by the rivers of Babylon weeping and crying out. Oh how shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land! And wishing and saying, "happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones." Psal.137:1-9. Will the ox lowgh when he hath a fodder? Job 6:5. Until they have deliverance they cannot but mourn, and none can deliver them but the Lion of the tribe of Judah. Rev.5:5. To such a soul only is Jesus Christ precious; others may talk of him, and make a great profession of Jesus Christ in the letter, and talk of Christ dying at Jerusalem, and of believing, and salvation by him, but they cannot love him until Jesus Christ be Emmanuel, a Saviour to them, Matt.1:23; then and never before can these elders throw down their crowns before the Lamb, saying, thou only art worthy to receive honour, and glory, and power, for thou only hast redeemed us by thy blood. Rev.4:10-11. Thou seest that thou canst not so much as move hand or foot to help thyself;

all thy tears, thy prayers are nothing but as Christ prays and intercedes on thy behalf, and the Spirit helping our infirmities, "making intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." Rom.8:26. This take as the first difference in examination between those that are wounded, sick, and condemned; the one, he is so, and he can go to no other but only to Jesus Christ, to be healed and saved. The others, when they are so, they can find help and rest in man, in means, and ordinances, and fellowships, and reformations, and the better ordering of their lives, by their own effort and strength. The other finds that there is no resting, no sitting still in anything below Christ, but they hunger and thirst, and wait the good pleasure of Jesus Christ, and when the Spirit which "bloweth where it listeth," John 3:8, will blow upon their hearts. They are like a hungry man, whose stomach doth so know that he cannot rest without food, and like a thirsty man who cannot be satisfied without drink. It is not husks nor shadows, nor pictures, nor idols that will serve his turn, but he must have real food, he must have Christ's body which is meat indeed and Christ's blood which is drink indeed. John 6:55. He must have the eternal God help him, or all he can do is nothing to him.

Beloved, were men but come to this, to be made really miserable, and truly in bonds, which men so much speak of, but so little feel, ye need not direct them this way and that way, ye need not bid them cry or pray, or run or hear or the like, for their very misery would constrain them thereunto;

whereas otherwise men take up these things for form, and for custom, and complement, and to be thought religious, and to quiet their consciences and the like; but they would be like the blind man, which notwithstanding they hindered him, and reproved him, and bid him not pray, nor cry, yet the sense of his blindness made him cry out after Jesus Christ, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me." Luke 18:38. If men did but find, see, and feel the burning within them, and the sting of the fiery serpent, they need not be bid to look up to the brazen serpent, John 3:14, for sheer necessity would direct their spiritual eyesight to view Christ alone.

Secondly, if thou art a true seeker of deliverance, and the true waiter upon the Lord, thou wilt abominate and scorn all other deceivers, but only this only deliverer Jesus Christ; all others, thou looketh upon them as physicians of no value, Job 13:4, for thou seest there is but one Teacher, but one Counselor, but one Saviour.

They will not go after them that say, "lo here is Christ, and lo there," Matt.24:23, in this way, and in that form, saying, join with us, we are in the best way, here you shall find rest and satisfaction; but they see really and are fully convinced, that there is nothing else but the eternal Father making out himself through his Son, even Christ manifested in the flesh, "justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." I Tim.3:16. And says the Apostle, "even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world, but

when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.” Gal.4:3-6.

So that it is clear, that soul that truly seeks deliverance, it sees Jesus Christ only to be able to deliver, that there is nothing less than him, nothing besides him. But herein lies the misery of all the sons of men, for they pretend to seek Jesus Christ and think that they have found him, because they have heard of a Jesus Christ who died at Jerusalem; and though they have no union with them, yet if they can externally believe in him, that’s enough, though they never receive any virtue from him, nor was he ever formed in them, the hope of glory, Col.1:27, and herein generally most men professing Christ sit down and rest, and bless themselves, who have never yet seen truly their own misery, how they are departed from the fountain of living waters, and how they have dug to themselves broken cisterns which are empty and dry, Jer.2:13, which can hold no water; and in their extremity, hither they come to their own cisterns, thinking to refresh themselves, and quench their thirst, but they are empty and dry; and so many men who are great professors of religion dig wells for themselves, but they are not the wells of salvation. Isa.12:3. Oh my dear friends! My heart bleeds to think how these men delude themselves with golden dreams; as they pretend great love to Christ, and say, he is their hope, and

their help, and that they will wait upon him and cast their souls upon him, when as they do but as it is spoken in the Psalms, "they returned and enquired early after God. And they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer. Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant." Psal.78:34-37.

How do these men keep a great stir, and make a great noise for their religion, and who seem more zealous than they, or more eager for worship; who more flattering and smooth in their expressions and say thy servants, thy servants; and who seem to be more affected with dishonour to Christ, and are very much offended at errors and heresies and blasphemies? But I fear, and not without demonstration enough, that they do but flatter Christ with their mouths when their hearts are far from him; says Jehu, "come with me, and see my zeal for the LORD," II Ki.10:16, but we know that his zeal was but for himself; and so these men are offended if anything be said to touch them or their ways, pretending dishonour to Christ, and readily crying out blasphemy, because it reproves their blindness or ignorance, showing that they are the blind leaders of the blind, with both falling into the ditch, Lk.6:39; and so do all out of pretense of love to Christ and zeal for the Lord of hosts.

If so be it were so, that they did make God their zeal, and Christ their rest and their dependence as they would have all believe, what is the reason

that these men professing themselves servants to Christ, and messengers from Christ, what's the reason, I say, that they are so in love with the world? Who more hunting after honour, after riches, after applause, and in all things seeking themselves as much or more than others making no profession? What's the reason that they must come forth as messengers sent out from Christ, and yet they must have two coats, contrary to their Master's command, Mark 6:9, and they must have their script and their bag, and who more taking care to provide for the body, for food and raiment and the like, and yet they say that they are doing the Lord's work, yet dare not trust their Master for outward things. Shall any man think that these men have trusted their souls with him, who dare not trust their bodies with him, but they must have so much a year, and they must bargain with the people or else they will not work. How say you, are not these those that make merchandise of the word of God? Certainly these men can never make out themselves as messengers from Christ, approving themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God, II Cor.4:2, neither hath he commissioned them, nor given them their errand, nor revealed his secrets to them, but they run before they are sent, and say, thus saith the Lord, when he sent them not, neither have they seen any vision, Jer.14:14, as the prophet saith. Certainly these are not the men that preach the word of God out of a ready mind, and constraint of love, depending on the Lord for their recompense and reward, but for filthy lucre sake. I Pet.5:2. These

men never yet received the truth in the love of it in themselves, but preach for honour, and for praise, and because it is a place in credit, and this delights them, and is very pleasing to the flesh, and because they are had in honour, and so much they will speak forth and no more than that which will stand with those things; and they dare not venture either their honour or riches, or credit, &c., upon the account of truth, no not for their lives.

Are these of Paul's mind, who cried out, "woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" I Cor.9:16. But these men, if they can have but the accommodations that attend a minister in these days, as riches and honour, and praise and full tables, and entertainments, and feasting and uppermost seats and the like, they will do well enough for dispensing the Gospel, and do that warily and tenderly enough without prejudicing their own esteem or offending others. And are not these men faithful stewards, think ye, {as they would fain be esteemed,} that can thus order their ways and keep up themselves, and dare not commit themselves nor their works to the Lord, nor to the authority and power of truth in the hearts of men? I am much grieved to see these things, and yet who seem more zealous than these men, who say that they are doing the Lord's work? Just so did the Pharisees up and down, whom Christ so sharply reproves for hypocrites, and blindness, and covetousness, and deceivers, &c., being blind leaders of the blind, and both falling into the ditch.

But the reason of all this is, because these men were never yet emptied in themselves, they never took up the cross of Christ or denied themselves, Matt.10:38, but are rich, and full, and holy, and wise, and sober, and very strict, {as they would be thought, and think so of themselves,} for though they talk and babble of these things in a literal way, yet they never had them in experience, but boast of things in another man's line, and stretch themselves beyond their own measure, II Cor.1:14, borrowing this man's words and the other man's experience; but because Paul and others have been witnesses to the truth, as opened to their understanding, this they appropriate and arrogate, and say that this is their condition, when tis no such matter, but having a show of humility and godliness they deceive the simple, and are such who serve not the Lord Jesus Christ but their own belly, and by good words, and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple, Col.2:23, and are such who cannot give testimony to the truth of the gospel, they being full of many collected choice words; but if you bring those words to experience, they plainly discover that they know nothing of them, but do indeed oppose the truth in themselves, for they love honour and greatness in the praise of men, of whom Christ saith plainly, "how can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only." Jn.5:44. Certainly these men, whatever they talk of Christ, and preach of Christ, and make a great noise in words, yet they will be found to be no other but as sounding brass and

tinkling symbols. I Cor.13:1. They will undertake to invite others to Christ, who have never found Christ themselves; for no man can come after him, but he that denies himself, and takes up his cross and follows him, and though they in words and notions talk of self-denial and selling all for the one pearl of great price, yet they are wise in themselves, and holy in themselves, and rich in themselves; and they yet retain a power to act in the ways of God, and to conform themselves to the rule of life. Have these men sold all think you? And though they say men are dead in trespasses and sins, yet how many duties do they lay upon them, and say do thus and thus? And whence is all this, but because indeed they never yet followed Christ, never yet found him, never yet believed in him, never yet denied themselves, were never reduced to emptiness and nothingness, but are still alive and whole in themselves, except it be for a few outward neglects or omissions now and then, and that they can make up again with a little double diligence. And this is their way, and herein lies the life and top of their religion, and truly brethren, how can these things be otherwise?

Did the woman with the bloody issue ever come to Christ as long as she had anything left? Neither doth any of the sons of men return to Christ spiritually and in truth, until they are poor, empty, lost, naked, miserable and undone; and therefore, though they say they are looking for this one and only deliverer, and talk much of him; yet, all their ways and practices declare the contrary; and this

true deliverer is he that they speak against and oppose, and as he was reproached, hated, spit upon, and crucified by the Jews, so he is in and by these men, for the true Christ, and the true Messiah is always abused, slandered and crucified by the world. "The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil." John 7:7. The true Christ is always hated, and so all who hold him forth in the spirit, it likewise cannot but hate and persecute, because they testify that all the deeds thereof are evil. "Remember the word that I said unto you, the servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also." John 15:20. And why? The reason is, because he brings light with him, and that discovers their darkness, their lies, their hypocrisy, because he testifies that their goodly deeds are evil, and upon this account all {that know not the life of Christ in experience} do really hate it, and persecute it; for when man hath built up to himself much glory, riches, strength, wisdom, and great attainments, now for Jesus Christ to come and strip him and take away all his beautiful garments, and all his glory and strength, here now if man cannot be content to submit, and lose all for Christ, then he bustles and strives to keep up his own glory, to keep on his glorious garments, that neither men nor himself may see his nakedness, impurity, deformity, ungodliness, hypocrisy and lies.

Tis true, thou sayest in words, Jesus Christ is the only deliverer, and thou art seeking after him; if

so, why seekest thou then the living amongst the dead, Luke 24:5, thinking to find Christ in dead forms, and dead duties, and ordinances, {as thou dost call them,} and thinkest that they will deliver and give life, and when thou hast done with them some spirit and quickness; here is thy comfort and thy joy, and so thou dost set up thyself in thy own doings for thy Saviour, Helper, Deliverer.

But, why seek ye Christ and the true Deliverer without yourselves? For what's all the deliverers and Christ's in the world if he be not a Saviour in thee, and a deliverer to thee? Why seek ye Christ at Jerusalem and externally, and say, if I do but believe in that person that there lived and died, it is enough though I never find him a Saviour to me? "Jesus saith unto her, woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what, we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him." John 4:21-23.

Now for men to come in the name of Christ, and say, lo here, and lo there, and say that he is in this form and that custom, in this ordinance and to that dipping, in this manner, and in the other way of breaking of bread and the like, and they think by using these external things to imitate Jesus Christ, and to give the Holy Spirit, and to get grace, and they come preaching in his name, and in his name have done many great works, but saith Christ, "I

never knew you, depart from me you workers of iniquity." Lk.13:27. They say also, that they are Christ's messengers and ambassadors, and that he hath sent them forth, and yet Christ hath not furnished them for their work, but only being furnished from the letter, and by reading men's labors, they come forth audaciously, and say, we are the messengers of Christ, when as the Spirit of Christ never furnished them; yet they say, thus saith the Lord, and have seen nothing, they have had no vision, but say what others say, and so prophesy what they know not what, and further for all they say Christ sends them, yet they dare not trust him, not so much as for external maintenance, but they must have their bag and their wallet, their script and their maintenance, or else they will not do their work. They dare not commit themselves to the wisdom, and care, of him whom they say sent them. "Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel that prophesy, and say thou unto them that prophesy out of their own hearts, hear ye the word of the LORD; thus saith the Lord GOD; woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!" Ezek.13:2-3. But in vain came these men out in the name of Christ and bring forth such fruits, who can believe them, or regard them, or honour them, coming forth in this manner? Surely none that have the power of truth and experience of the work of Christ in them, and that really know him to be the true and only Deliverer and Saviour of sinners; but those who are blind as themselves are blind, may indeed be led by them. But Christ's sheep

know his voice, and the voice of a stranger they will not follow, John 10:5, those who have experience of Christ, must see a proof of Christ in them, or else they cannot follow them. They know if Christ sent them, he hath spoken by them, and that they have heard the word at his mouth, and he hath preached in their souls first, and then discovered himself to be a deliverer to them, or else they bring but the voice of strangers, and are but ministers of the letter, and not of the spirit. "Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, which to you-ward is not weak, but is mighty in you." II Cor.13:3.

And let the sons of men run up and down from this fellowship to the other, from ordinance to ordinance, and from baptism to baptism, from breaking bread here and there, yet is this nothing so long as thy heart is still dead, and lies under the power of lust and corruption, and is in bonds and fetters still; for except Christ be thy deliverer, except he appear to thee, except this root of David spring up in thee, except the Lion of the tribe of Judah arise on thy behalf, Rev.5:5, all thou canst do, and all thou canst run unto, cannot save thee, nothing else in heaven or earth can save, help, or deliver thee.

But it may be, this doctrine may seem harsh to some, and they may object, and say, what then? Shall I sit still, shall I do nothing, shall I not use the means, shall I not prepare and fit myself for deliverance? Consider I pray you, when you have done what you can, what is it that you do, or what is it that man can do to save or deliver himself? Is not man dead in trespasses and sins? Eph.2:1. And

can anything raise the dead but the voice of Christ? And is there any good thing that can be done by them, until Christ work it? Are not all their works without him but sin? Or can there be anything properly called a means, or an ordinance but only Christ? When men have reformed themselves and their paths, and trimmed their ways to seek love, Jer.2:33, they have but gone astray in all this, and gone after their own lovers, and sought themselves in all that they did, and all was nothing else but sin and abomination in the sight of the Lord. The sons of men are very inquisitive after that which pleases their fancy, and their own inventions, and seem to press after high things, and great questions, but they really oppose and desire to be ignorant of the truth, as it is in Jesus. They speak of deliverance, but they really hate it, though they may say, whatever thou doest with us, reform us and make us holy and the like, but the truth is, they would not have it so, for they mean not as they say, for if Christ should take his own way with them, viz., to bring man down in himself, and to strip them of his beautiful garments, what would become of these men's smooth words, and long prayers, and seeming devotions? Would not their hearts give their mouths the lie, and all they said, and discover themselves to be gross and abominable hypocrites, and indeed would with the multitudes rather go out and beseech Christ to depart out of their coasts, Matt.8:34, and with all really pray, depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways? Job 21:14. So that when men who were never yet lost, undone and

confounded in themselves, pray for the grace of God and mortification, and to be crucified to the world, alas, alas, they pray for that they know not what.

And again, these men because they can deliver the outward word, and the letter, and bring their matter into a handsome form and method, they think that they have preached the word of God to the people, when alas this is nothing, for the outward letter is not the word; but, what is there expressed literally is only as a witness to the word and the truth, and of what the saints of God have found in all ages, and that which they shall find in themselves; and if Christ be a deliverer to them, they shall find the like things in themselves, and there is none that can understand the letter in the mystery, but they to whom and in whom the same things are accomplished, II Cor.3:15; these only have the veil taken off the letter, and none but Jesus Christ himself can do this.

And particularly many will object. What, shall we not pray that we may have this deliverance? I answer, that no man ever truly prayed, but out of a sense of want. If thou were indeed brought into a true sense of thy empty, naked and lost condition; of thy poverty, beggary, and starved situation, then Christ is pleading on thy behalf, and his Spirit praying in thee with sighs and groans inexpressible. Rom.8:26. Then thou wouldst pray indeed, and could not but cry, pray and groan indeed; and this is true prayer. Prayer is not to get together a many fine smooth words, and to collect this fine expression, and the other; and observing this and

that time, and that hour; but prayer is words or sighs from so deep a sense of misery and want, that we verily see we starve and die except we shall prevail. Men, if they truly prayed would not come dreaming out with such beggarly questions, as to whether or not we should pray, and shall we not hear the proclamation of the Gospel, and the like? These questions themselves reveal that they never did any duty rightly, but only in a way of form or accompaniment, or to quench the cry of conscience and the like; but if men be truly in misery, and hell, and in bitterness, they cannot but choose to cry, and pray, and beg. I will warrant you will not need bid them, for you cannot keep them from it, nor will they ask, shall we not pray or hear and the like? For they pray by the power of the Spirit, and that speaks in them with groans which are unutterable and beyond all expression of words.

We read of some of the heathen persecuting Emperors, that in a way of cruelty would constrain the Christians, though they were under tortures and torments, that yet should not cry nor complain; and if they did, they would torture them the more; but it is not so in the tortures and torments of the soul, for they cannot but cry out, and complain, and seek deliverance, for when the soul is in bitterness it cannot but cry out to the Lord.

And further, though they have done these things, as doing them by necessity, yet those that are truly delivered by Jesus Christ, they do not esteem the doing of these things their deliverance, or them their deliverer; wherein lies the mystery of

the most of the sons of men, that if their conscience begins to smite them, and sin begins to appear, and looks them in the face, says the soul, I must now look out for a remedy, I must do something to quench this fire, and to allay this burning; and then what do they? They then think to reform their lives, and they will go pray and hear or join themselves into this and that Fellowship or Church Gathering, and there they will conform to the use of ordinances, and it may be, get into the best reformed fellowship {as they conceive} and nearest the rule of Christ, and here they rest, here they are quiet and all is well, and wrath is passed and they are delivered. Alas, alas poor souls, in this very thing they have turned aside from the one true Deliverer, and missed their deliverance. But the true way to deliverance is to stand in thy misery, and abide condemned in thyself until Christ himself take pity of thee, and then Christ himself will condescend to open thy eyes to behold his grace and truth, and he will carry thee out to reading and hearing, and praying after a spiritual manner; for while these works are thine own, and thou seekest for to deliver thyself, thou art so much the more in bondage; for these duties, if done rightly, are the work of the Deliverer, and the fruit of thy deliverance, and not the cause thereof. And when Christ doth them in thee, then they are done with power, then thou prayest from a real sense of want, and thou hearest with a circumcised ear, and then thy reading is in the power of the Spirit, as he awakens thine ear to hear, "the Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that

I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary; he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned. The Lord GOD hath opened mine ear," Isa.50:4-5, for that is not true or spiritual reading, and hearing, and praying, which every man may do outwardly, though it be ever so often, and ever so constantly; and yet men call these duties and ordinances, and conformity, and holy walking, when they are never so, except Christ the Deliverer perform them by the power of his Spirit, for otherwise they are not spiritual nor holy duties as men falsely call them; for they are but outward and carnal, and nothing of the Spirit in them, but done only by the power of self, and of the carnal natural man.

And therefore when Christ teacheth, he openeth the ear, and he gives sight to the blind; his work is not an empty, cold, or dead thing, but his word is spirit and life, and he requires an ear in an ear, and an eye in an eye. "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing, the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." John 6:63. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear," Lk.8:8, and eyes to see let him see; otherwise, whatever man may call them, they are none of his ordinances, but they most profanely put their empty, cold, dull, blind, and lame sacrifices upon him. And hereupon thou thinkest and concludest that Christ hath been thy deliverer; I say, whoever thou art that dost make thy duties, and thy conformity, and indeed thy ordinances {for they are none of his} thy support, thy comfort, thy rest, in

the least, herein thou hast turned from the true Deliverer, the true Saviour, and hast trod him under foot and crucified him, Heb.10:29, and has made thyself thy god, thy deliverer, thy redeemer, thy saviour; and of the day of the Lord is coming when these things will be made to appear to thee, and wrath will come upon thee unexpectedly, even then when thou thinkest thyself secure and safe, and all is well, and when thou thinkest that thy peace is made and wrath is removed, and that there are no more frowns and storms from the Almighty, when indeed thou hast all this while but made a covenant with death and hell, and then the day of the Lord shall come upon thee as a thief in the night, when thou thinkest all is well, and thou mayest sleep securely; then will Christ summon thee to judgment, and the trumpet shall sound in thine own breast, I Cor.15:52, and "when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" Luke 18:8. No, but then all the tribes of the earth shall wail and lament because of him, Rev.1:7, even so Amen. Then two shall be grinding at the mill, and two in one bed, the one taken and the other left, Matt.24:41, then he that is on the housetop shall not come down to take anything out of his house, for the day of the Lord shall surprise them on a sudden, and as a thief comes when no man expects him, and as our Saviour saith of his doctrine, so do I of these things, he that hath ears to hear let him hear, and he that hath eyes to see let him see, Mark 4:9, and he that hath a heart let him read and understand.

I know beloved, men talk much of what they should do, as if they were so willing to do anything that Christ commands; but actually and in truth, what do all these men, that seem to be so much for doing, I say what do they do? Do they not in all these do quite contrary to what they should do? If Christ hath smitten them, then he alone can heal them, and yet they will be healing themselves, and delivering themselves, when they should be seeking to Jesus Christ alone, and looking to him, and waiting upon him for deliverance; and the way to be delivered is not to run to this man and to that minister, and hang upon this man's preaching, and to another man's counsel; no, but thou wouldest see that all man's preaching, teaching, and counsel is in vain, and that there is no other way, nor no other deliverer but only Jesus Christ; thou wouldest not be tied to this man or to the other, but thou wouldst say of all, even of the wisest, the gravest, the soberest, miserable comforters are ye all. But thy trouble, and thy guilt, and thy sting within thee, would make thee hearken when Jesus Christ doth heal thy conscience, and draw forth thy sting, and quench the burning of hell fire within thee, so that thou mayest but hear the voice of Christ. If thy ears be opened for those glad tidings of Christ, thou wouldst run from country to country, from land to land, and from sea to sea to hear the word of the Lord. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD, and they shall wander from sea

to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it." Amos 8:11-12. For thou wouldest see that in all men there is a famine, not of bread, but of the word of the Lord, for Christ only gives forth his word, he is the bread of life, John 6:51, the true bread which cometh down from heaven; 'tis not Moses nor any man that can give this bread, but only our heavenly Father.

When thou hast done all that is commanded thee, yet thou must not rest in thy doing, nor in thy using means, nor in thy praying, but still in all must count thyself but an unprofitable servant. Lk.17:10. Thou must not sit down and say, I have done my part, I have prayed, and heard, and walked strictly, and joined myself to the best Reformed Church. Alas, if thou rest in these things, and think to yourself, now I have done well, and it shall be well with me. All this praying and doing Christ calls vain babblings, and vain repetitions, Matt.6:7, which is but to do like the heathen, who think to be heard for their many words and much babblings; all this thy doing, which thou makest such a stir about, is no other than calling darkness light, and evil good. Isa.5:20. And when thou goest out to look for any minister or servant of Christ to heal thy wounds, take heed of the idol shepherds, Jer.6:14, which will prophesy peace when there is no peace, to speak deliverance when Christ hath not did them, for none can heal thee but He that hath wounded thee. And so for any other who prophesy lies and daub with untempered mortar; who say to thee, go thou and

repent and believe on Jesus Christ, and thy sins shall be forgiven thee; know this is not the way; neither are they true prophets, for repentance and faith is alone God's gift, and his work; and if he be a true messenger of the Lord's sending, all he can say is, "I am but an instrument." I cannot give nor help thee to repentance nor faith, neither can I direct thee to get them; but only by waiting on Jesus Christ, who alone is the Giver; I am but the forerunner to the bridegroom, I have nothing to give, nor can I direct thee where to get that which thou seekest before he comes, or before his pleasure is to bestow it. For whoever he be that undertakes to be anything but a messenger, as John the Baptist was, crying, I am not he, but I am but the voice of one crying, "prepare ye the way of the Lord," "I indeed have baptized you with water; but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost." Mk.1:3-8. He cries, that there is no Teacher but Jesus Christ, no Prophet but he alone, for we have nothing to give; there are no riches but Christ Himself.

Examine thyself, how thou satisfieth thine own heart; what quiets thy conscience? Hast thou it from man or from Christ? Hast thou found that all thy runnings to and fro, from this man, and to the other, hath done thee any good, but thou hast found that let men say what he could, yet still thy trouble continued, and thou couldest rest in nothing below Christ? I have known some, that by running hither and thither, they have for a time, for a year or two, or more, somewhat allayed the rage of conscience, being directed to outward conformity, and getting of

repentance, and taking up constancy in this and that, and the other duty; but this cure being not thoroughly wrought, but as the prophet Jeremiah saith, "they have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace," Jer.6:14, for they having submitted to their directions, they have hereupon comforted them, and told them now all was well, and that they were converted, and both concluded that he was their spiritual father, that had begotten them again, but for all this, the day of the Lord hath afterwards come upon them as a thief in the night, I Thes.5:2, and they have been robbed of all their comfort and confidence, and have lain many years after in misery and bondage, and no man could speak any peace to them, till Jesus Christ himself came, and then they found him indeed to be the only and true Deliverer; and that he alone is "anointed to preach good tidings unto the meek," he alone is sent to "bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified." Isa.61:1-3.

Therefore from hence I would press a word or two upon all those that think themselves delivered.

It is worthy of your consideration that so your confidence may not deceive you. If thou art delivered by the power of Christ, and that the Lion of the tribe of Judah hath ransomed and redeemed thy soul from the power of the grave, Rev.5:5, then thy testimony, and thy witness will be this; that nothing in heaven or earth can deliver but solely the power of Christ, and this thou wilt and canst hold forth, not in general words only, but really and from heartfelt experience, that there is no deliverer but Christ alone. Thou wilt, I say, bear out thy witness, {if so be thou art delivered,} that it was not ordinances as men improperly call them that had any effect, it was not in the power of the letter of the word, nor in anything whatsoever, nor in the power of thy doing, nor thy watchfulness, nor strictness which could in the least direct thy soul to rest, but only the mighty arm and power of Christ, for he hath trod the winepress alone. Isa.63:3. He can in experience give testimony freely to that Scripture in Isaiah 63:1, "who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." He that hath "trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me; for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come. And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered

that there was none to uphold; therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me. And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth." Isa.63:3-6.

Here beloved is a true description of man's deliverance, it can never be until Christ will accomplish it, and until the year of his redeemed be come, and he doth it alone and no man stands by him, for no man can help; and in that day, they shall drink in his fury, and he will tread down their strength; 'tis not man's power, nor wit, nor learning, nor endeavors, nor doings, nor fellowships, nor ordinances that can help him, or stand by him, but Christ's own right hand hath wrought salvation. If it be not by the hand and power of the Lord alone, thou were never yet delivered, for in that day all the strength of man, the wisdom of man, the righteousness of man, all their strength must be all trodden down, and in that day he must be content to drink in the Lord's fury, and he must stand condemned and abominable in his own sight, and take the cup of this fury at the Lord's hand. "For thus saith the LORD God of Israel unto me; take the wine cup of this fury at my hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send thee, to drink it. And they shall drink, and be moved, and be mad, because of the sword that I will send among them. Then took I the cup at the LORD'S hand, and made all the nations to drink, unto whom the LORD had sent me." Jer.25:15-17. Oh says that soul whom Christ hath delivered, I find that he alone was my Saviour, my

Deliverer, there was none with him, if his hand had not laid hold upon me and saved me, I had gone down to hell into the nethermost pit.

Oh beloved, he cannot endure to hear anything lift up anything equal with Jesus Christ or join anything with him to help him in this work in the least, for he hath rather that you should kill his dear father, nay himself also, rather than hear anyone speak against or undervalue the work of Jesus Christ. And this is the witness he bears forth, for he testifies what he knows, and what his eyes have seen, and what his hands have handled of the word of life. I John 1:1. Nay, the very work of Christ itself bares testimony that this was Christ's own work in them, for 'tis such a work as none other could do, saith our Saviour, "the works that I do bear witness of me," for "if I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin, but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father." John 15:24. Why should you believe on me, saith Christ? For to make duties or those things falsely called ordinances his rest or his peace, or his saviour, this is death to any true experienced soul, for he cannot endure that any should wear that crown but Jesus Christ alone. He knows experimentally, as Peter, when Christ asked of them, "will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go, thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." John 6:67-69. They have experience of this in themselves, that Christ alone has power and

wisdom, and strength, and to turn away from him is to turn to death, to sin, to misery, to weakness, to helpless and dumb idols, whatever it was but only himself, and the work of Christ giving testimony to this work; they felt the workings thereof, they had it not by reading or hearing, or observing this or that rule, nor by notions, or fancies, or opinions, or persuasion, or self-confidence, but they in themselves have had experience of the breaking of their own bonds, and the loosing of their own yokes, and that to them, Christ hath preached good tidings to the meek, and hath bound up the brokenhearted, and proclaimed liberty to the captives, Isa.61:1-3, and hath opened the prison doors, and delivered them from death and guilt and hell, and that the tabernacle of God is with these men, and to them there is no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, for the former things are passed away, Rev.21:4, and he that now sits upon the throne saith, "behold I make all things new." These things write, saith the bride, and also this soul, for these words are true and faithful.

Beloved, can you give testimony to this work of Christ in you? Have you seen it, felt it, or believed it in truth? Oh! Know it is not much talk of Christ, or much talk of sin, or talking of deliverance, nor thy persuasion, or the like, but hath Christ wrought it in thee by himself alone, when no man stood by him? Isa.63:3. Not thyself by thy power, wisdom, or endeavors, but Christ alone, who is mighty to save, and that their wisdom and their strength, and their help, and their doings, are all trodden down, and

Christ alone is exalted. Except thou canst give a clear testimony to this, thou may pretend to what thou wilt, and be as strict and as formal as thou wilt, but in vain doth thou talk either of the Deliverer or the delivered; for thou art still {for all thy forms} in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity, Acts 8:23, for Christ has never yet set thee free, and thou hast as yet been but thy own saviour, and thy own hand hath wrought all thy deliverance which thou hast yet had, and thy own life is yet whole in thee, Luke 11:21, and the strong man keeps possession, for all thy forms, duties, obedience , fasting, praying, using ordinances, or closing with fellowships, or walking with this or that church, or for any of thy thoughts of membership, or the like, all this is nothing, and all this may be, and Christ never yet be thy Deliverer, nor thy Saviour.

But because I would clear this point to you my brethren, that you may not be mistaken therein, take notice more distinctly of these two things. First, the nature of this freedom. Secondly, the relation thereof, that is, what it is in itself, to whom it belongs. First, for the nature of it, no, it is not any external nor outward freedom, but it is spiritual and inward as it sets the soul free and delivers from all captivity and bonds, and those taskmasters within; it does not teach thee to deny to pay tribute to Caesar, and submission to external laws; it promises nothing of external kingdoms or thrones, or that the saints shall rule upon earth and the like, and that they shall sway scepters, and be raised up to worldly dignities or powers. No, nothing of this nature, for

Christ saith plainly, "my kingdom is not of this world," John 18:36, for then would my servants fight. These are not those things which are to contend for, but for righteousness, for peace, for joy in the Holy Ghost, Rom.14:17, to be delivered from themselves, and from the powers of darkness, to be freed from the oppressor within, this is the freedom of the saints. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Eph.6:12.

Many men keep a great deal of stir in preaching, and offering to the world large treatises, and promising great matters about external freedom, and of the saints having the ruling of the world, and of having all things in subjection to them; but alas, alas that nature of Christ's kingdom is otherwise; for it lies in being denied to all things in the world, to have no expectations of great things therein, to esteem it an excellency to be content to be nothing. Indeed, I deny not, but what the Lord in his providence is pleased to order, and confer upon nations, or upon this or the other saints externally, or give deliverance from outward oppressors, and in the restraining of wicked ones, and great men in their wrath and cruelty, they may and ought to receive them thankfully, and to use them for the glory of God, and the good of themselves and others; otherwise they are not well used, if they be not faithful stewards of them; and they are to enjoy them moderately, and with self-denial, and with

weaned affections, as seeing them but temporary, and to be parted with they know not how soon. Therefore whatsoever men talk, or can say, or write upon such things, certainly this is not the business, this is not the deliverance that is here meant, nor the freedom of the saints, but true freedom is inward and spiritual.

Again, neither doth it stand in any outward observations in meats or drinks, or the observing of Sabbath or Days, or this or that external form of worship, nor in their actings or workings, but in the power of Christ alone, delivering the soul from death and spiritual wickedness in high places. The worship and service of saints doth not consist in variety, one acting this way, another after another manner, but the true service of saints is one and the same, one faith and one baptism, Eph.4:5, and all eat of one bread, and all drink of the same cup, and all drink of the same spiritual rock, I Cor.10:3-4, outward eating, and drinking, and praying, and fasting is not the worship of Christ, but if Christ be thy Deliverer, if he hath set thee free by his own hand, thou dost bear out thy witness, and will not endure to hear of anything set up equal with Christ; for whoever doth so, doth but seek to reconcile and make a communion between Christ and Belial, and to make a fellowship between the temple of God and the temple of idols. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers, for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness, and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial, or what part hath he

that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 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." II Cor.6:14-18. If men talk of freedom, {although with much confidence,} if the power of sin be still in them, pride, and glorying in themselves, and love of the world, and malice, and envy and the like, in vain do men talk of deliverance, for all their forms and outward holiness, there cannot enter into the kingdom of God anything that defileth; the fearful, or the unbelieving, or murderers, or sorcerers, or idolatrous, or liars shall have no part therein. Rev.21:27. For be sure of this, nothing goes into the kingdom of Christ, but that which comes out from Christ; only that which is of a heavenly and spiritual nature, for nothing of man is to enter therein, all in and of man is under condemnation; only the work of Christ shall stand and remain, and all things else must be trodden down and annihilated and destroyed.

Further know then that the liberty of a Christian is in his own breast within; for if it were outward, men might hinder it, or take it away; but this liberty cannot be stolen from them, but they enjoy it in despite of all the powers of the world; 'tis not subject to decays and changes as outward

liberty is; which outward liberty men not knowing, nor having any experience of the spiritual and inward liberty wrought by Christ Jesus which is constant and durable, this makes them all the swirl about external freedom, whereas if they knew it, they would know this were far beyond all that which is but external, outward and carnal. And 'tis called carnal and fleshly, because it is so subject to alteration and change, it never continues in one state, and it knows that men may be of very great ability for external wisdom or learning, that they may be able statesmen, great scholars, masters in the liberal sciences, learned preachers, and yet never have any experience of this true liberty, nor ever yet know what it was to be in Christ, though they may talk largely in the words thereof; for this freedom is infinitely above all things of this nature; it exceeds whatever is in man, as wisdom, reason, wit, and art; for no power or wisdom of man can teach or procure man this true liberty. No university, nor any academics can teach it, for 'tis only taught and wrought by Jesus Christ, and it is infinitely above the reach of human wisdom; nay man by all his learning and wisdom, and acquired parts and utmost industry is so far from attaining it in the true possession and power thereof, that by all those things he can never come to know it, nor understand it; yet such is the pride, arrogance, and presumption of the sons of men, that they will undertake to preach thereof, and to teach it to others, when as they never understood it themselves, nor ever came to the practice thereof, for this power, and this

liberty, and this deliverance can never be known but by the workings thereof, as it must be brought to us by the communication of the Spirit working in us.

Secondly, concerning the relation of this freedom, or to whom it belongs; and that is, only to men that find themselves bond slaves, for he that thinks himself a free man, though has never yet found really his bondage, except it were in words or notions, such a one was never yet delivered. 'Tis true, men exercised about religion, may and do ordinarily confess that we are all sinners, and that they are by nature bond slaves, &c., which men may do and yet never find it true in themselves, but that of which a man is overcome, saith the Apostle, II Pet.2:19, of the same he is brought into bondage; nay herein is man's bondage of the greater, because he thinks himself free, and delivered, then he is most in bondage; and what a pitiful bondage is this? Nay, when he partly sees himself in bondage, thinking then by his own struggling and pains to work himself out, he is more in bondage, when he thinks to amend the matter and to get himself to be a saint, then he of so much the more a devil. How are most men captivated to their own lusts, to every poor base and mean thing? And how are they captivated to the concepts and inventions of men, to their forms, and to their rules? And how ready are they to obey and idolize what men have found out for worship? Wherein they commit flat idolatry, for the commandment requires that, "thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything

that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them, for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God.” Exod.20:3-5. Wherein lies a great mystery, more than is in the literal and external command, for whatever it be that thou depends upon, or dost wait upon for comfort, or hopes upon for any rest, peace, or satisfaction, to that very thing thou dost bow down, and thou dost make it a graven image. When thou so far dost subject thyself to the will of man to let him rule and ride thee, to follow his rules and directions to get peace thereby, these then thou surely dost make thy god, and they are images and idols to thee. Nay further, when men have so far ensnared thee as to cause thee to submit to every poor and empty thing, as when they place religion in meats and drinks, Col.2:20, in touch not, taste not, handle not, as the Apostle saith, which are but things which perish with the using; and yet they will enslave their consciences to such men, and such things.

And further, the world hath made a great deal about Christ coming in the flesh, and about his life and death, and sufferings, when as indeed they {as they have used the matter} have even made it a just nothing, a mere image, a fairytale, an idol, and have by their inventions made the cross of Christ of no effect; some saying that his death is meritorious and satisfactory for sins past, but not for sins to come; and that some sins are pardoned, but not all; and that man hath power, and that he must work out his

own salvation, quite mistaking the intent, the drift, the life, marrow and mystery of the Scriptures, but content themselves with the bare letter, which every man may by his own wisdom comprehend and find out; and others saying that sin is never pardoned until there be actual repentance, and that there is a power in man, {if he uses his utmost endeavor,} that he may work out and accomplish his own salvation; and that man must be a co-worker with Christ; and that he must perform his part by way of fulfilling the conditions required or else Christ will not perform his, and many such ignorant, literal and unexperienced tenants are held forth by them.

But what is Christ made in all this but a mere nothing, a very idol; and making the full and perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, a poor, scanty, mean, narrow thing; and to say in effect that Christ takes away sin but in part, but that man must do something, and he shall take away the rest. And that man's acting is the cause of taking away sin, when in truth Christ hath trod the winepress alone, and that no man stood by him, and that he only speaks in righteousness, and is alone mighty to save, and he despises and treads down all man's strength, and all the power of man to the uttermost. What is all this but to say that he shall not do it alone, for man shall stand by him, and he must help him, but we must know this Deliverer is as full and as large as the Son of God himself, and that deliverance is as deep and as high as the misery of man. The defection of man is not so deep, but the descent of Christ is as deep; nor man's sins reaches not so

high, but his ascension is as high, but these men cut short both the vastness of the Deliverer, and the largeness of the deliverance.

Tis is certain, that man's misery and fall is so deep and so great, that nothing but infiniteness could recover and fetch him up again; he is fallen into an infiniteness of nothingness, from whence all the creatures, angels, or men could not redeem one soul, but it must be the infinite work of the Creator. Man by sin hath thrown himself into a worse condition than any other creature, and below the whole creation, and he that sees it not thus really, has never yet known what it was to be delivered; and he that thinks that less than infiniteness will redeem him, he undervalues and circumscribes the death and life of the Son of God, and counts it a poor thing, and has never yet been saved; he has never known the height, and the depth, the length, and the breadth of the love of Christ, Eph.3:18-19, which is unspeakable and passeth knowledge; he never has seen himself in the lowest hell, nor has ever seen Jesus Christ stooping and descending down into the very bottom of the bottomless pit, Psal.88:6, to bring him up again. He that is delivered by Christ cannot but admire and cry out, oh, the height, and the depth, the length and the breadth of the love of Christ. And again, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed

unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen." Rom.11:33-36. Seeing him to be so high and so rich, and so full, and so perfect that he is so full of glory and majesty, and yet to stoop so low, to debase and disrobe himself, to make himself so poor, so low, so much nothing to redeem and recover such a sinful wretch as myself! Oh how great is this freedom which is wrought by Christ alone, without any seeking, or desire of mine? Nay till he hath descended to find me out, I never knew my own misery; nay when he did appear and condescend so low to deliver me, I was not willing to be delivered, but opposed him, and fought against him, and hated him, and used all the devices and shifts that I could invent to avoid this deliverance, and to remain still in bondage, and sided with the devil as my friend, and looked upon Christ as an enemy, and a tyrant, and an oppressor.

Herein was love indeed, that Christ should thus far overcome himself to become nothing, and less than nothing for me who am really so, and that he who is so infinitely rich, full and blessed in himself should show so much love, patience, long-suffering and bear so many affronts and indignities from such a miserable forlorn creature as man is, and would never leave me until he had persuaded and overcome me. Oh, herein was love indeed, transcendent love, and incomparable love!

My friends, you that talk so much of Jesus Christ, and are very zealous for him outwardly, {as one would think,} and none more, and all you that

keep such a stir about your forms, and fellowships, and orders, and washings, &c., except you have found Jesus Christ as indispensably glorious and preeminently lifted up, in vain do you pretend to him, for you do but draw nigh him with your lips, but your hearts are removed from him.

This is the word of the Lord concerning you, Isa.1:10, &c., "hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah." Why Sodom and Gomorrah? He speaks to Judah and Jerusalem in the first verse, but because they were no other to him, but were as profane as Sodom and Gomorrah, for all their sacrifices, sabbaths, prayers, new moons, &c., "to what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me, saith the LORD. I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth; they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you, yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear, your hands are full of blood." Isa.1:10-15.

Nay, and I dare be bold to say, if Jesus Christ should but come to you, to convince you of your bondage and deliverance, you would hate him, spit

at him, crucify him with as much malignity as ever the Jews did. For, in truth, the whole world in all their religion and forms love not Jesus Christ, nor aim at him, nor worship him, but love and seek only themselves, and certainly this is that light which shall break forth in these latter days of the world, to strip, unmask, and discover all the religion of man.

FINIS

**THE VEIL OF THE COVERING SPREAD
OVER ALL NATIONS. WHAT IS IT, AND
HOW IS IT REMOVED. WITH THE
DISCOVERY OF THAT MOUNTAIN OF FAT
THINGS FULL OF MARROW, AND WINES
ON THE LEES WELL REFINED.**

**Delivered on a Public Day of Thanksgiving,
June 23, 1653.**

"And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations." Isa.25:6-7.

The prophet in the former part of the chapter, having seen and taken notice of those wonderful works wrought by Jesus Christ, both in his judgments and mercies, he breaks out into wonderful praise, rejoicing and admiration of his wonderful works, and of his councils of old, "O LORD, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things; thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth," Isa.25:1, in which, he gives thanks, as in the person of Jesus Christ, or as a member of him, and expresses the deep and wonderful things which have been wrought only and alone by Him. From whence we may take notice, that the songs and praises of all Saints, are only and

alone to magnify and lift up Jesus Christ. In Christ's temple everyone speaks of his glory, for they have nothing to say in praise of man, or the power of man, wisdom of man, or the glory of man, of the faithfulness of man, of the councils of man, but of the Lord alone.

They are not telling forth what they have done, to bring glory to themselves, or to set up their wisdom, or power, or parts, or anything in them; of their righteousness, of their holiness, of their love, of their joy, of their peace, or anything of this nature, as the Scribes and Pharisees, I am not so and so, and I do thus and thus, thereby to magnify themselves, or to make others think highly of them. No, but their songs and their praise is alone to exalt Jesus Christ, and to tell of his doings, of his councils, of his faithfulness and truth, of his mercies and loving kindness, of his righteousness and judgments; this is their glory, and this is their song.

In the second verse, you may see how he sets out the spoils and the ruins that Jesus Christ hath made, as great and glorious cities were made a heap, and defended cities a ruin. That strong city Babel built-up by the power and wisdom of man, for his protection and defense, which he would raise up to Heaven, to prevent destruction hereafter, that the deluge of wrath may not swallow him up; the soul having seen the Almighty power of Jesus Christ, ruining and bringing down of this Tower, and this Babel in himself, and making all this work, power, wisdom, providence of man, of self and flesh to be made Babel and Confusion. Here now, the Saints

give all the glory to Jesus Christ alone; man finds that he was raising a temple, setting up a worship of his own devising; and for what end? That he may secure himself, provide for himself, deliver himself from wrath, from hell, from the overflowing scourge, from the devouring flood; he thinking himself to be wonderful in working and glorying in his own devices, and his own religion, and his own forms, and thereby thinking this tower would secure him, that no deluge could reach him, he being above all danger. "Because ye have said, we have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us, for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves." Isa.28:15. As Paul, when he was marching on confidently and boldly in his own uprightness, and thinking that he acted all things according to the rule, but now in the height of all his pride and confidence, Jesus Christ brings him down, smites him from his horse, for he had built a city {as it were} and called it by his own name, Psal.49:11, magnified his own strictness, his own holiness, and said as Nebuchadnezzar, "is not this great Babylon, that I have built." Dan.4:30. Now the soul seeing all this to be a lie, to be confusion, and a deceit, and a delusion, and all turned by Jesus Christ into ruin and confusion in his own soul, and not a stone left upon a stone which is not thrown down, Matt.24:2, this the soul comes to see is alone the work of Christ; that he hath made of a glorious city an heap, and of a defended city a ruinous place of strangers,

Isa.25:2; and this to be no city which shall never be built up again. When once Jesus Christ pulls down Babel in us, it shall never be built again, for he levels it flat to the ground. All of man's setting up must be utterly ruined; no part of that building set up upon the ruin of man's power, wisdom, strength, parts, will Christ make any use of for his kingdom, but all must be ruined, laid flat to the ground, and he will not leave a stone upon a stone. Luke 21:6. The work of Christ is an overthrowing, overthrowing, overthrowing work, Ezek.21:27, the work of Christ is to slay, strip, and undo man, to strip them of all conceit of themselves, and to lay them flat to the earth, to equal and to level them with the worst of men. The work of the devil is to build up man in his own wisdom, in his own strength, to make him something; to cry peace peace to him, when there is no peace, Jer.6:14, to put wrath far away, and to tell him that he is thus and thus, he hath such love and charity, and meekness, and conformity to the will of Christ, and therefore to fear not, none of all these things shall happen to thee. When indeed this is nothing but the work and wisdom of the devil in man, to make him secure, and to put the evil day far from him, Isa.28:15, and thereby hath made a covenant with death and hell, and of all men, he shall be preserved from ruin. Why, he is a holy man, he hath submitted to ordinances, he is under the purest forms that are most agreeable to the will and mind of Christ, when as all this may be nothing but the work of the devil in man, merely to delude him, and to keep away guilt, that he may not see the

bottomless gulf of sin and delusion that is in his own heart.

But when once Jesus Christ hath thus declared his power in the soul, and brought forth his eternal councils therein, then he comes to see that all this is done in faithfulness and lovingkindness, and in tender compassion; then he comes to see that he was deluded, and fed himself with lies, with wind and vanity, Hos.12:1, and that the way to safety was not to build up this Babel, but to bring it into confusion; for, saith he in the fourth verse, "for thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat." Isa.25:4. So that you see, the matter of praise is only to magnify and set up, and exalt and make Christ great and wonderful. They cannot say anything of themselves, or of men, for they see them to be nothing but sin, and the fountain of misery, desolation, and destruction, even the very best, the highest, the holiest in their own esteem. And so he goes on, verse 5, "thou shalt bring down the noise of strangers, as the heat in a dry place; even the heat with the shadow of a cloud, the branch of the terrible ones shall be brought low," and all this but to show forth what further work Christ makes, how that he goes on making more havoc in Satan's building. Man's work, or the work of Satan in him is to set up and exalt the wisdom of man, and power and holiness of man, and to slight and debase the wisdom, holiness, and power of God, as mere foolishness; but his own is wisdom indeed, and holiness indeed. Now the work of Christ is to pull

down these strongholds and high imaginations, II Cor.10:4, Babel must be confounded, and Babel must be leveled to the ground; Christ will himself set up his own Temple, his own House, his own Kingdom, and will bring man to see that he is nothing but want and misery, emptiness and confusion, sin and death, hell and condemnation, and that Jesus Christ alone is fullness, riches, life, light, glory, and all that can be named or esteemed good, and that man is nothing but what may be named and esteemed evil. And this is certainly the work that Christ makes in every soul wherever he enters, and Christ brings the soul really to see, all this is true, in itself, all done and acted in man, and that this is Babel, and this Antichrist is set up in him; and also, that the power and wisdom of Jesus Christ hath ruined and destroyed them in him; and that this can be no other, but the work of Christ, conquering and bringing all things, even every thought, into subjection to him, and he gives him the sole praise and glory of these mighty works, for he knows that he had no hand in it himself, he could not believe of himself, repent of himself, never would the strongman bind himself, ruin himself, but when one stronger than he comes, Lk.11:22, then he is disarmed, and never before, and thus he sees himself delivered from bondage, set free from the devil's chains, brought out of Babylon; and that Christ alone is all in all. Christ is all fullness and no emptiness, all riches and no want, all wisdom and no folly, all righteousness and no impurity at all; but contrary, man himself to be nothing but emptiness

and nothingness, darkness, misery, folly, madness. "This is an evil among all things that are done under the sun, that there is one event unto all; yea, also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead." Eccl.9:3. While men thus build up themselves and have these high opinions of themselves, they are in the pit, in darkness, in misery, in bondage, but they see it not until at length they fall down and sink into it forever.

But were Christ appears in mercy, there he brings down the noise of strangers, for all this in man and of man is but the noise of strangers, though man have a high opinion of himself, and glories in these conceits, and thinks himself in the King's favour, and if any shall be saved he shall, and so blesses himself that all is well, and no wrath, nor no devil, nor no hell, shall come near him; yet alas, this is but the noise and the voice of strangers, which must be brought down, Christ cannot own this voice {for 'tis the voice of strangers} but will bring it down to hell and to the sides of the pit, Isa.14:15, for, all this language is nothing else but the language of death, and the language of Babel, the language of the devil, and the language of confusion, and all this is but the branches of the terrible ones, Isa.25:5, the branch which hath enlarged and spread itself over the whole earth, everyone is gone astray, and there is none that doeth good, no not one. Psal.14:3. And all the imagination of man's heart is evil, and only evil continually, Gen.6:5, not a man upon the face of the whole earth, but this branch hath spread

itself over him, and he sits under the shadow thereof, Isa.30:3, he hath something of man to shroud and cover himself withal, this is the branch of the terrible one, that Jesus Christ will cut down. Man's holiness carries great sway, and who dare speak against it? It is high and lifted up, and reaches unto heaven, yet the power and faithfulness of Christ shall bring it low, it shall fall and never rise again, and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it. And cursed be he that buildeth again the walls of Jericho. "The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited. Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the LORD of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously." Isa.24:19-23.

And then he comes to the versus read, what shall come to pass after the accomplishment of all these things, "in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined," Isa.25:6, he spake not of any mountain before, but of a

branch, and he presently changes the metaphor and now speaks of a mountain. It shows us thus much {by the way} that there is not any one thing in the world but it holds forth Jesus Christ, all the whole creation is a representation of Jesus Christ, all types, all metaphors, are resemblances of him.

In this mountain, as mountains are things of the greatest strength, most stable, most immovable, most durable; and he is in Scripture often called, the mountain of strength, the mountain of holiness, Jer.31:23, the strength of salvation, and the mountain of his glory. "And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." Isa.25:6. No man ever comes into the mountain of strength, nor into the mountain of glory, nor of holiness, nor of salvation, until they come to Jesus Christ, for all strength, glory, riches, power and righteousness and peace is only to be had in him and nowhere else, only "in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined," in him only can we drink out of the wells of salvation, Isa.12:3, and eat of the hidden manna, Rev.2:17, so that these words contain a further making out of the excellency and glory of Jesus Christ unto miserable and undone man. If once man come to be thus lost, undone and brought down in himself, then will Jesus Christ make him a feast of fat things; if once his peace be lost, his righteousness lost, his joy

lost, his help lost, his strength lost, then will Jesus Christ be all these unto him, and he will make out a peace for him, a righteousness for him, a glory for him, he will indeed be unto him, a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.

And so, as he saith in the next verse, I "will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations," that is, man's opinion of his own goodness, his seeming righteousness, which was as a covering, as a veil, that man could not see himself miserable and under wrath and hell and darkness. This is the covering, every man naturally hath an opinion of his own goodness, he hath something or other to cover himself withal, but some have finer, and {as they conceive} richer covering than others, they think they have more holiness, and more repentance, and more love, and more good works, and these are by so much the worse, as these are at a further distance from the kingdom of heaven, and publicans and harlots, and the vilest sinners shall go into the kingdom of heaven, and they themselves {they that have so much holiness} shall be shut out. Matt.21:31. Here now, the veil of the temple must be rent, from the top to the bottom, Luke 23:45, the rock of their righteousness must be rent, their shame must be laid open, and what they have done in the secret chambers of their own hearts must now be proclaimed upon the housetop. Luke 12:3. They cannot conceal it, for now the covering is removed, now they come to see that Jesus Christ is only the

rock of their righteousness, and that they have none at all; all other rocks, all other righteousnesses must be rent, that so their want, their misery, their condemnation, their hell and horror, their darkness and delusion, may be discovered, and if man be once brought to this, to be content to be miserable, {as indeed all mankind is by reason of the fall} to be content to see themselves undone, to be shut up under the wrath of God, condemnation sealed upon them, and the pit to have shut her mouth upon them, having now thus lost all their power, wisdom, righteousness, then all death, hell and darkness shall be swallowed up in the death of Christ, then he will as it is in the eighth verse swallow up death and victory, and the Lord God shall wipe away all tears from their faces. In this mountain he will take away all sorrow, and the rebuke of their sins, all guilt, all condemnation, all bonds, all captivity, all strongholds, all chains, all death, all fears, griefs, terrors, and all things of that nature, for this rock, this mountain will swallow up all, and so take away the rebuke of his people.

When a man is brought into this mountain, he shall be thus fed with fat things, and wine on the less, and all tears washed away, and this is that day of the Lord, and this is the Lord's resting day, and this is the sole Sabbath and resting day, when all rebukes, all frowns, all griefs are removed. All other sabbaths and rests external are but figures and representations of this true rest. And then it follows in the ninth verse, "and it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he

will save us, this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation," when Christ hath thus appeared to the destruction of all things in man, and brought him out of himself, and have ruined all his strength, righteousness, wisdom, &c., then Christ will be all in all to him, then will he feast on him in this mountain, and the soul seeing all these things accomplished in itself, then it cannot choose but rejoice, triumph and sing unto the Lord, even the song of Moses and the Lamb, this is our God that we have waited for, this is the Lord, in him alone is power, wisdom and righteousness, lovingkindness and tender mercies, "thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created," Rev.4:11, thou alone art our strength, and our salvation; all their happiness is concentrated in this one God, and they have no God but him, no Saviour but him, they have but one God, "one body, and one spirit," even as they are called in one hope of their calling, "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in them all." Eph.4:4-6. They rejoice in this, that they see themselves made nothing, that they are emptied of themselves, of their power, wisdom, righteousness; for they now rejoice, triumph and sing because the veil of covering of all nations is removed from their hearts, that their high thoughts are brought down, that their wisdom is made folly, that their opinion of their own glory, of their own somethingness, of their

own holiness is removed, and Christ alone is he in whom they enjoy all things.

From hence you may conclude upon this point, that Christ alone is the saints strong mountain, and their feast of all good things. He is only their mountain of strength, he is their joy and their song, he hath rent and destroyed the face of the covering which is upon all the people; they see that none can remove this covering, but Christ alone, and therefore he having done this in them and for them, this rejoices their heart far more than if he had increased their corn, or their wine or their oil, Psal.4:7, Christ is their feast, Christ is their day of Thanksgiving, Christ is their Sabbath, which shall never end; he is their morrow and fatness, here are their wine and their fat things full of marrow, Christ is their mountain, their glory, their rock, and all this they see is wrought in them by the power only of Jesus Christ. And this adds to their rejoicing, that they see that they have no hand therein, they see that they did not choose him, but he chose them; that they instead of choosing him, ran away from him, opposed him, fought against him; and yet he followed them and never left them until he had conquered them, and this now is their joy, and their praise, and their song; and nothing in heaven or earth shall be exalted or magnified by them, but only Jesus Christ, their strong mountain, their feast of all good things.

These souls only come to see, that there is a veil, and that this is the veil of covering, spread over all nations; all those, upon whom the veil is, cannot

see the veil, but he only in whom it is rent, from whom it is removed, and all their desire is, that it may be removed from all people, that others may see that which he sees, and enjoy that which he enjoys, that Christ may be a mountain to them as he is to him, a rock to them as he is to him, a feast to them as he is to him. And they can say truly, and name this mountain Jehovah-Jireh, for only in the mount of the Lord, can this be seen. Abraham could not sacrifice his son, until he came up into this mount; and once come into this mountain, then the soul can part with all things for the love of Christ, for nothing is so dear as Christ. And this is the conclusion wrought by the spirit in Abraham, Jehovah-Jireh, saith he, in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen; for there is no seeing any of these things, nor is there any no true feasting until we come into the mount of the Lord. What was that going up to Abraham to the Mount Moriah think you? In the truth of it, it was no other thing but this, his going up from himself, and out of himself, forsaking all things for this one thing, and coming up to this mountain of the Lord, where the Lord alone was all in all. Beloved, know this for truth, that there is no wisdom, no righteousness, no strength, &c., nowhere else, but here, in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen, and nowhere else. There is no self-denial, no true repentance, no conquering of the least sin, no true peace, no joy, no love, no wisdom but only in this mount; whatever men pretend, that they are wise, or holy, and the like, 'tis all but deceit and a delusion, until we come up to this mount, until

this veil be removed, we can never bind the strong man, we can never cut off our right hands, or put out our right eyes; in essence, we can never forsake ourselves, we can never deny our own power, wisdom and holiness. Matt.5:29-30.

Here now is this mountain of strength, here it was that Abraham staggered not through unbelief, but was strong in faith giving glory to God. Rom.4:20. Here he was fully persuaded that what the Lord had promised, he was able to perform, that though Isaac were sacrificed, yet God was he who could quicken the dead, and calleth things which are not as though they were. Herein was Abraham, the father of the faithful, and Isaac the seed of many nations, and all the faithful are his seed in this; and his going up to the mountain, is no other but what is done by all the faithful; that literal mountain, was not the truth, but only the figure of the strong mountain Jesus Christ, as he is the mountain spoken of, Isa.2:2, called there the mountain of the Lord's house, which shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it. Jesus Christ is that mountain, who is unalterable, unmovable, unchangeable, never to be shaken, nor ever to be removed; and to be established on the mountains of man's wisdom, of man's righteousness, which were esteemed {by man} never so high, never so strong, yet this mountain shall overtop them all, and be established above all. Beloved, none come to know these things, but those in whom they are wrought, in whom the veil of the covering is removed. Men

may pretend to these things and be very confident that they enjoy them, when indeed they are under the covering to this very day.

This is that stone also that Daniel speaks of, which was cast out of the mountain without hands, Dan.2:45, which smote the image, which was so terrible in the form thereof, his head being of fine gold, his breast, and arms of silver, his belly and thighs of brass, his legs of iron, and his feet part iron and part clay. Now the stone cut out without hands, smote this terrible image, and itself became a great mountain, which filled the whole earth; and however this may be applicable {as by some it is} to the outward monarchies in the world, one succeeding and overcoming another; yet, all those things are but figures of the truth, for those things are not done without hands, but the truth is done in spirit, whatever it is that men set up to shelter themselves under, any form, any religion to defend themselves from the wrath of God, from the guilt of sin, from seeing themselves odious, with all their righteousness and rags. All things of that nature are images, and are such images, and so terrible that no man is able to break them to pieces, 'tis only the stone cut out of the mountain without hands that can bring them down or break them to pieces. These images are diverse, and of several tempers and conditions, some are of clay, that is some are of low rudiments, poor and mean things that men set up and rely upon, and shelter themselves withal, their good meanings and good hopes and the like, and these may be esteemed but as the feet of this

image; others go higher, and they depend upon things of more worth and strength, that seem to be made of iron, for they dress themselves with moral virtues, and put confidence in them, and these they think will defend and save them; but there are some that go higher than all these, for they pretend to clothe themselves with the garments of Jesus Christ himself, and the graces of the Spirit, and in these they glory; and this glitters like gold, but it is not gold, and they seem to have faith, but have not faith, and love, but 'tis not love, and patience but 'tis not patience, &c., and they are no other but images and idols upon which men {professing religion, and under the strictest forms and fellowships} rely upon and shelter themselves under, and think these will defend and protect them from hell and destruction and God's wrath. These things cover them and cover the wickedness of their hearts, and they cannot see themselves how vile they are, how infinitely wicked in the sight of God, as they cover themselves with a covering, but not with the Lord's Spirit. "Woe to the rebellious children, saith the LORD, that take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin, that walk to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth; to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt!" Isa.30:1-2. Woe be to all such, for these poor souls do most pitifully and miserably delude themselves, these instead of putting on the rich and glorious robe of Christ's righteousness, do clothe themselves with the stinking, loathsome,

abominable and devilish righteousness of man, and prefer it before the excellency of the Lord Jesus Christ. And of these Christ himself saith, "that the publicans and the harlots," and the vilest of sinners shall enter into the kingdom of heaven when they shall be shut out. Matt.21:31. For these are those that have put the stumbling block of their iniquity before their face, as the Lord saith by Ezekiel, "these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumbling block of their iniquity before their face, should I be enquired of at all by them? Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them, thus saith the Lord GOD; every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet; I the LORD will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols; that I may take the house of Israel in their own heart, because they are all estranged from me through their idols." Ezek.14:3-5. These commit the highest abominations, these set up their posts by the Lord's posts and their thresholds by his thresholds, which is the height of iniquity. These have daubed up a wall with untempered mortar, Ezek.13:10, they are the wall, and the prophets that prophesy peace to them, they are the daubers, and the forgers of pillows under all armholes, that pollute the Lord among his people for handfuls of barley, and for pieces of bread, that slay the souls that should not die, and save the souls alive that should not live, by their lying to his people that bear and receive their lies, having made the righteous sad,

and strengthened the bands of the wicked that he should not return from his wicked way by promising and showing him the true way of life. "Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the LORD, and their works are in the dark, and they say, who seeth us, and who knoweth us?" Isa.29:15. These are those of the house of Israel that have set up idols of jealousy in the chambers of their iniquity, and dig deep and think to hide their councils from the Lord, and these are their idols and their gods that they worship, serve, rely upon, and sacrifice to. Therefore with these will the Lord deal in fury, because these wipe their mouths and please themselves in their own idols, and with the gods that their own hands have made.

Now men being thus confident in their own righteousness, and thinking this form, and that duty, and that strict walking shall deliver and protect them, and their resting secure under this mighty image, then comes the stone cut out of the mountain which breaks in pieces their glorious image, as it falls upon all their duties, upon all their righteousness, upon all their towers, upon all their idols, and crushes them all to pieces, brakes in pieces that stately image made of iron and clay, and brass, and silver, and gold, and makes all their high opinions of themselves become like the chaff upon the summers threshing floor that the wind carries away. Dan.2:35. And then they are brought to see that all their confidence was but an idol, an image, a lie, vanity, wind, and delusion. And then, and never before this little stone becomes {in them} a great

mountain and this fills the whole earth, man being once discovered to be as he is, vanity, a lie, babel, confusion, darkness, hell, horror, misery, and what not, with all his glorious righteousness, discovering them to be but filthy rags, Isa.64:6, when man is brought really and not in words only, {for that is part of the covering,} to be nothing but sin, emptiness and nothingness; then is the work begun, the foundation laid, "thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church," Matt.16:18, and the foundation being thus laid, the gates of hell shall never prevail against it. The other building was but built upon the sand, which cannot withstand when the rains fall and the winds and the storms blow, but the fall thereof shall be great; but when this work is brought about in the soul, that man is laid low, made nothing, emptied of himself, this is the foundation upon which building, let the rain fall, and the winds blow, and the storms beat, yet it shall stand because it is founded upon a rock. Matt.7:25.

This Rock is only and alone Jesus Christ, that blessed eternal Rock of Ages, upon whom all the saints from the foundation of the world to its consummation are founded and bottomed, as upon Mt. Zion, which shall never be removed. All the patriarchs and prophets give testimony to this Rock; to Him that is the Rock of Ages, and is that great Mountain that shall fill the whole earth. Dan.2:35. He that shall only reign, and shall be all in all, whose kingdom alone shall be exalted. All the fathers drank of this Rock; as the apostle saith, they "were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and

did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ." I Cor.10:2-4.

He is that unspeakable glory, power, majesty, eternity &c., that can never be lifted up enough, never able to be unfolded nor set forth by men and angels according to his greatness, his goodness, his unchangeableness, his glory, his wisdom and infiniteness. He is the wonder of ages, the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his Person. Heb.1:3. He it is that is set forth by all types, metaphors, representations, and yet all come infinitely short of Him. He that once comes into this mountain that we have been speaking of, he shall be fed with these fat things. There is no attaining these high and fat things but in the Lord's mountain; 'tis not man's mountain, nor man's fat things which can feast us with these things, but this man shall be fed and shall have the veil rent from the top to the bottom, the covering that is the covering of the veil of all nations, that is more or less upon every man. But it is Christ only in whom man's glorious temple was destroyed, and all of man's building laid flat, and not a stone left upon a stone, that is not thrown down.

That we may come and make some use of all which we have said, and apply it to ourselves. This discovers, that all things that Christ will make use of in his church, must be materials of his own, from himself, of his own providing; for whatever it be that man provides, that men hew out by their own

wisdom, or power, and fame, be they ever such curious images, they are all abominable, all must be destroyed, broken to pieces, blown away, made nothing. All "fat things" are only to be had in this mountain; there is no destroying the veil of the covering of all nations, no bringing man to see his own misery, his own hell, his own darkness, but here; no showing man the excellency of the riches and glory of Christ, but here. No true feast, but here; and all other feasts are but death and poison. Whatever feast man provides, or feeds or feasts himself withal, or takes contentment in, he feeds himself with lies, he is but an hungry man still, that dreams he eats, and when he awakes he is empty. But this "feast of fat things," and "wine on the less," and "fat things full of marrow," and "wine on the less well refined," is only prepared and given unto us by Jesus Christ. Isa.29:8. Man naturally feeds upon nothing but sin and misery, and hell and damnation; and these are sweet to him. Why? Because there is a veil upon them, the covering of all nations, Isa.25:7; some things, more or less excellent; some goodness, some righteousness, some holiness, some duties, some reformation, some forms, some shadows, and these are the covering by reason of which he neither sees nor tastes death, nor hell, nor destruction. In Christ there is all life, all rest, all peace, all discovery of good things; but if man remain in himself and dwell in his own mountain, there is all darkness, and all deformity; nothing but death, trouble, briars, thorns; but it never appears so, until the veil be taken away; till then, man is

never stripped of himself, never turned outward, but all is under this covering; and whilst so, he blesses himself and saith I am safe, all is well, there is no death nor hell can come near me for I am a reformed man, and I walk exactly, I press after the strictest rules of the word, I am under the purest ordinances. Here now, man eats death and tastes of the forbidden tree, and the tree is sweet to him, and it is to be desired. Gen.3:6.

But now when Christ appears to the soul really, all these thoughts are cursed, damned, thrown down to hell, and the man becomes vile, abominable in his own sight; and instead of seeing himself as an heir of glory, as before, his thoughts are clean altered, for the veil, the covering is removed. And now he sees himself as an heir of hell, a poor deluded undone creature. He sees that the ass, the flesh must not go up into the mountain with Abraham, but must be left below, let that bear the burden, as fit and meet it should, let it bear the wrath of God, it must be destroyed, it must be condemned, it must go to hell. "And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you." Gen.22:5. All the glory of man, all the excellency of nature, all the holiness of man, the wisdom of man, all must be left below with the ass, the flesh, at the bottom of the hill, and there must be a going out of ourselves, a loosing of ourselves, that we may go up to the mountain, and there be feasted, and there see strength, there see glory, there see power, there see riches, righteousness and

all good things; and then man shall see how he called evil good, and good evil; darkness light, and light darkness. "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!" Isa.5:20-21. There he shall be feasted with all delights, there he shall see how wisdom hath furnished her table, Prov.9:2, there the scales are removed, and here he beholds Jacob's ladder, Gen.28:11, here is the valley of Achor for a door of hope, Hos.2:15, here he enjoys his hopes, here he sees visions, and the third heavens opened, and here he feeds upon the hidden manna, &c., Rev.2:17, which being the "revelation of Jesus Christ," Rev.1:1, now opened before him.

But know this, that all these things are not done at once, but by degrees, as man leaves the ass behind, so he ascends the mountain; as man goes out of himself, so he enjoys Jesus Christ, and is made one with him; as man is made nothing so Christ comes to be made everything; man becomes all in Christ, and nothing in himself; so far as man utterly denies himself, so far he eats of these fat things, when he sees himself oppressed with sin, or wrath, or hell, he presently runs to this mountain, when he is parched with drought he runs to this a rock, to this fountain of living waters. Jer.17:13. Below in the valley in himself he can find no comfort, nothing but wrath, death, darkness, and destruction, that is, nothing but the bottomless pit, there's nothing but madness and folly, nothing but

lies and vanity; there's nothing but fears and frights, horrors and amazements, and the smoke of the bottomless pit. Rev.9:2. He now cries out, woe is me, did I so much delude myself, to think myself to be wise, holy, &c., when as there was nothing but folly, and infinite madness! And now he sees that there is in him antichrist indeed, the beast with seven heads and ten horns, and himself bearing the mark and the image of the beast.

And all this the soul sees by faith, for faith is the eye of the soul, when faith goes up from itself, and looks upon Jesus Christ, there it sees all riches, all glory, all wisdom, all unchangeableness, all purity, all life, all rest, all in all; in a word, it sees Him to be unutterable, unspeakable, and in him things not to be able to be uttered; not fit to be uttered, but only to such as are admitted into the same condition, for others cannot comprehend these words, as they are paradoxes and riddles. They see themselves to be nothing but sin and horror, and there is the bottom or the foot of Jacob's ladder, and they see also Jesus Christ with all his riches, glory, power, wisdom, righteousness, &c., there is the top of the ladder, and these things are only to be seen in this mountain.

When Saints by faith look down into what they are in themselves, they see there is a bottomless pit of smoke and darkness, blackness of darkness, darkness that may be felt, and they see that this smoke covers the face of the whole earth. Exod.10:21. There he sees in this valley such a bottomless depth of sin and misery, that he is

ashamed of himself, and ashamed that others should see him to be so.

Now while the veil is untaken away, all the endeavor, all the wit, all the power of natural man is to keep on this covering, to keep it from being rent, he would by no means have it removed, he would upon no terms see himself as he is, to see himself undone; to be nothing but emptiness and misery, as this kindles the fire of hell in him. What, he that thought himself so holy, so full of goodness, now to see himself to be so far deluded as to be all sin, and all darkness, and all hell; he that thought himself to be a lover of God, and a lover of righteousness, to be no other but a hater of God, and a hater of true holiness, and a hater of the truth! Oh now, by all means, he would cover and hide this monstrous image from himself and others; he would not for all the world see himself, nor have others see him, thus vile, and thus miserable, but on the contrary to admire himself, to magnify himself as good, excellent and holy; but when Jesus Christ comes, he will in despite of all man's wisdom, cunning and power, discover him to himself; he shall whether he will or not, behold his own shape, see himself in his own colors; and then he cries out, "oh miserable man that I am, who shall deliver me?" "Lord help me, I am undone, I am a man of polluted lips," and with Peter, "Lord help or I perish," "I shall sink forever into this bottomless gulf from whence there is no redemption."

He sees now the veil rent, and himself lost forever; and that such is the bottomlessness of this

gulf that he is in, that nothing can redeem him thence, but only the blood of Christ. No hand can help him out, but only the infinite bottomless mercy of the Son of God. He sees now nothing in heaven or earth, no righteousness of men or angels, could suffice for his ransom, but Jesus Christ alone, the Son of God himself must lay down his life to redeem him out of unparalleled destruction. Now Christ revealing this to him, here hereby ascends up into this mountain, and there he feasts, and there he hath all his wisdom, all his power, all his life, all his sustenance, all his living waters; here, he now hath all his teachings, for he now sees Christ's mountain exalted upon the top of all mountains, above the top of all man's mountains, of wisdom, power, holiness, &c., though they have been raised in man's esteem ever so high, and esteemed as the mountains of the Lord. He sees his knowledge now mere folly; his wisdom, darkness; his righteousness, sin; his power, weakness; his glory, shame; his heaven, hell; and this he sees in himself, and he can see nothing else but this misery and this blindness upon the face of the whole earth, every man is under this darkness, is under this covering, the face of the covering of all nations.

Christ went up to the mountain, and taught the people. The truth is, this is that mountain where Jesus Christ alone teaches, all other teachings are folly and ignorance until we hear the word from his mouth. Here is this mountain where the soul beholds visions, and receives the manifestations of Christ, and the mysteries of the kingdom; here it sees from

the bottom to the top of Jacob's ladder; here it sees the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, that had it not been for the love of Christ, the mere power and hand of Christ, he had been gone forever, lost forever, swallowed up in the mystery of iniquity; but when Christ brings him into this mount, then he sees himself escaped, then he sees Sodom and Gomorrah all on a flame, all self and flesh, and all man's wisdom and righteousness burnt up, and the smoke thereof ascending as the smoke of a furnace; and then he can say experimentally Jehovah Jireh, in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen. Gen.22:14.

Saints can testify of these things because they have seen and felt them accomplished in themselves, and 'tis that which their hands have handled of the word of life, I Jn.1:1, they can give testimony to the wisdom of Christ, to the power of Christ, to the righteousness of Christ, to the everlasting and un-expressible goodness of Christ, as it is expressed and put forth in their hearts. They can give no testimony of man, of any goodness, wisdom, power, &c., in themselves, but they know Christ to be all and all. The believer sees man and himself, and all things of man to be nothing but a pit of darkness, a lump of sin, a gulf of misery, without the least wisdom, goodness or power; but whatever is good or strong, or even holy in him, 'tis not himself, 'tis not of man, but of and from Christ alone. He sees experimentally, that he hath {as of himself} no power, no strength to resist sin, no repentance, no mind to hate or resist the least sin, but the

contrary. He finds a cursed, hellish, damned, unbelieving heart, full of evil and that continually, Gen.6:5, a heart instead of loving God, it fights against God, instead of doing good to his neighbor really, he seeks not his good, but his own ends in everything he doth, that he in essence doth nothing at all for God, but himself is his supreme and ultimate end, so that his highest and best actions are loathsome, defiled and abominable. Now the soul seeing these things to be really thus, then all his strong, high and towering conceits fall down before the light, wisdom, power and excellency of Christ; and he sees that there is none of all these through all the whole earth but in Christ alone, no wisdom at all but his, no power at all but his, no righteousness at all but his, and no creature to receive any glory but him alone. Then he falls down and cries out, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Rom.7:24. Who shall deliver me from this monstrous fiend of my own self? He now sees the locusts of the bottomless pit, covering the face of the whole earth, everyone running after his own ways and following his own laws, every man setting up new gods, every man setting up the image of his imagery, and the abomination of desolation in himself, every man making himself his own god, and seeking to be something, and making the eternal glorious God to be an idol and nothing. He sees himself with the whole earth besides, saying with the builders of Babel, "go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make

us a name," Gen.11:4, that we be not scattered and destroyed. They will save and deliver themselves from hell, wrath, and destruction by their own power, by their own wisdom, by their own inventions, by the brick, slime, and mortar that they have made. Now the Lord looking down from heaven to see what the children of men are doing, and he in himself sees how God hath said, "let us go down and confound their language," God in them hath discovered the evilness of their ways, the evil of self-seeking, self-glory, of their self-wisdom, self-power, self-righteousness; and they in whom, or to whom the Lord discovers these things, all this contrivance, and all this work in them is made Babel, confusion, a heap of lies, 'tis all deceit, destruction and misery, but only in Jesus Christ he hath righteousness indeed, life indeed, power indeed, heaven indeed; and then he can add and say with the apostle, "thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift," II Cor.9:15, and again, "thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." I Cor.15:57.

Herein the saints find Jesus Christ to be their joy, to be their feast, to be their mountain, to be their glory, to be their all in all. In this mountain they find and receive all these good things, and are fully satisfied, that they are to be had nowhere else. If they look anywhere else, they know there is nothing but sin, corruption, death, hell, mortality and the grave. And they having found this mountain, they find themselves escaped, delivered from all those things. Now they sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and

Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, Matt.8:11, they have found Abraham's bosom, they have found the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God, they have found the hidden manna, they have received the white stone, with a new name, which none can know but such as receive it. They see themselves delivered, and thus are at rest from themselves. They see their own wisdom, their own power, their own holiness to be as it is nothing but sin and hell and misery, and a delusion. And in this they rejoice in, to see this Pharaoh overwhelmed in the sea, this makes themselves sing with the song of Moses and the Lamb, and to see all this to be done, not by their power, not by their wisdom, nor by their watchfulness, nor by any endeavors of their own, but that the whole work in every part of it was Christ's alone, that 'tis he alone that is mighty to save, he that is also glorious in apparel, and traveling in the greatness of his own strength, Isa.63:1-2, none assisted him, no man stood by him, but he alone, made bare his own arm, that so he might have all the glory. These things seen and accomplished in themselves, is their feast of fat things, their wine on the less, their keeping of the Sabbath, their day of praise and thanksgiving. They have none to praise, nor to speak well of but Christ alone. They find that he alone was their Deliverer, and he was their Captain and their Conqueror, that he alone was their Leader, their Guide, and their Teacher. And that all other teachers were but deluders, soothsayers, liars and deceivers. These can call no man master and father upon earth, for

one is their Master and Father, which is Christ alone. As Paul saith, that he received not his gospel of man, or by man, but by revelation of Jesus Christ, Gal.1:12, and so these receive not their power, nor their wisdom, nor their teaching of, or from man, but only by and from Jesus Christ alone.

Then also, in the next place let us further make this use of this point, to take notice of the misery and desperate condition of all men by nature, what a deluge of destruction is upon him, because of the face of the covering of all people, because they seek help, and strength, and riches, and glory, and wisdom in other mountains besides this mountain. Because they find strength, and wisdom, and rest, and rejoicing, and feasting in their own mountains, and the more comfort and delight men take in their own wisdom, or holiness, or the like, so much the more miserable, so much the further from the kingdom of heaven. When men look upon themselves as being strict or more holy than others, because they are under such and such forms, such rules, and are so conformable to the word and mind of Christ, and here solace and feast themselves, and cry, lo here is Christ, and there is Christ, Lk.17:21, in this form, or that fellowship, and think therefore that they are in a safe condition, but that it will go ill with all others, "which say, stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou," Isa.65:5, the dangerousness of these men's condition, I say, you may discover from the present point, when they make any other thing their rock, or their mountain but Christ alone; when they think they can guide

themselves, provide for themselves, teach themselves; these are in a very miserable condition, these are those of which Christ saith, go not after them, for they are deceivers and deluders, for the kingdom of God cometh not with outward observation, as they say, by observing this rule or this form, or that fellowship, or any way that man hath found out to cover himself withal. All these are but fig leaves, which will not bear out the wrath of God, these are but men's coverings, which cover themselves with a covering {as they think} from all evil and wrath, but 'tis not the Lord's Spirit, for the bed is too broad, and the covering is too narrow, Isa.28:20, it will not defend them from the Lord's fierce wrath. These are they that have kindled a fire to warm themselves with, Isa.50:11, but they shall lie down {saith the Lord} in the fire that they have kindled, and in the sparks that they have gathered together. And for all their forms, and prayers, and duties, and ordinances, and holiness, and washings, and baptizings, and their receiving of sacraments, and the like, yet this is that which they shall receive at the Lord's hand, they shall lie down in sorrow; for when you did all these things, did you them at all unto me, and not unto yourselves? Did you not at all fast unto me? Though you pretended to seek me early, and to seek me daily, and did delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and as they that forsook not {in the least} the ordinances of their God, and take delight in approaching to God, yet for all this saith the Lord to the prophets, "cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and

shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins." Isa.58:1. All these things will not deliver thee from wrath, but thou {rather than any other} shall lie down in sorrow, and publicans and harlots {for all your holiness and strictness} shall enter into the kingdom of heaven before you, Matt.21:31, and "it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment," Matt.11:22, than for these that have done these and these things in his name; yet for all this Christ will say, "depart from me, I never knew you, you workers of iniquity." There was nothing but iniquity in your righteousness, in all your duties, in all your forms and professions; you of all others I will not know, you of all others depart from me, you of all others are workers of iniquity; you above all shall lie down in sorrow, and in the sparks that you have kindled; for you have thought yourselves better than others, holier than others, when you are indeed and in truth the vilest and worst of all others. Therefore most desperate and most miserable are these above all, inasmuch as they thought themselves before all, when they think because of their holiness, because of their conformity, because of their moderation, because of their abstinence, because of their meekness, because of their gravity, therefore they are better than others. Here is the great and unspeakable delusion of their own hearts, for grace and true religion never teaches any man to think highly of himself, but to think highly only of Jesus Christ. Grace debases man more and more, and brings him to see the bottomless deceit and delusion

of his own heart; it teaches men not to think better and better of themselves, but worst and worse, and makes men not to desire praise or high esteem from others, but it would have Christ to have all the glory and praise, and itself to be less and less, and worse and worse in its own esteem; for the more grace, the more light, which discovers more and more the infinite and bottomless vileness and delusion of their own natures.

Beloved, this is the true teaching which comes only and alone from Jesus Christ. Man's teaching can never bring this about, but this teaching and learning is from the Father, from heaven; men learn this lesson only in the school of Christ, Jn.6:45, their God is made something, and indeed all and all, and man is nothing but an infiniteness of sin and misery. Let everyone therefore examine himself by this rule, and lay close to his own heart; if he feeds himself, or glories, or feasts himself with any other thing than this, that he is brought to nothing, that the Lord alone may be exalted, and be all in all; let him be sure that he hath not his teaching from this one Father, and this one Master, but his teaching is only by the precepts of men. "Wherefore the Lord said, forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men; therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, even a marvelous work and a wonder, for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men

shall be hid." Isa.29:13-14. And until a man become to know this in experience, whatever he thinks of himself, and whatever acquired parts or holiness he hath, and though he be never so much admired by others, he feeds but on the wisdom of the flesh, and lives and depends on that which the world adores for their gods, either on the external lusts and pleasures of the world, or else on silver, and gold, riches and honour, lands or preferments, &c., which cannot profit a man in the day of wrath, Prov.11:4, or else they feed upon their own righteousness, their own duties, on their leaving this sin, or that sin, or {as they suppose} all sin, all gross sin, and it may be conceived that their obedience is according to the rule and mind of Christ, conforming strictly to the highest and most perfect forms and fellowships; and resting in this, they feed but upon husks and vanity, and delude their own poor souls, as the prodigal, who would fain have filled his belly with the husks, but no man gave unto them. Lk.15:16. None of all these things can satisfy, they will not deliver, nor keep off the wrath of God; they will prove no covering, no shelter at all, but the wrath of God will break in upon them, and make them appear wretched and miserable, vile, naked and abominable. And that soul that is brought to this, to be stripped of all its garments, and made naked, and lost, and undone, {as to itself and all the things of man,} this is the happy soul, this is the blessed soul. The others, all others put their trust in the arm of flesh, and are departed from the fountain of life, from the living God, and therefore are not, nor

cannot be blessed, but are those that are cursed. Jer.2:13.

Therefore we would that ye should take special notice of these two things. First, what this cursed disposition in man is, what the veil is wherewith he is so deludes and deceives himself; and secondly, how this veil is removed. First, what it is, it is that earthly, sensual and devilish wisdom in the hearts of the sons of men, persuading them to be that which they are not, that they are holy, just and good; that they have goodness, holiness, wisdom, and power, &c., and if they improve these {say they, as they may} they may bring themselves into a happy and a safe condition, and thus conclude with themselves that if they can forsake sin, that they can be righteous and holy. This is that devilish wisdom that the devil infused into Adam in his fall, this was and is his eating of the forbidden fruit, when God had created him dependent upon himself for all his power, wisdom, goodness, holiness, he fell from this condition to have a dependence upon himself and on the creaturely being, on his own wisdom and holiness, &c., to have a power in himself, and thus he departed from the Fountain of all good, to seek a happiness in himself, in his own nothingness; and thus he became lost, cursed and miserable. This is the veil, this is the covering, this is the deceit that is upon all flesh, the veil of the covering of all nations. And it is called a covering because it hides and keeps away the light that man cannot see himself as he is, cursed, hellish and infinitely miserable. Now this veil will not suffer the light to come upon him, to see

himself as he is, because man by all means and ways labors to maintain a good opinion of himself, and for others to have the same, and would by no means see himself lost and undone. This veil hides that darkness and gulf of sin that is in him, and tells him that it is not so, nor so with him, as he is holy and righteous, and hath wisdom and power, and the like. This is the veil that is upon the heart which must be rent if ever man come to be happy, if ever he hopes to feast in this mountain of fat things. You know we use veils, that the defects and deformities of things may not appear; and so man doth by his own heart; he would by no means see the ugliness, the monstrous deformity thereof, he would by no means once think that hell and the bottomless pit is in him; he would by no means see the smoke of that bottomless pit arise out of his own heart; but this is certain, though men hide this from their sight and beholding, yet all men have covered themselves with this veil, and 'tis the covering of all nations.

In Adam all die, I Cor.15:22, not a man upon the face of the earth, but all have eaten of this forbidden tree; and because we have eaten, all the endeavor of man now is to keep away the sight of guilt, for he would not see his deformity, his lost condition, but with Adam he runs among the bushes and hides himself among the trees from the presence of the Lord, Gen.3:8, he labors to keep away the light that he may not see his own blackness and deformity. What says he, have I no wisdom, no power, no holiness, no love, no faith, no power to repent, no ability to any good thing? This

he cannot endure to hear of, this he runs away from, as from death and the devil; this cuts him to the very heart. Therefore all his endeavor is to keep this veil whole, that it may still remain; thus he remains under the Old Testament, and the veil is not rent, and is still upon the heart. But in the day that the soul is turned to the Lord, it is content to see and acknowledge its own misery, its own darkness; then is the caul of his heart rent, Hos.13:8, then is hell laid open in him, and the bottomless gulf seen in himself; and that hell men so much speak of, he sees to be really in himself, and that himself is the very image of the devil.

Secondly, take notice how this veil comes to be removed and taken away. Now this veil is only rent and done away by Jesus Christ. Not all the power, nor all the art of all the sons of men is able to remove this covering; there is none to be found in heaven or earth to open the seven seals but only Christ, he alone hath the key of this bottomless pit. Rev.5:5; 9:1. None can unlock this hellish heart of man but himself; his heart is the bottomless pit and the devil is the keeper; and until Christ himself come and unlock and open this gulf, and remove the devil, 'tis not all the endeavors of the sons of men can bind this strong man, Matt.12:29, nor open the soul and dark heart of man; but all their study, and all their endeavors are to strengthen this veil, to make it thicker, that they themselves may not see the horrible pit. Man runs to this thing and other thing, and all this to keep from his light the knowledge of himself; either I say to the cares of the world, or the

pleasures, or the riches and contents thereof, that if it once begins to be opened, and he sees the smoke thereof begin to ascend, he strives by all means to cover it closed again; he chokes these thoughts, that the worm that never dies, Mark 9:44, may not know within him, and to quench the fire which can never be quenched but only by the blood of the Son of God; or else I say, when men are still dogged with the thoughts of hell, and these things will not be a sufficient covering, they seek out further, and get a covering of their own devising; they get to this duty and to that form, and change from better to better {as they think} and from one degree of holiness {as they conceive} to another, and thereby get an opinion that they are children of God and heirs of heaven, and therefore they are safe and all is well with them; and they think they do all this in conformity to the mind and will of God, when it is merely to hide and cover themselves from their own beholding, and that they may behold themselves holy, wise, gracious and happy. Now I say, that the work of Christ is to discover all this to be a delusion and a lie, and to let him see that he is a cursed, hellish, damned, undone, and miserable creature, and that no good is in him at all; and to let him see that Christ Jesus alone is the only Ordinance appointed of the Father to bring many sons unto glory, Heb.2:10, and that there is nothing in an ordinance but Christ alone; and in vain do men talk, and keep such a stir about ordinances, except Christ be the power of every ordinance. He is ordained of the Father to be Judge of the quick and the dead,

Acts 10:42, he is also ordained to give repentance, Acts 5:31, and forgiveness of sins. What can an ordinance do if Christ be not the Ordinance, if he be not the power and virtue of all ordinances? It is he alone that is ordained to be the only Teacher, Master and Father; and therefore call no man father, nor master; nor no external ordinance a guide, but only as Christ is in it; and therefore, that it is in itself empty and dead, and whatever acts not in this One Ordinance Jesus Christ the Son of the Father without whom you can do nothing at all, John 15:5, whatever it be, it is no other but a deceit, a covering and a lie.

FINIS

BUILDERS OF BABEL CONFOUNDED WITH THEIR OWN LANGUAGE.

**Being an exposition by Mr. John Webster,
at the end of a disputation at All Hallows
Lombard Street. He being then requested
to dismiss the multitude with some
profitable exhortations; which were given
from Genesis 11 the 9 first verses.**

"And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech, &c." Gen.11:1.

"And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. And they said one to another, go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the LORD said, behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do; and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of

all the earth; and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth, and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.” Gen.11:1-9.

This is a portion of Scripture, which in the letter and history is apparent to all that hear or read it, and everyone knows the meaning thereof; but what is the mind, the mystery and meaning of the Holy Ghost, is only made known to them that are taught of God; and making no question, that those who have the Spirit of God will own the mystery and divine sense, {“it is written in the prophets, and they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me,” Jn.6:45,} we will through the Lord’s assistance proceed to open them to you; for to them it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom, {“unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God, but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables,” Mk.4:11,} but to all others they are parables and paradoxes, which they neither will, nor can understand.

“And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.” Gen.11:1. The whole earth; that is, that natural lost condition, in which all the sons of men are, all being gone down into the earth to seek a happiness there. Having forsaken their life and happiness in God, they have all digged unto themselves broken cisterns, Jer.2:13, hoping to find a life and a happiness below among the creatures. A

this is the condition of all the sons of men; this is the condition; that is, the language of the whole earth. In this all the sons of men are equal; darkness is come upon all, the image of God is defaced in all. All, the whole nature of man hath but one tongue, but one language. "They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." Psal.14:3. There is not one better than another among all the sons of men; but all are equally lost, all equally departed from God. All are under the same condemnation, they all speak one language; and with one mouth they all blaspheme. What one doth, all do; there is no difference. And in this condition men proceed and go on, they are journeying from the East. Gen.11:2. What way soever any of the sons of men go, they are still journeying on, in and under this misery. The nature of man is laboring and traveling further from God, from the East, from the light of God, from the life of God, which they have lost, and are now walking on in darkness, misery and blasphemy, and all saying and concluding in their practice, that there is no life to be had in God, no comfort in him, he is as a helpless dead image, a mere name, and there is nothing at all in him to relieve and help them; he hath neither power, nor mercy, nor goodness, nor wisdom, nor all-sufficiency; he is a dry tree. And therefore they have turned their backs upon him, and will seek out a rest, and a god, and a help of themselves; and they are journeying, whither? To the land of Shinar, what's that? To the city of drowsiness or the land of sleepiness; when men

think that by their own industry and endeavors, and by their acquired parts, or by their rules and forms, or by their religion which they have taken up, to secure themselves, and to find rest. Here now they begin to erect a Babel, a tower that may reach to Heaven, which may secure them from all danger, and that they may ascend and dwell there, where no destruction may reach them, thereby to prevent the overflowing deluge, that it may not come at them.

When man is once gone out from God, who was his life, and his light, and his rest, and his happiness, being not content with him alone, nor with the tree of life, Gen.2:9, of which he might eat freely, but casting his eye upon the tree of knowledge of good and evil, Gen.2:17, he lusts to eat thereof, for it is pleasant to look upon, Gen.3:6, man would by no means live exclusively upon the Lord, and have a dependence out of himself, but he will take a secure course and provide for himself; he likes well this tree; and here he feeds and eats; he travails in this pleasant plain of Shinar, and here he begins to bethink himself to dwell and to take up his rest; here he can sleep quietly under his own labors, and sit reposedly under his own vine, and here now is the place where all men consult together to raise a Babel; this is done by, and in every man, man having lost himself and gone out of his way, having no house nor tabernacle, having departed from his house built by God without hands, II Cor.5:1, he bethinks himself of building himself a house made with hands, by his own study and invention, and this shall be his abiding, and here he will dwell, and here

with his own hands he will make himself a shelter from all storms and from all destruction.

"And they said one to another, go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly, and they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar." Gen.11:3. They say to one another; that is, not as if men singly spake thus to one another, but every man enters into a consultation with himself, and with the Prince of darkness. And now they having forsaken God the true guide, they hearken to the devil, and to the father of deceit and lies, and take his counsel, and him they will follow, and his works now they do, and not the works of God. {"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own, for he is a liar, and the father of it." Jn.8:44.} And what do they? And they say to one another, "go to, let us make brick and burn them thoroughly," that is, they think and resolve to act like wise men, and make all secure for themselves; their building shall be strong and durable, and their materials accordingly, bricks thoroughly burnt, which shall not fail and molder away; that is, the things that he chooses shall be things agreeable to his own liking, and they must be his own inventing, else he will put no confidence in them; none shall choose for him, whatever it be that will advance man and make him something and great, as to himself and others, and things that men esteem highly of, those he will choose. Nay, and not only so, but he will have

something of his own to trust to, to come into the presence of God with, and he will frame to himself a religion and a righteousness that shall avail before God, which he shall accept, and in which himself may put confidence. And here now poor man hath deluded himself, and they have made themselves aprons, Gen.3:7, and {as they think} a secure covering; here hath he made himself a shelter and a tabernacle, and built up to himself a tower reaching to Heaven, and so shall prevent destruction and condemnation. When man begins thus to build, he chooses {as he thinks} the likeliest and probablest means for his security, and in his conceit builds so strong, that no winds nor any storms can shake him, nor no deluge overthrow his building; and so confident he is, that he thinks the power of Heaven and Earth can never shake this building; for the top thereof shall reach to Heaven; he is so far safe, that he is sheltered from the wrath of God, from the frowns of the Almighty; he hath gotten unto himself such a righteousness, and such a conformity to the rule and mind of God, that he is as it were a perfect man, he sees little amiss in himself; and though he may in words confess that he is a sinner, yet let but any one sin be charged upon him, and he hath {as he thinks} a sufficient excuse, and will clear himself from all sin.

But is this all the end of this strong and stately building? No, "but let us make us a name, lest we be scattered upon the face of the whole earth," lest we should be in as bad a condition as others are, and as the wicked of the world are; we will be wiser, and

condemn them, we will not be like the publicans, who are wicked and profane; but we will forsake sin and live uprightly, and we will do something that we may get us a name, that we are holier than others, Isa.65:5, and we will be no less than master builders, I Cor.3:10, no such wise men as we; no such strict holy men as we; and the end of all this, is, lest death and misery, and sin, hell, and condemnation should break forth and seize upon them, with the rest of the world.

But now in all this time what doth God do? He beholds their works, and their doings, and their contrivings, "and the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded," verse 5, which is not to be understood as if God removed or came down locally, as leaving Heaven, to come down to the Earth, as men when they remove from one place to another, but God came down, that is, he began to manifest himself, he began to show himself to the sons of men; prior to this he 'let them alone,' and they thought themselves secure and that all was right, safe and well, which they had done; but now the Lord begins to appear, to confound their thoughts and inventions, and to show all the sons of men their folly, vanity and madness, in all this they were so confident of, they thought that they were securing themselves from ruin, when alas poor souls, they are running as madly upon their own ruin and destruction as any else in the whole earth; nay, are further from returning, than any other, inasmuch as they are more wise, more holy, and more confident

than others. {"The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican." Lk.18:11.} And herein is their misery the greater, Lk.13:28, therefore it is high time for the Lord now to come down, to scatter this building, and to make it Babel and Confusion. "And the LORD said, behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do, and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do." Gen.11:6. As if the Lord should say, all the sons of men are running headlong to their own destruction, they are all as one man, all do one and the same thing, and they have one name and one language, and all go one way. Satan hath almost gotten his full possession, and they will be wholly guided by him, and follow his counsel, they are all departed from me, and he is almost finished and irrecoverably lost and gone; and yet every man thinks that he is right, and no man considers what he doth, nor once thinks of returning; for every man is right in his own eyes, and nothing will be refrained from them, and if I go not down, if I do not discover myself, and make their folly and madness, and their misery appear, they are running on confidently, never to return. Therefore, "I will go down and confound their language," I must bring to nothing all their works, all their wisdom, all their confidence, and all their inventions, that I may save man from destruction. Now the work of the Lord is to pull down, to ruin, and to destroy all this stately building of man's erecting, and to lay it all

flat, and to let man see, that whatever he plants is in vain, for every plant, which the "heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up," Matt.15:13, whatever man hath wrought by his own power, and in his own wisdom, must be brought to confusion, and to be made Babel, {"I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it; and it shall be no more," Ezek.21:27,} and not a stone left upon a stone, {"the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down," Lk.21:6,} though the Temple which the sons of men have set up, be ever so glorious and precious in their beholdings, yet all must be destroyed, and they and all their works and endeavors, all their forms and inventions turned into a ruinous heap. Isa.17:1; 25:2.

And the Lord will not only say this, but he will also do it, verse 8, "so the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth; and they left off to build the city." When man is once convinced of his miserable condition, and sees himself and all the sons of men thus deluded and befooled, and begins to see that all their confidence is madness, and all their works sin, and all their duties as filthy rags, Isa.64:6, and all their forms and inventions no other but Babel and destruction; then and not before, they leave off to build this city; for then they see themselves {as it were} swallowed up in death and misery, and at their best actions are but dung and dross, and abominable things; and that there is no stability in any of the sons of men; and this is the Lord's work alone, this man hath no

hand in, for it is the Lord that saith and doeth it, to confound this language, and scatter men from this building; so that they can now no more contribute their wisdom or counsel, their strength or endeavors to this City of Confusion.

"Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth," verse 9, all that is of man, from the power, excellency, righteousness of man, may it ever be so beautiful, and ever so esteemed, all is mere Babel, but a city, a temple, a refuge of confusion; and the Lord will scatter and confound every building thereof, that is, he will commix, confound their language, they shall be all amazed and confounded to behold what the Almighty hath done, to see their strong mountains so removed, and their strong city of refuge ruined and blown asunder.

My friends, so far as the Lord hath declared to me, this is the mystery and the living sense of this portion of Scripture. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear," Matt.11:15, and he that hath eyes to see, shall see; he that can receive it, let him receive it. The truth and things of God carry light, power and demonstration in themselves; he that thinks by his own power, or by his own wisdom, or by his own light, or by his own learning to discover them, he is still in darkness, he is to this day raising Babel, and the Lord is not yet come down to confound his language, and the truth hid and sealed up from him.

Now that I may come to make a little further application of these things to ourselves; the first use let it be this, from what hath been spoken we may conclude, that all the sons of men, the whole race and every particular person is equally in one and the same condition. They are all of one mass, of one lump; not one wise, and another foolish; one righteous, and another sinful; not one earthly and another heavenly; not one in light, and another in darkness; not one carnal, and another spiritual; but the whole earth is of one language. They all, even the best are nothing but sin, rebellion, death and enmity; they are all carnal, all departed from the Fountain of Living Waters, Jer.2:13, they are all gone astray and become abominable, and not one that doth good, no not one. Psal.14:3. Every one of the sons of men are under wrath, with all their works and righteousness; everyone is no other but a child of hell, and a son of perdition and confusion. And there is no good that any of them can appropriate, or lay the least claim to; for there is no wisdom, but the wisdom of God, nor no righteousness, but the everlasting righteousness of that only ONE and all sufficient Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ. He that says that there is any good thing in man, any righteousness, wisdom, power, any endeavors after any good or the like, he is no other but a most abominable blasphemer. And this conceit and presumption the Lord hath cursed and will confound. For can an evil tree bring forth good fruit? Either make the tree evil and his fruit evil, or else make the tree good and his fruit good. Matt.12:33. Can man

be evil and wholly evil, and yet bring forth anything that is good? Or is there any good or any holiness but what is from the Fountain of good? For any to dare to say otherwise is high blasphemy to God and Jesus Christ, to take that which is proper and peculiar to the ever blessed God, and to ascribe it to a sinful, nothing, empty creature; for any man to take the crown from the Head of Jesus Christ, and to set it upon his own head, and say this is his, what greater indignity! What higher blasphemy than to say that which is crooked is straight, and to call darkness light, and evil good? Isa.5:20. Who are these that darken counsel by words without knowledge? Job 38:2. From what principle think you, cometh all the religion of this nature; and from whence cometh this kind of teaching? That man must be something, and man must do, and he must act, and he must believe, and he must repent, and there is something required of him to do by way of condition, or else the grace of God is frustrated. Certainly these men are no other but Babel builders; for they never yet knew the confusion of languages in themselves; they were never yet undone, made nothing, nor stripped of their own power, wisdom or righteousness; not convinced of the vanity and nothingness of all their power and endeavors. They never yet saw that these things were all alone proper to Jesus Christ. But they must work, they must do, and they must act. These certainly {whatever they say} never yet were convinced, that man is a lump of sin and weakness, never yet saw where the bottomless pit is, never yet cried out misery and

shame upon themselves, but think they have some goodness and some power, and whilst they are in this condition, they do behold much goodness in themselves, and many fine things of their own making; many silver shrines and goodly performances, Acts 19:24, for they can reform and repent, they can give laws, and take ability to themselves to keep them; and thus miserable man deludes himself and erects Babel!

But when the Lord comes down to see what the children of men are doing, and begins to show them their madness and folly, and to open the mouth of the bottomless gulf in them, then a man appears to himself black and ugly; and that he is as a black African that can never by all his endeavors change his skin, or alter his course, {"can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots; then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil," Jer.13:23,} but that he is mere weakness and nothing but emptiness and confusion, but until this time, what a proud conceited creature is man; and how does he look upon himself, and upon his riches and his parts, and his endowments before others, and thinks everyone should admire him, as he doth himself, and all his actings tend to this end, to be admired and to get himself a name, and he is still speaking of his rules and of his doings, and of his righteousness, and of his strictness; and all this is but to magnify and make himself as great and as excellent as may be. This beloved is the condition of all the sons of men; their folly is their wisdom, and contrariwise, their wisdom is their folly. For man to

be made nothing, and emptied of all his glory, to be made naked and bare, and poor, and blind, and miserable, Rev.3:17, and to forsake himself, and take up the cross of Christ, this he abhors and spits at; this doctrine is heresy and blasphemy; this is the preaching which he calls folly and ignorance, antinomianism and mere ranting, any reproaches that can be invented. And if Christ himself were upon the earth, they would call him a heretic, an enemy to Caesar, and a seducer, and the devil, what not? And who would be so forward to scourge and crucify him as those that so much outwardly attached themselves to him, and said that they were his servants and pretended to walk according to his life and commandments?

In the hearts of all the sons of men there is nothing but this confused language, for "who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" Job 14:4. This is the language that comes out of man, that defiles man, {"not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man," Matt.15:11,} yea all the sons of men, the wisest, the most learned, the holiest. Who sought more after a conformity to the rules of the Scriptures than the Pharisees? Who more exact in those rules? Who attained more external learning than they? The spirit of man being once gone out from this one and only rest, {"thus saith the LORD, stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, we will not walk therein," Jer.6:16,}

he hunts and pursues after a thousand things to make up his emptiness, having lost the center of eternal joy, he is in continual motion and rests nowhere, he walks up and down through dry places, and find no rest, Lk.11:24, he hunts up and down for the land of Shinar, a place to sleep in, but cannot find it.

Consider O ye sons of men, whereto tend all your labors, all your endeavors, all your unweariedness? Is it not to get something to rest upon, some pillow, something to lay down your troubled and unquieted spirit upon? Is there not something of self in all you do, to provide for yourself, to lay up for yourself? Are you not traveling from the East to the land of Shinar, that you may get to the land of sleepiness? Land of Shinar, to find a rest, to repose themselves upon, and to trust in. Some, they are journeying after riches, some after honour, some to vainglory and esteem of those whose estimation they think to be a happiness; and these things {and such like} of the lowest and poorest things, many make their Shinar, their happiness, their glory, their rest. And others there are, who do go a little higher; these things do well, that the others rest in, but those things they think somewhat too low, and therefore they will seek some better things, as they conceive, as learning and arts, as skill in tongues and languages, as philosophy, astronomy, astrology, geometry, and the like, and to excel others, and to be more able than other men. These and some of these they count it their glory and excellency, this is their Shinar,

their place of sleepiness; but moreover some there are, who rest not here, that cannot sleep here; but they think if they can but attain to some higher things, that concern the soul and Heaven, and Eternity, then they could herein indeed take their contentment and rest; the others who contended themselves with riches and honour, and the like; or those that gloried in their arts and sciences, they are convinced, that all these were too short, because they reach but to the body, and to human things, to those glories that men esteem highly of. But, so they reason that if they could but attain to something to please God withal, if they could but worship God after this or that form, in observing strictly these and these duties, and get into this or that Fellowship, this or that gathered Church, which worship God after the purest and most primitive way, and nearest the rule of Christ, if they can but leave this sin and that evil, or if they could but leave all known sin, herein and the like, many men make this their peace and their rest; this is their Shinar, and place of sleepiness and slumbering. And having gotten thus far, they think that they can patch up a righteousness that will be pleasing to God himself; for they can hardly see a slip or a falling really in themselves, though they are ashamed to say so, yet let them but examine their inward parts and they shall find it so. They think they have in a Gospel way performed the conditions required on their part, and they are sincere in what they do; and if at any time they come short, then Christ by his righteousness will supply and make it up, and herein is their peace,

and this is in their esteem, a goodly and a glorious, and an excelling righteousness. None so high as they, none so holy as they, stand farther off, for I am holier than thou, and I am thus and thus qualified. And he looks upon other men with disdain because they come short of him, and because they are not so strict as he, nor have taken so much pains in religion, and done so many duties and walked up to such rules as he. As the Pharisee, I bless God, &c., that I am no whoremonger, drunkard, swearer, not as these base publicans, Lk.18:11, I make conscience of omitting the least duties, I fast twice a week, and I relieve the poor, and pay my dues to the minister, and I would leave all sin, and I would do every duty; and thus men thinks they have covered themselves warm, and this is their Shinar, the place of their desires and rest, here they have found a place to sleep in, and a pillow to repose and lay their heads upon, and to rest their travailing and wearied thoughts, and they could never rest until they came to this Shinar.

But here I proclaim to all such, be they never so secure in themselves and applauded, and cried up as happy and blessed men by others, yet all this is, but this Shinar, this is but the Babel which here the Lord speaks of, and it shall be no other but the place of confusion. Nay publicans and harlots shall go into the kingdom of Heaven, Lk.13:28, when they themselves, these perfect men in their own minds, and in others esteem shall be thrust out. Alas, they cover themselves with a covering, but not with the Lord's Spirit, Isa.30:1, the bed is too short, and the

covering too narrow, Isa.28:20, they cannot cover themselves therewith; ye have indeed preached in my name, and prophesied in my name, and in my name done many great works, and wonderful, but for all this depart from me, you are no other but workers of iniquity, says Christ to such, Matt.7:22; the highest and most glorious, and the most seemingly holy of all these things cannot be the place of rest, for "except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." Matt.5:20. "Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest, because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction." Mic.2:10. Arise therefore and depart, for indeed there never is, nor ever was, nor ever shall be any other but one only place of rest for all the sons of men, and that is only and alone Jesus Christ, that eternal rock and refuge for all nations and generations, that perfect sacrifice of the eternal Son of God, to which nothing in the least can be added, and nothing else was ever required for acceptance, but only this beloved Emmanuel, in whom alone God is well pleased. "And lo a voice from heaven, saying, this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Matt.3:17.

But when thou thinkest that thou must do this duty and that, leave this sin and that evil, and why? Because this is the condition on thy part which thou must perform or else Christ will not perform the promise of Life and Salvation on his part; and herein men are deluded and for all their pains and

endeavors and strictness, yea they fall short of the kingdom of Heaven. For it is not thy works, nor thy duties, nor thy forms, nor thy notions, nor thy Church gatherings, nor anything else of thine which is the accomplishment of the promises, but they are all Yea and Amen only and alone in Christ Jesus, II Cor.1:20, in whom the promises are made. If these works be wrought by thy industry, by thy care, by thy watchfulness, by thy wisdom, by thy power, they are all odious and abominable. God will as soon accept the offering up of swine's blood, and regard as soon the cutting off a dog's neck as any of these thy duties. Isa.66:3. For whatsoever is done by thee or in thee, except it be done by the wisdom, power and hand of Jesus Christ, who is the promise maker, and the promise worker and accomplisher, they cannot be in him Yea, and in him Amen; for he alone is the promise, that is the maker and fulfiller; he must work it by his power; but as long as thou thinkest thou canst do anything, or hast anything to offer, or anything to accomplish, and thou must do it on thy part as a condition, the Lord abhors all such sacrifices as abominable. When thou thinkest such and such rules are prescribed, and I must obey and submit to every rule, not the least but I must do it, and then the promise is mine, for now I am in the right way; and then sayest to thy soul, "soul take thy ease, for this is the true place of rest," here thou mayest lie down in safety, Lk.12:19, examine thyself, is not this thy end? Howbeit all this is nothing else but the building up of Babel in the land of Shinar. All this while when thou thoughtest thou

wast traveling to thy rest, thou art traveling quite contrary, traveling to ruin, to destruction and confusion; thou art but traveling from the East, to the plain of Shinar, a place beautiful indeed and pleasant to the sons of men, when they had turned their backs upon the East, and were gone out from God, from their rest, and were not content with the fountain, {"for my people 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.2:13,} but followed the streams which in the end are dried up, and where there is no water to quench thy thirst, but only a mere hell and place of torment, and not one drop to cool thy tongue. Lk.16:24.

Secondly, we may see here that sleepiness is the end that all these builders of Babel propound to themselves; they would have some rest from their doings, and from their labors, and from their wisdom, and from their endeavors; their end in all they do is security, that they may sleep quietly, that they may not fear, neither death, nor hell, nor judgment, that they may say to their souls, "peace, peace, when there is no peace," Jer.6:14, and now they having made a Covenant with death and hell, Isa.28:18, here they will rest, and here they will build, and here they will sleep. Being come to this pleasant plain, here they resolve to secure themselves, and to build a tower reaching to Heaven. They consult and conclude, now they have their hearts desire, and nothing shall be restrained from them; and all this they do, says the Holy Ghost,

"lest we should be scattered;" all these things, and all these devices, are but coverings of men's invention to save themselves from wrath and from the guilt of conscience, which else would gnaw within them, and be in them the worm that never dies, Mark 9:44; for hereby they think they have made themselves a shelter from the storm and the wind, Isa.4:6, but 'tis but as the house built upon the sand having no foundation, Matt.7:26, it can never stand, here is no security; though they think to provide for, and secure themselves, and think themselves wiser and holier than all other men. Their end is always selfishness, to secure and provide for themselves, and the means by which they attain all, is also within themselves, by their own wisdom, power, parts, righteousness, endeavors, and the like.

Also in this way of man to come to life and rest, what does he, for he bethinks himself with all the wisdom he can, to choose wisely and discreetly; we will here build {say they to themselves} and we will build sure and safe, and we will make brick and burn them well, and so their building may endure, and not fall upon their heads. They have still something or other, that they themselves invent, and pretend the rule of the word to go by, as the safest way; sometimes that they find out, that their own self tells them is a likely way, saying to themselves, Christ has promised that if men believe and repent, then they shall be saved. Well, I will go and perform these, and reform my life and the like, {says man,} and then these promises are mine. The

Jews {especially the Pharisees} were very expert and nimble at this, who were strict according to God's own rule, who more searched after every iota of the Law, and as far as they were convinced strived after perfect conformity. Herein lay the top of their religion, and here they build up their Babel. Now when Christ comes and strips them of their righteousness and pulls down their Babel, and by his doctrine lays them open to the world, and makes them appear as they are, to be open sepulchers, dissembling hypocrites, to be but pretenders to righteousness when they have none at all, Matt.23:1-39, but to make religion a cloak to devour widows houses, and to serve their own turns, to make for their entertainment with the world, &c. Christ now opening these filthy sepulchers, shows what they were within, how fair, and beautiful, and holy soever they seemed to be without; and this made them so mad, as to persecute him even to death, nothing would serve them but his blood, and the cruelest death was too good for him. Yet these were men of no low principles, {as men think,} for they were the gravest, the soberest, the wisest, the most learned, and the strictest observers of the Law, and the teachers of it to others. Men highest in esteem, the strictest for worship, according to the pattern; men that feared God {as they, and generally all men thought,} and loved their neighbor, and did righteous things to men, and herein was their glory.

Now some among us go further than all this, for we strive to walk according to the rule, and

wherein we come short, we have a Mediator and an Intercessor, and that is Jesus Christ who died at Jerusalem, whom the Jews would not acknowledge, but crucified; and we will repent and believe in him. And now beloved, these have builded up Babel higher than the other; for alas, this is nothing but wearing a garment of linsey-woolsey, Lev.19:19, this is nothing but sewing a new piece into an old garment, and making the rent worse. Matt.9:16. This is but putting new wine into old bottles, and the bottles are broken, and both bottles and wine {and so these men} utterly lost. They think that man must do, and man must teach, and man must inform, and see not that Jesus Christ is the only Teacher, the only Master, the only Guide! They must find out, and they must study, and they must collect, and they must gather here flower and there a flower, and this they present to the people as a precious posy, whereof they themselves in their own experience know nothing at all; but they have sought it out by their learning, and stole it out of other men's labors. Are these {think you} prophets and labourers of the Lord of the harvests sending? Lk.10:2. No never, all these things must be lost, esteemed as dirt and dung; for you know what Christ says, for "no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish." Lk.5:37. If all that we do, be anything but what Christ does for us and in us; if all we teach, be not Christ teachings himself; if all our works be not from the new man, born of God which cannot sin; if all be not the works

of Christ, whatever it be that man erects and sets up to direct and guide him, but only the wisdom from above; whatever it is that strengthens him, but the power from on high, all must be pulled down and scattered, all made Babel. "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up," Matt.15:13, for if it be not wrought and acted by his Spirit in us, it cannot stand.

When men think that by their power and wisdom, and by their authority to act for God, and that they can propagate the Gospel and establish truth and settle religion, and that they can make a uniformity which all men ought to submit to, whereto doth all this tend, but that man should take upon him the Work and Sovereignty of the Almighty? And this is the plain English, God is not wise enough, nor powerful enough, nor all-sufficient enough to erect the kingdom of his Son; but we must do something, and we will contrive, and we will send forth labourers as we shall think meet, and what we judge to be truth and wisdom, and holiness, that and no other, shall be established. What is all this, but to establish the wisdom of man, and the power of man; nay indeed the weakness and ignorance, and the blasphemy of men above the strength, wisdom, righteousness and all-sufficiency of the eternal God! What is this, but charging of God with weakness and insufficiency, and ascribing that to man, which alone is due to God? Is this any other, than to make the weapons of our warfare strong in man, and in the power of his might? II Cor.10:4. Now the blessed work of God, is to pull down this Babel, built by the

sons of men. O says man, let's have the wisdom and power of the magistrate, and let him show himself strong for God, and what he judges evil, and sinful, and schismatic, and heresy, let that be rooted up; and we will make the crooked thing straight, Lk.3:5, and we will undertake to make men religious and to reform their lives. What is all this, but to be wise in his own wisdom, and consistent in his own strength, and holy in his own holiness, and that he alone is judge in the things of God. What greater blasphemy can there be! Instead of being strong in God and the power of his might, Eph.6:10, they are mighty and strong in man and in themselves. Now all these works the Lord will ruin and destroy; all this strong building he will make Babel, he will turn it to confusion; all this language will the Lord confound, scatter and destroy. Whatever it be, which is of man or by man erected {though pretending a service and a worship of God} either found out and invented by himself, or else pretending a prescribed rule in the word for it, and this done by the power and wisdom of man, it is no other but a Babel, and it shall be made a city of confusion. And this the Lord will certainly do and bring to pass in man; either that both he and his works, his wisdom, righteousness, power, &c., may be destroyed and confounded together, that both himself and all his works may be burnt up together, or else that his work shall be burnt, and yet he may be saved, yet so as by fire, I Cor.3:13, for this fire of the Lord shall try every man's work of what sort it is; if the Lord in mercy descends and comes down amongst the sons of

men, to burn up all their works, their wisdom, their strength, and all things of this nature, to strip man of all his abilities and righteousness, and make him nothing in himself, and abominable in his own sight, Ezek.20:43; this destruction of the flesh is that he may be delivered from death and wrath, and that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord, I Cor.5:5, and that he may bring him to rest, peace, wisdom, righteousness and glory in that alone and all-sufficient Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom alone are all these; but in the creature nothing but trouble, confusion, death, sin, hell and condemnation, in which all the sons of men are concluded, and all their best works, and Christ alone is ordained of the Father to be our strength, wisdom, righteousness, redemption and salvation. I Cor.1:30. Him alone hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. Him alone I say, being made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption, that so no flesh should glory in his presence, I Cor.1:29, but according "as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." I Cor.1:31.

FINIS

THE POWER OF DIVINE ATTRACTION, OR THE FATHER'S GREAT LOVE IN DRAWING POOR SINNERS UNTO HIS SON.

**Delivered at Whitehall on the Sixth
of John, verse 44.**

"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day." John 6:44.

Beloved, when the power of God from eternity, {which was himself,} was made out in the appearance of flesh at Jerusalem, when this Eternal Word {I say} was in that veil, which was the making out of the true body of Christ; when the Saviour of the world appeared in the flesh, to make out himself to the sons of men, and in all his actings and speakings, we find nothing else sought, acted or spoken by him, but the fulfilling and accomplishing of the work and will of the Father, about which he was sent, John 6:38; and therefore whatsoever he did, or said, was only that he might finish and accomplish that great work about which the Father had sent him; therefore in that regard he said that he had meat to eat that man knew nothing of, understood not, nor could see. John 4:32. And as he came to fulfill the work of the Father, not only in the flesh in those manifold and unparalleled sufferings he underwent, but also in the power of that Spirit that he might convey very life and salvation to the

souls of men, this was his meat and drink; so that this is it that in all his speakings he chiefly holds out, so herein, he having declared that he was that bread which came down from heaven, that only true and spiritual manna, John 6:33, that nourishes the souls of those that are his own, and besides which there is none other. Hereupon {he holding forth this so boldly and so clearly} the Jews, the Scribes and Pharisees, those religious and learned men of the times not knowing the mystery of this bread, became extremely offended, and despised and derided him, saying, "how can this man give us his flesh to eat?" John 6:41. Truly beloved, that which is held out to us by this, is, that the Jew is in every man by nature, and is discontented and offended at the speaking out of the spiritual things of Jesus Christ. When it is held forth that there is no other wisdom, strength, righteousness and holiness but that which is only in and from the Son of God, and that this is the only meat and drink of the soul, and that there is not any one of the sons of men, that hath either wisdom, or holiness, or power, or any good thing of his own, this is a hard saying to flesh and blood, for "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." I Cor.2:14.

The words now read are the answer of our Saviour to the murmuring objection of the carnal minded man or religionist saying, how can this man be bread unto us, or manna, or meat and drink? Is not this the son of Joseph? And the reason is,

because they saw only the veil, but not the Godhead, the eternity or everlasting WORD that was under that veil, viz., his flesh or his external appearance. Now, he therefore gives an answer to this their murmuring, and shows the reason and ground why it could not be otherwise with them, that their carnal minds could do no other but murmur at these spiritual makings out of the mind of God, because no man could know him, love him, and believe in him, but those that were given him of the Father; those that were drawn by the Spirit and love of the Father only would understand, love, believe, and know him; but otherwise all others would nor could do no other but murmur and repine; for all others, in seeing they did see and not understand, for their foolish heart was blinded and darkened with impenitency of heart, and therefore saith he, "no man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him."

First, here is discovered by way of negation and exclusion the impossibility of man {as man} to come to Christ, "no man can come to me, &c.," John 6:44, "with men this is impossible." Matt.19:26.

Secondly, here is laid down the power, way and means by which man comes to Christ, and that is in and by the drawing of the Father. When the Father draws, man cannot but come; and when the Father draws not, man cannot but not come unto Christ. "No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him, and I will raise him up at the last day," as if he should say, if he be not drawn and raised up by me, he can never come, and

I never raise nor draw until the last day, till man's last day, man's power, wisdom, strength, holiness, and all that is in or of man, is at an end, and that he is lost, distressed and undone. Then at that last day I will raise him up, I will come in and stay no longer, for whilst man's day, {that is, man's life, wisdom and strength remains,} there is nothing but resistance, blindness, fightings and opposition.

First, no man can come, that is, in his natural, blind, dead, and lost condition, wherein he is as a dead bone, Ezek.37:1-28, there is no life at all in him, wherein he is stark blind and sees not the things that concern his peace, Luke 19:42, therefore he hath no will, nor power, nor mind to come unto me. Unto me, who am the Saviour of sinners, the truth, righteousness, and sanctification itself, to come unto me, that is, to me indeed, for men had power enough to come to Christ's bodily appearance while he was here on the earth, but this is not that spiritual coming unto him implied; to come in conceit, notion, opinion, or in a verbal or literal way, according to the history and relation of him. But to come to Christ is to come in the life of Christ, in the power of God, to come unto him in the eternal power, that he may only teach them, lead them, and guide them, and be their only Master, that they may know no master, no father, no teacher, no leader, nor any strength besides him. Oh beloved, this is not to be done without the drawing of the Father, or not but in a fatherly way, since he is the Fountain of eternal love; the Father or Fountain of love that hath made out his eternal love himself in the similitude of

flesh, for God was in Christ {saith the text} "reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." II Cor.5:19. It must be the love and goodwill of the Father made out to the soul that must call in and will draw it, and cause it to come in, to be at peace with him and be reconciled, only by his own making out his love in Christ. So I say that this eternal love that sent out Christ, and that gives with Christ all good things, Rom.8:32, it is the same eternal love and power, the same everlasting goodness and goodwill of the Father that draws and brings the spirits of men unto Christ, else they cannot come.

Draw them, but how is that? With such a drawing as must be effectual, as the rain falls not in vain, but the earth bringing forth fruit meet for them for whom it is appointed, Heb.6:7, so the Eternal Word and Power of the Father made out through the flesh of Christ to the soul, calls, compels, draws and works effectually and brings home the soul; and this drawing of the Father is the eternal and everlasting power of the Godhead or Spirit that wonderfully draws the souls of men; and when they are thus drawn, they cannot but follow; and being thus drawn by him, this is the joy, life, wisdom and righteousness of the soul, here it dwells and rests, having lost its own life, it lives and receives full satisfaction in the life, power and wisdom of Christ. Then, it is the office of the Son whom the Father hath sent to quicken it, and raise it up at that last day, and make it like himself, even to sit together

with him in heavenly places. Eph.2:6. The point I shall offer to your consideration is this.

That the drawing of the Father only leads the souls of men unto Christ, otherwise none can come unto him. Before this truth can be received by us, or be of any benefit unto us, it must become a truth of evidence and manifestation and experience in our hearts; yet to merely witness this from the literal word, that this is truth, you may be pleased to look upon a place or two, yet they can make out nothing to us except the same be made out by the eternal Spirit. The word is but a dry tree and dead letter, and the experience of the spouse in Canticles 1:4, witnesses the same, "draw me and we will run after thee;" her experience had known, that the drawings and leadings of those cords and bands of love {that are never to be broken in Christ Jesus} only made her willing to go after that Husband, Father and God of loving kindness and mercy; otherwise man never comes, nor is ever drawn, but only by these cords of God's love in Christ. Again, the same is witnessed in Jeremiah 31:3, for there the prophet tells us, "the LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee," and in Hosea 11:4, he declares that he had "drawn them with cords of a man, with bands of love;" the soul thus finding that it is only the power of the Father, the love of the Father that hath drawn him out of many waters, just as the psalmist witnesses, for David had found it so, "I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.

He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God, many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD." Psal.40:1-3. There is nothing but the eternal power of God that is able to draw the soul out of that deep and miry pit in which it lies. The drawing of the Father, which power only draws men unto Christ, otherwise they will not, nor cannot come. "And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." Jn.5:40. That this is so indeed, divine truth witnesses, and the experience of all Saints, that men will not, cannot do, act or work, nor come in unto Christ without this effectual drawing.

First, because Jesus Christ is not known and understood in the preciousness, excellency and value of him to the lost, blind, and carnal heart of man; for man in this condition knows not the worth, sweetness and excellency of him; therefore man comes not unto Christ as David witnesses, "the LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people as they eat bread, and call not upon the LORD," Psal.14:1-4, and so I say, man comes not to Jesus Christ, because he is ignorant of that life, glory, righteousness and immortality that is laid up in him, and therefore the apostle renders it as the reason

why the princes of the world {princes of learning, and princes in zeal and religion} killed him; why, because {saith he} that none of the princes of this world knew him, for had they known him, they would not have crucified the Lord of life. I Cor.2:8. So I say, the ground why our spirit comes not to Jesus Christ is that blindness and ignorance that is in the heart of man, because he knows not the excellency and preciousness of Christ. As our Saviour said to the woman of Samaria, "if thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water," John 4:10, and so it was with Jerusalem, "if thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes." Lk.19:42.

Again, men cannot come to Jesus Christ, because as he is the power of God, and appears in the wisdom of God, so he appears as foolishness unto them, and they disdain him as a weak and mean thing; as Isaiah saith, "for he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground, he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not." Isa.53:2-3. The apostle also tells us, "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them,

because they are spiritually discerned," I Cor.2:14, and in 1:23, "but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness." So that man doth not, will not, nor cannot come to Jesus Christ, because the spirit of Christ appears a poor despicable thing, and the heart of man is so set against him; and even that stone that is to be the head stone of the corner, it is rejected and laid by, even by those that account themselves master builders. This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes! Psal.118:22-23. "Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious, and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious, but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient, whereunto also they were appointed." I Pet.2:6-8.

Again, another ground why the souls of men come not to Christ is because the appearing of Christ in the Spirit makes all the hidden things of man's heart lie open, even that which man himself has never seen, nor ever thought was in him, and this man truly hates, and will not abide to see nor behold that depth of pride, that self-glorying, that hypocrisy, &c., and that bottomless pit of misery. Man's eye has never looked into himself, into his own heart, but in the day of the appearance of Jesus Christ all is discovered and laid open, and therefore

man would by no means come to Christ, because the appearing of Christ discovers his sin and condemnation. Man loves his own life, "skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life," Job 2:4, but "he that findeth his life shall lose it," Matt.10:39; and therefore our Saviour tells us plainly, "this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." John 3:19. So here the ground is rendered why the Gospel is condemnation to the sons of men; the Gospel brings light, but men resist it and hate it. Christ is "the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." John 1:9. "I am the light of the world, he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Jn.8:12. Here is the condemnation of all the sons of men, is that they dare not stand in the light of Christ, not being able to behold hell in their own hearts, but labor by all means to cover it, for the light of Christ would show them that there is no thought, action, or duty, or performance that ever they did, that had anything of purity in it, but it was all sin. Now man not daring to see his own misery, therefore he runs from this light, and gets himself behind any tree. He runs from the appearance of him that sits upon the throne, Rev.6:16, and so resolves that he will not see his own misery, death, and condemnation, neither will he believe it though it be told him by an angel from heaven, lest thereby he may know, or be convinced that his deeds are only evil, and that continually.

Again, this is the work of the Father to draw men unto Christ, because no less than infiniteness and eternity is able to bring God and man together. The separation between God and man is so vast, and they are at such an infinite distance since his fall, that nothing but infiniteness can bring these two infinite ends together, for the soul of man in one sin, sins against an infinite God; in any one sin it goes out and turns away from the infiniteness of all blessedness, good, joy, glory, and peace, and so goes down into the infiniteness of nothingness, {for nothing is a kind of infiniteness,} and he is indeed gone into a far country, as the prodigal was. Lk.15:13. Now therefore nothing but the infinite power and infinite wisdom and strength that is in the Lord, is able to bring life out of death, something out of nothing; and therefore there is nothing to bring the heart of man out of that far country whereunto it is gone, and out of that bottomless pit into which it is fallen; nothing can do it but infiniteness and eternity; nothing but the same Spirit that raised up Jesus Christ from the dead, can quicken our mortal bodies. II Cor.4:14.

There is nothing I say, able to do it {but the same Spirit} to bring a poor soul from under hell and condemnation, and make it one in unity with the Spirit of Christ. And therefore the Apostle witnesses "you that were aliens, hath he made nigh by the blood of Christ," and you that were sometimes afar off "are made nigh by the blood of Christ." Eph.2:12-13. So now, I hope this appears a truth to you, and I hope the Lord will make it so in you by experience,

for until then it is not a savor of life unto us; for except you have the Scriptures made good in the power thereof in your own hearts, what are the Scriptures to you? And I have alleged them for that very end that you may find and say, these things are all fulfilled, not only among the Jews and at Jerusalem, but really and truly in myself. So then I hope that some of you see it in the alone power of the Father that draws the souls of men unto Christ, for otherwise no man can come unto him. But give me leave yet a little further for the clearing it, and explaining it by the way, what this power of the Father is, or how the Father doth draw or bring the souls of men unto Christ.

God is said to be Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in Spirit and in Truth. John 4:23. God is nothing but life, glory, power, spirit and immortality; and whatsoever thing we could have a notion or similitude of, that is able to set out strength, and life, and glory, and wisdom, yet all these come infinitely short of setting out the strength and power of the Lord of Hosts, the great Jehovah, who is the one that keeps Israel. Psal.121:5. He that keeps Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps, so that it is to be cleared, what power it is that brings the spirits of men unto Jesus Christ. Certainly there is nothing but the same eternal Spirit that was in Jesus Christ; it is the same immortal and immediate hand and power of God that doth ever raise up the soul of man, and bring it unto Christ, and nothing but that Spirit only, and therefore from hence is that of the Apostle, that no man can so

much as say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost, I Cor.12:3, and except a man be born of Water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. John 3:5. For 'tis all one, and 'tis wrought by one and the same Almighty Spirit, to say that Jesus is the Lord by the Spirit, and to be born of the Spirit, for man to say and confess to ten thousand times, if he be not brought to the spiritual apprehension and realization of the Lord's Almighty power and grace exerted on his helpless behalf. All his confessions in words are nothing, for "by one Spirit {saith the text} ye are all baptized into one body," I Cor.12:13, even the whole body, and they all testify one and the same thing, that there is but one Spirit, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all, Eph.4:4, and that they have all been made to drink into one spirit, which is that one, boundless, infinite and eternal Spirit of the Father, that like the wind, "bloweth where it listeth," and we may hear the sound, Jn.3:8, and taste the operation thereof, "but know not whence it cometh," nor when it will work, but comes and goes when he pleases, and not in the least when men will, they having no command of that free and sovereign work. It is only this one Spirit that makes the soul one with Jesus Christ, and therefore the Apostle witnesses, "if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you," Rom.8:11, this is that Spirit that searches all things, and tries all things, even the hidden things of God, I Cor.2:10; this is that living

Spirit that blows upon the dry bones, Ezek.37:4, the Spirit of the four winds that blows upon the dead and rotten bones, and the blowing of the Spirit brings sinew to sinew, bone to bone, and this makes them live and stand up before the Lord; and there is nothing else but this Spirit that doth it, and there is nothing that can be conjoined with it. However men may say and keep a great deal of bustling about the power of man, that so it may not be said that there was any to help him; yet I say that it is the Spirit of God alone that draws man to Jesus Christ, that it may not be said that his idol hath done it; for otherwise the mouths of all would not be stopped, Rom.3:19, and all flesh would not become silent before him. Zech.2:13. Neither would it be said that the saints rejoice in nothing else but in the Lord Jesus Christ alone.

Objection. But I know that it will be objected, though God doth thus, and he only draws the soul to Jesus Christ, yet this is not done without means and instruments. To which I answer, that truly I grant it to be so, but the ways of God are like himself infinite, and he is infinitely wise, and his ways are past all the thoughts and imaginations of the hearts of men, for eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor is the heart of man ever able to find out the secret ways of the Lord. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Rom.11:33. "But as it is written, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered

into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." I Cor.2:9.

Secondly, God hath not only determined a thing, but determined also by what power, and instruments, and means he will bring it to pass; but in this it is otherwise with God than with man. Man may propose a means to an end, that is weak and may fail, but God never intends and purposes an end, but the means are as infinite as Himself, and as eternal and omnipotent as Himself, so that his means cannot fail. He speaks and it shall and must come to pass. It is true God hath ordained the means by which he brings men to Jesus Christ; but this means is his own power, and spirit, and strength. "For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." Psal.33:9.

Objection. But thou wilt say, is it solely by himself alone without an organ and instrument? Is there not something subordinate? To which I answer, truly the workings of God have always a subject wherein to be manifested, as in man, there is the soul which is the recipient and subject in which the things of life and death are acted, there is usually an organ, and how should they hear without a preacher, Rom.10:14, yet both the organ and the preacher are empty dead things, and if I or any man, in being exercised about the things of Christ, should look upon ourselves otherwise, quite laying by all thoughts of power, wisdom, ability, to do anything, but to be only as a pipe or cistern, through which those divine things pass, and no more, we take that praise to ourselves which is alone due to God. Now

though it be so, I say, that this organ is but a dead thing through which the life of God passes, if we be anything else in our message and speaking to you but as men that have denied ourselves, laid aside our own wisdom, strength, conceits and abilities, and all the workings of our own heads, if we be not dead to all things, that so the Lord may speak through us, then I may boldly say that we are not those instruments and ambassadors by which he entreats his people to be reconciled unto him. II Cor.5:20. Therefore be pleased to consider that place of the Apostle in I Cor.3:6, "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase," so then Paul may be called a planter, and Apollos a waterer, but doth he go no further? Nay, {saith he,} "neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase," and though they may improperly be called planters and waterers, yet neither is the planter anything, nor the waterer anything, and so that it is clear, it is no otherwise but thus, that it pleased God out of his own love and goodness to condescend so low as to speak the words of eternal life and mercy by us, and to one another, that men out of the same blood and frailty should become instruments and no other, in the hand of the Lord, taking no glory to themselves and anything, but only to be as weak, frail, and dead instruments whereby the Lord will speak out the words of eternal life. But this creature is to be considered as nothing at all; neither is he that planteth anything, nor he that watereth, but God is all and all, I Cor.3:7, therefore, I say, till it be so

with us, that we are dead to all our own wit and reason, and all our understanding, till these are killed and dead, and we stand only waiting upon the Lord, as Habakkuk saith, "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reprov'd," Hab.2:1, I say, when the soul is thus dead and silent to his own wit, to his own self-seeking, to all his own opinions, of wisdom or strength or parts; I say, there is no man which is a true prophet or messenger from God until then, for all the prophets and ambassadors from God come thus qualified, and they are not ashamed thus to shame themselves, and to be as nothing in the eyes of themselves and others, that so the Lord alone may be lifted up and exalted by them. And when God appears thus in the poor dead organ, then usually God works in them, and by them, for saith the apostle, "we have this treasure in earthly vessels." II Cor.4:7. God uses organs and instruments, but there is no efficacy in the instruments, for, notwithstanding all that I can say and speak, if the eternal sense and wind of the Spirit to be not at the back of it, and go home with it, it will be but a parable, a history and a paradox to you. Saith Christ, "to you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom." Matt.13:11. So then it is only the immortal word of the Lord that draws the soul, and it is the power of eternity which works all, and it is from mercy and great condescension {on his part} to speak out these things, by such frail instruments; but it is so, "that no flesh may glory in his presence,"

I Cor.1:29, and that the praise may be of God, and not of the vessel or of man.

And know further, that it is the Spirit of the Father, the same eternal power of the Father, even the same that is God; for it is the same God, though the manifestations be diverse, and though there be the manifestations of the Father, and Son, and Holy Ghost, yet they are one, for they are not three, but ONE.

The next thing I shall explain is, that what is meant by Christ, "no man can come unto me," by me, here is not meant the coming of the fleshly presence and body of Christ, for then must we {with Mary} seek him amongst the dead; no, for he is not here but is risen; as it is not meant of the coming to Christ in the history, and notion, and in the letter; for so all men making profession are come to Christ. The text saith, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself," II Cor.5:19, and again, "the Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us." John1:14. What is it to come unto him? Certainly then it is to come to the Emmanuel, he that is God with us, or rather God in us; but saith the Apostle, "to those that are called we preach Christ crucified, Christ the power of God and wisdom of God." I Cor.1:24. So that to come unto Christ is to come to the power of Christ, to have him abiding and dwelling in us, carrying us, and leading us into all truth, John16:13, and therefore he tells you again, "Christ in you the hope of glory." Col.1:27. Therefore saith the apostle, "examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not

your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" II Cor.13:5. So that to come to Christ, is to come to the power of Jesus Christ, and Christ is the power of God, and the wisdom of God. I Cor.1:24. Nay, it is God through his Spirit, teaching us, and guiding us, and directing us; he being the sole master, ruler, power, and strength in us; and this is to come unto Jesus Christ, from whence it being thus explained, there is a deduction or two we would draw from what has been said.

First, if the immortal Spirit only draw the souls of men unto Christ, that is, unto himself, for he is the love of the Father made out unto us, for Christ was God dwelling in flesh; then if it be so, then man considered {as man} cannot be anyways drawn or driven, or can come unto Christ; for not any power of man {as man} or the power of the whole creation is able to draw man unto Christ, but only the power of the Father. Let men say what they will, there is no power of man, or any actions or disciplines of man which are able to bring man unto Christ, for he is weak and cannot, willful and will not, guilty and dare not come to Christ; he dare not appear before him. But this is a drawing whether the carnal mind will or will not; for though it murmur and repine, yet it draws him out of this spiritual Egypt and bondage; and it shows how false all his pretenses are which the world so much admires and cries up. Every man thinks that he can go to Christ, and that he can bring others to Christ by arguments and persuasions, and the like; and for this purpose are all the forms of

religion set up under pretense of coming, and bringing, and going to Christ, and going on to the heavenly Canaan, and to the New Jerusalem. But did they but look into their own hearts, they would see this was but going from the Lord, instead of going or coming to him, for all these devices are but the cover over the iniquity of their own hearts; for every several way and form will say, they are journeying to Christ, and to find him, when alas, where is the man that minds him? But all only seek themselves, their own rest, and to quiet their own hearts, and to cover the smoke, and the cry, and the guilt that lies upon them, and to get comfort to themselves, and then they are safe, and they think that they have gotten near to Jesus Christ. And when he wants peace, then he bethinks himself of walking more close, and stricter to those forms and rules by which he has quieted his own conscience; and thus he runs in a circle, and makes himself, his works, and his own duties his salvation. For if thou askest thy own heart seriously, as to what is the reason of thy praying and going into this form or the other form, is it not because thou thinkest that God accepts thee and loves thee? And is not this to deny this truth, that there is nothing but the power of the Father that can draw thee, that there is nothing able to draw thee, but the immortal seed and the almighty hand of God; and to say, that something else is sufficient to draw thee unto Christ? But here now lies the depth of this deceit, for thou drawest in a religious way, and hast gotten a covering, and a profession, and such and such actions into thy hands; and here

thou dost take thy rest, and what follows? Thou dost gather together, and heapest up all nations to make thyself strong and secure, but thou covereth not with the covering of the Lord, Hab.2:5, and so thereby layest sin upon sin, Isa.30:1, for thou covereth indeed with a covering, that thereby the condemnation, hell, and guilt in thy own heart may not be made manifest to thee.

Now consider whether ever thou canst come to Jesus Christ, who is the Rock of Ages, that goest not in the leadings of the Father. But if thy own heart did apprehend that thou was that child {which Ezekiel speaks of} cast out into the open field, and hast no hand to help thee, nor any eye to pity thee, Ezek.16:5, if it were so with thee, then he would appear to thee, and lead thee; and if thou thoughtest that thou wast the most ignorant creature in the world, if thou wast but blind enough, and bad enough in thy own sight; but the misery of the world lies herein, because they think that they see, therefore their sin remains. John 9:41. For there is no difference amongst all the sons of men, for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Rom.3:23. Thou mayest, and I know dost think so, that there is indeed a difference in some, but truth hath witnessed it, that every man hath sinned, and is at an infinite distance from the Lord God of mercy, and that there is no salvation, nor any power, but in the hand of the Almighty, and that he alone is able to make peace and bring together those two infinite distances, and to make them one.

Now judge whether this, or the way of the world brings the greatest inconveniency, and whether this way of man do not set him at a further distance from his true rest, for if man thinks that he can come to Christ by anything of himself, by any religious actions or performances, then from this it must needs follow, that he sees not his own weakness nor wickedness, for there is no sin, nor wickedness, nor misery made manifest unto him, and he makes lies his refuge, and under falsehood hath hidden himself away, Isa.28:15, and drawn away his heart from the living and eternal God to depend upon the lying and deceitful power and wisdom of man, having dug unto himself broken cisterns. Jer.2:13.

Secondly, so that this will follow, that this man hath found a rock to slay himself upon, for if thou thinkest that thy actions and performances will bring thee nearer unto God than other men, or that anything can draw thee nearer, but the sheer work of the Spirit in bringing thy soul near to Christ, is not this {I say} to set up something against the power of the Father? Is not this to set up error against truth, and darkness against light, and antichrist against Christ? For here it is manifest that there is nothing but the power of the Father to draw all men unto Christ. Now seeing that thou hast made lies thy delight, and vanity thy trust, see what is pronounced against thee, for all thy confidence and strong opinions of thy safety and security, for "cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD."

Jer.17:5. I say, this only leads man from a denial of himself to a setting up of himself, from a true waiting and dependence upon the power of God, to a depending and hanging unto the wisdom and power of the flesh. Now when the soul has some true experience of this in its own heart, that no hand draws to the Father, but the Spirit only; oh then, this will make the heart of man lament, and say, what a hard heart have I, for I cannot go one step towards my Saviour. This makes him cry out and say, come Lord Jesus and open my blind eyes, that I may receive my sight, Mark 10:51, and thou Son of David have mercy upon me, for there is none but thou alone that can cure my leprosy and save my soul, or else I perish, I perish forever; and this is that which makes man to have the true circumcision, and to worship God in the Spirit, and have no confidence in the flesh. Phil.3:3.

Then if it be the Father's power and Spirit that only draws men unto Christ, then neither man nor magistrate can draw or drive them thither. The work of the Father is his own work, and he hath not substituted any other in its place, for he will not give his glory to another, neither suffer his holy name to be polluted. "I am the LORD, that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images." Isa.42:8. Now if it be thus, that unless the Father draw man unto Christ, man cannot come, then it must needs be lies and vanity for any of the sons of men to take upon them, and say that they can and they must act something, either to draw or drive men unto Christ; as we know this hath

been the undertakings of all ages and times, but what was the fruit thereof? Under pretense of doing God good service, they have shed the blood of the saints, that it might be fulfilled that not a prophet perished out of Jerusalem, Lk.13:33, for still in all ages, who hath more persecuted the Gospel, and the true professors thereof than those who show most of zeal and profession thereof. Christ and all the Prophets and Apostles, and generally all the Martyrs have suffered upon this account, that upon them might come all the blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel, to this very day, Matt.23:35, and that the bondwoman always persecutes those that are from above. Gal.4:29. Now I say, for the Magistrates to say that they can propagate the Gospel, and keep back errors; alas, what is all of this nature, but high presumption against the power and absolute authority of Jesus Christ, and taking the government of the church out of his hand, and proclaiming themselves wiser than he? But I shall but propose to these poor self-wise creatures, these one or two things. Are they able to rule themselves, and to keep errors out of their own hearts? I suppose no man so ignorant of himself as to deny or affirm that he can, the nature of man being so depraved, that he cannot really resist one sin, as it is sin. And moreover, is it not a truth that if the Lord watch not the city, the watchmen watch in vain? Psal.127:1. And yet thou that couldest not keep one sin out of thine own heart, how canst thou undertake to watch over the Church of God, and keep out error and wolves that they come not in?

Alas, poor ignorant man, this is thy pride and the vanity of thine heart, I Sam.17:28, for 'tis the Lord alone that keeps Israel, and he neither slumbers nor sleeps. Psal.121:4.

Again, dost thou not say that thou art a Christian? If so then thou wouldst believe that he is God All-Sufficient. "I am the Almighty God, {God All-Sufficient,} walk before me, and be thou perfect." Gen.17:1. Is he all sufficiently wise, strong, holy, good and merciful, &c., then is not this the manifestation of thy absolute infidelity when thou thinkest that he will not take care of his own Church? Or else thou concludes thus, if he be wise enough, yet he hath not power enough, and therefore thou must help him. And is he not all sufficiently good, and will he not take care of his own cause? Never fear, but he will. "I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Matt.16:18.

And again, is it not said that, "it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell?" And that "in all things he might have the preeminence." Col.1:18-19. And saith he plainly, "the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." John 5:22. And that all power in heaven and earth is given unto Him. Matt.28:18. And again, "unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder," and that "of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever." And that "the zeal of the LORD of hosts will

perform this." Isa.9:6-7. And again, that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ. Col.2:3. Now, is all the power of the Father given into the Hand of Christ? And have not we all said that the Pope is not the Viceroy nor Vicar of Christ? And does not every man throw dirt upon him, and yet we can get into the pope's place, and sit in his seat and say, we are the substitutes of Christ. That which we deny him, we take to ourselves; certainly all this is nothing else but hellish arrogancy, and the pride of the man of sin, and antichrist within us that exalts himself {in us} above all that is called God, II Thes.2:4, and puts us into these ways; and to think that we can draw, or that we can drive men to Jesus Christ, when there is none that can do this, but merely and solely that only and eternal power and Spirit of the Father.

Thirdly, if it be so, as we have clearly proven, and none dare deny it; neither can then the wisdom, nor power, nor strength, nor any rules of fellowships or church gatherings, or any discipline of man draw nor drive others in, but 'tis only the drawing and driving of the eternal power of the Father's Spirit. It is true, the sons of men may do and have done, and do compass sea and land, Matt.23:15, and what is it to do, but to make a proselyte, and then but a twofold more the child of perdition than before. They may indeed gather men into fellowships and churches, {as they call them,} but to gather men into the spirit of the Lord Jesus, this was never the work of man; no strength, nor power, nor wisdom of man could ever do it; and without question every

plant that the Heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up. Matt.15:13.

It is true, and I grant, there was some mention made of the Church and Churches in the times of the Apostles; but what Churches were they? They were no other but what were called by God himself, in the power of his Spirit, and not of or by man. Where do we read of this man's church, or the other man's members; but they were called the Church of God, and not divided by those distinctions of vain glorious, self-seeking, ambitious and covetous men, as they are in these days. Nor did they own one another, or had any relation one unto another in their love or esteem upon that account. But they looked upon one another in what place soever, as but one body, and having all but one spirit, merely because they were all baptized into one Body by that one Spirit. I Cor.12:13. They did not know one another as they were of Paul and of Apollos, of Cephas, I Cor.1:12-14, and this man's Church, {as they now call it,} but as they were all baptized by one Spirit, and into one Body, and as they were of one mind and of one spirit, and so of one heart, and so brought "to the general assembly and church of the firstborn." Heb.12:23. Therefore we must conclude that there is nothing that gathers or draws in the soul of man unto Jesus Christ, but the everlasting power of God. We know also that men may worship at Jerusalem this way and that way, and pretend to honour that Christ who died there, and yet they do but draw nigh to him with their lips, but not with the spirit and in truth;

Isa.29:13, but no man can do these things in the power of God, nor so much as say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost, and by the power of Jesus Christ. And be sure that "every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up." Matt.15:13.

From whence also lastly, if the power of the Father only draws the spirit of man unto the Son, and unto Jesus Christ, then let every man look in, and unto his own heart, and see whether he doth not resist the drawing of the Spirit. "Behold, {saith he,} I stand at the door, and knock, if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me," Rev.3:20, to enter but into thy own chamber and be still, and look into thine own breast and see whether thou be not daily and hourly resisting the Spirit of God that doth draw man unto Christ; didst thou but look into thy own heart, thou shouldest find that there was never any thought that did ever arise in thee to check or control thee in thy evil ways, but that very thought was a light in thee, if thou wouldst have heeded or regarded it. And that light also did tell thee, that all thy best actions were but sin, and that in all the ways which thou walketh in, there is nothing but fear in them, and death in them, and misery in them. And that all thy best and holiest services are but an abomination in the eyes of the Lord. There is a spirit within thee that is still troubling and checking thee, for every proud, and for every evil thought, and what is this for? Only to let thee see that thou art dead and reprobate to

every good work, and that all thy deeds are evil, and all that thou knowest, thou knowest not as thou oughtest to know. It is to let thee know that thou art naked, and poor, and blind, and miserable. It is to take away thy false strength, and thy false wisdom, and riches, and to let thee see thy own weakness, and folly, and poverty; but this is thy only misery, and the general universal misery of all the sons of men that they dare not stand in the light and abide in it. To abide in such a light, which shows that man hath not one good thought, but is as a beast before God. Psal.73:22. That he hath no holiness, nor any righteousness at all. Now for thee so far to presume and to think so highly of thyself, that thou art of such abilities, and wisdom and parts as to sit down at the head end of the table; or because that thou hast gotten in thy own conceit into the best way of religion for knowledge, practice and performances; and therefore thou art somebody, and thou must be magnified and revered, and for these men now to be brought back, to look into their own hearts, and see themselves as bad as the rest of the world, indeed to see themselves the worst of men! Oh beloved, what a mighty fall must these men have, before ever God brings them into this condition, which must be if ever they be brought or drawn home to Jesus Christ by the power of the Father.

And yet to add to this, besides all this thou hast gotten a covering for thy sins, and hast wiped thy mouth, and said thou hast done nothing, when all thy ways are nothing but resisting, fighting and enmity against God. Do not men deny the Lord when

they take esteem unto themselves, that they must be great, respected and honored? What is all this but to rob Jesus Christ of his honour and glory, to steal it away to put upon themselves? Oh, that the power of God would but make men abide in the center of their own hearts to see that there is nothing there but darkness, nothing but folly in regard of God and Christ. If man would but dwell and abide here, to see himself lost, wretched, miserable and undone, then God would lead him and bring him unto salvation, but "this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." Jn.3:19. I make no question, but are all here pretend at least to be seekers of God? Now enter into thine own heart, and tell me what is the end of all thy religious actions? Are they not done for this purpose, that thereby thou mayest gain and get a good opinion to and of thyself, that thou hast served the Lord in a way which he commands, and when thou hast so done, thinkest thou now art accepted? Is this thinkest thou the free will offering that is in Jesus Christ, wherein we serve him not as slaves or as servants, but his sons? Sons that are begotten out of love, and out of love serve him without fear all the days of our life. Luke 1:74. Now, I say, when thy religious actions are only made use of to hide over thy sin, and to get a good opinion of thyself, this is not the work of the Spirit of God, this is not a drawing to God but from God; this is a drawing into thyself, to depend on flesh, and to feed on the dead ashes of thine own heart, Isa.44:20, and not to know that there is a lie in thy right hand.

But now if thou didst but see thy own sin, and thine own evil heart, thou wouldest not dare to speak of God but with much trembling; but know that if thou speak of him or of divine things, thou speaketh as vainly, and as dissemblingly as wickedly, and hast nothing of a supernatural work of the Spirit more than the world of men, for all thy many words in large professions, that will say we see, for then thy sin remaineth. But if thou art led forth mourning and weeping over thine own misery, and over thy own cursed heart, to thee I say, the Lord will draw thee and lead thee in the everlasting power, so that thine own carnal heart, and all the power of hell shall not be able to keep thee from Christ; but thou shalt understand and find that it is the power of the Father only that draws every sinner unto Christ, and he will cause thy captivity to return as the streams in the south, and thou shall find that he that goeth forth weeping, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him, that so thou mayest rejoice and magnify Christ alone, utterly renouncing thyself, and all the power of man, as having no hand in this almighty work.

“When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing; then said they among the heathen, the LORD hath done great things for them. The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad. Turn again our captivity, O LORD, as the streams in the south. They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious

seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing,
bringing his sheaves with him." Psal.126:1-6.

FINIS

THE SECRET SOOTHSAYER OR THE HIDDEN SORCERER DISCOVERED.

SERMON I

**Preached by Mr. John Webster at All
Hallows Lombard Street, London.**

"And I will cut off the cities of thy land, and throw down all thy strong holds; and I will cut off witchcrafts out of thine hand; and thou shalt have no more soothsayers; thy graven images also will I cut off, and thy standing images out of the midst of thee; and thou shalt no more worship the work of thine hands." Micah 5:11-13).

Beloved, there is an all the sons of men a spirit of hatred and opposition against the wisdom, power and righteousness of Christ, ever since their going out and departing from the presence of the Lord, having forsaken Him their rock and their stay, and having turned down into their own wisdom and power, and having chosen that for their god and their guide, they will not by any means be turned back to the Lord to forsake themselves, their own wisdom and righteousness, power and parts, but they use all their study and endeavors to go on with all confidence after the gods of their own hands which they have made and chosen; and man never returns to that love, peace and amity with the Lord, but by the almighty hand of the Lord, by the very

same power, and no other, but only that which can raise the dead out of their graves, and the same Spirit that raised Jesus Christ from the grave. Rom.4:24; 8:11. And ever since this departing from the fountain of life to the broken and empty cisterns of the creature, Jer.2:13, there are but only two leaders, two guides, two masters, two teachers, which all the sons of men follow; there are but only two seeds, the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent. There are but only two brethren, Cain and Abel, Gen.4:2, the immortal and perfect seed of God, which is holy, pure and undefiled, which cannot sin, I Jn.3:9, and that wicked, cursed, hellish seed of Satan which never did, nor ever doth, nor ever shall do anything else but sin, rebel, and fight against the wisdom, light and power of God. There is no middle seed between these two. All actions, all thoughts, all industry, all inventions, all religions are either from the wisdom which is from above or else from that earthly and human wisdom which is from man, and from below. James 3:15-17. As the one is from heaven heavenly, so the other is from the earth earthly. "The first man is of the earth, earthy, the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy, and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." I Cor.15:47-49. The one of these guides is light and truth, and glory, and leads to rest, peace, fullness and satisfaction; and the other leads to darkness, misery and destruction, and yet pretends to light

and truth, and wisdom, but the ways thereof go down to the chambers of death. Prov.7:27. This earthly guide always draws downward, to seek rest in the creature, and something either without man, or within him, and so draws and deludes away the poor soul of man from that eternal all sufficient Jehovah, to sit down satisfied with the empty and broken comforts and helpless idols, those inventions of men which they have made and set up, and say these be thy gods O Israel, which will bring thee out of bondage, and give thee possession of the land of Canaan. Exod.32:4. The one is the true light, the true vision, the true Urim and the Thummim, Exod.28:30, which never can mislead or deceive, the other is the spirit of darkness, ignorance, deceit, witchcraft, sorcery, a lying and a familiar spirit, as it pretends to seek after God, and after holiness, and after peace and rest, but tis mere sorcery and witchcraft. This is that Jannes and Jambres that will always withstand Moses, for they pretend to imitate Moses, but they are no other but wizards, soothsayers and deceivers; they pretend for the truth, and yet withstand the truth, as saith the apostle, "now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth; men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. But they shall proceed no further, for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was." II Tim.3:8-9. They shall be found to be no other but deceivers, magicians and soothsayers.

These words which we have now read show us what man is, and what all men do before they are

brought to the light of Christ; they show that he is blind in himself, deceiving and being deceived, II Tim.3:13, that he is confident in his own power, in his own wisdom, and that he chooses to himself horses and chariots for his defense and preservation, Isa.30:16, and he will have a captain and a leader of his own choosing, whom he will follow, and he uses all his inventions to secure himself against all that which shall oppose him; he hath built himself forts and castles, and strongholds and bulwarks, and he hath the chariots of Egypt and swift dromedaries {as the prophet speaks} to secure and deliver him, Jer.2:23, on which he rests, trusts and depends, and on which he rides, and thinks that those things shall defend and deliver him. And the truth is so great and so deep, and so subtly contrived are all his witchcrafts, that all the wisdom of all the sons of men is never able to discover them to be so, but only the wisdom and Spirit of God, and that only can discover the secret and fine contrived enchantments, like Pharaoh's magicians, how did they act and imitate, and do the same things which Moses did, for a long time, as if they had wrought by the same power Moses did, when as they were no other, but deceivers, enchanter and magicians. Exod.7:11. In the same way do magicians work in all ages, whatever the saints and people of God do by the power of God they can contrive and imitate the same, in all their spiritual enchantments, they have their temples, and their worship, and their groves, their forms and inventions, and cry lo here and lo there, Mark 13:21, when these are nothing

else but their own idols, groves and images, the inventions and works of men's hands; and when they have decked and trimmed their idols gloriously, they not only fall down themselves to them, as Nebuchadnezzar did, Dan.3:11, but enjoining this idol worship to all others, and he that will not fall down to what they say is truth in religion, him they will persecute and brand with those odious names of heretic, antinomian, schismatic, and the like.

But in the day when the Lord will appear to make all these magicians and soothsayers to be liars, which day they hate and hide themselves from, because they hate the light, neither come they to the light, lest their deeds should be made manifest, and declared that they are not wrought in God, John 3:20, but are acted in the power of man and by the wonderful working of antichrist in all power, and signs and lying wonders and in all deceivableness of unrighteousness. II Thes.2:8-10. And the Lord when he shall arise, will discover and consume them with the breath of his mouth and with the brightness of his coming, and all those glorious images and fine contrived modes and forms, and lying wonders, wherein they trusted, insomuch that all the world wondered after the beast, Rev.13:3, as if that these were the only religious men. But when God appears with his light, all the shadows, deceits and delusions, all these enchantments and sorceries wherewith men have clothed themselves shall be cut off. The cities that the sons of men have built for their safety, security and preservation, they shall all be cut off from their hands. Now, of all things in the world,

these men have nothing more than this light, and this day of the Lord. The sorcerers use all the means they can to keep away this light, and to darken this glory by their reproaches, slanders, lies and scandals, and they will tell you, all this is false light. Why? Because it discovers their enchantments and delusions, and they will tell you that all these prophecies concern other things; they were only literally fulfilled when the people of Israel were carried captive into Babylon, and there can be no such mystery in them. And so for the promises, they will tell you that they are to be fulfilled externally and literally; or, at the most they will carry out the prophecies to be fulfilled only in the great Messiah who was born at Bethlehem, and was crucified at Jerusalem, yet indeed know him not. And he that shall go further than thus, is with them a deceiver; which sense is no other than those low, poor and carnal thoughts and expectations which the Jews had of him, expecting an outward and external deliverer, and all things to be fulfilled in a literal way, as if the body and divine Spirit of the Lord only busied itself about shadows and forms and an external worship, and bodily exercises, which profit nothing, and carnal ordinances and things of the world, and that he had no higher aim than what everyone may come to act and do, when indeed and in truth his main end is to declare the kingdom of heaven, and set forth the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, Rev.21:2, and to show, that his kingdom is not of this world, and consists not in meats and drinks, touching, tasting,

or handling, or anything the outward man can be exercised in, but that his kingdom consists in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Rom.14:17.

Yet some, yea most men who pretend very much in the knowledge of Christ, yet carry all prophecies of him no higher than his appearing in the flesh, and therein say that all Scriptures are fulfilled. As that prophecy here expressed, in the second verse of this chapter, "the virgin of Israel is fallen; she shall no more rise, she is forsaken upon her land; there is none to raise her up," Amos 5:2, some say, this concerned Israel's captivity, when all her glory departed from her, and she was stripped of all her beautiful attire and virgin apparel, to which it may be applicable I deny not, but that is but in an outward, literal and external way, for the Spirit of God hath a far higher aim than this, viz., that outward and external glory, when men trust to that, and profess themselves to be the Israel of God, because of that, then the Lord threatens that the pride of all their external forms shall be forsaken, and no man shall regard them, and there shall be none to raise them up. And that place in Micah, chapter 5 verse 2, they say is the promise of the restoration of the church, and that she shall be restored and her rulers. But some who would seem to go further, carry it to the highest interpretation, {as they conceive,} to Jesus Christ, his coming in the flesh, and they have referred to this place, and cited in the margin of Matthew 2:6, "and thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least

among the princes of Juda, for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel." That in regard he was the Messiah which was then born, and given to the world, and was to suffer, and die, and rise again. All which things are true in a lower and external sense, but there is more in it than so, for Christ is yesterday, and today, and the same forever, Heb.13:8, and his goings forth have been of old, even from everlasting; and therefore he cannot be limited according to the short time he was in the flesh. But Christ is the same in all generations, and he is chiefly manifested in the spirit, and all his words express no less. He still takes our eyes off his fleshly appearance, and says that his kingdom is not of this world, John 18:36, and that his kingdom is within, Luke 17:21, and his body is the bread which cometh down from heaven, John 6:51, and the cup which he gives is the cup of the New Testament in his blood. Luke 22:20. 'Tis not the eating the bread made by men, or wine of grapes in that which he feeds the soul. And so for Christ's death and his going away, there is more in it than his fleshly dying, or the application of that, but this is held out, he must go away, else the Comforter which shall lead into all truth, will not come. John 16:7. His bodily presence, and our apprehending of his fleshly appearing and fleshly suffering, he in this sense must depart, or else the kingdom of God cannot come upon us, nor the Comforter come. "Touch me not {in this way} for I am not ascended to my Father." And while you look upon my fleshly presence, I cannot send the Comforter; but that

must go away. "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven?" Acts 1:11. Why do you gaze upon his external appearing? Says the apostle, "wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh; yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more." II Cor.5:16. This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, so come in like manner as you have seen him go into heaven; that is, whatever has been done by him in your sight shall be done in a heavenly and spiritual manner, after that same manner shall all those things to be done over again, of which all those things were but the symbol, the pattern, and the resemblance of the actions of Christ in the soul forever.

You know it is all along prophesied of the Messiah as to what a great and mighty King he should be, and that the government should be upon his shoulders, Isa.9:6, and that he should rule over all his enemies with a rod of iron, Psal.2:9, and the like; that none of all the oppressing conquerors, and Nimrods of the earth should be able to stand in the day of his power. Now we know that these things were not fulfilled in the days of his flesh, neither are all the strong and mighty Nimrods destroyed to this day, but cruelty and oppression, and the monarchies of the world are in their full power still. Therefore there must needs be a further meaning.

Certainly, therefore they are the mighty Nimrods in the spirits of men, which are to be brought down, both high thoughts and strongholds, and towering imaginations, that lift up men in their

own thoughts, that say, I am, and there is none besides. As Babylon, I sit a queen and shall see no sorrow, Isa.47:8; Rev.18:7, I have the only true worship, and lo Christ is in my way, and in my form, and in my rules; and I of all other churches come nearest to the rule. When Christ saith plainly, go not after them, for if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect; if they say he is in the street, or in the wilderness, Matt.24:23, if they say he is in the secret chamber, believe them not, for the kingdom of God cometh not with observation. Luke 17:20. There is nothing to be known of Jesus Christ in the spirit, and in the mystery, by all the highest forms and ordinances {as they call them} in the whole world, for we see how many men do daily live in them, use them, handle them, and never yet come to enjoy Christ in the Spirit; and all is, because they make these forms and duties, and fellowships, and washings, and eating bread, and drinking wine, to be no other but graven images wherein they rest and bless themselves in their idols, saying, "these be thy gods, O Israel." Exod.32:4. For there is no one that ever entered into these forms and modes, mending this, and reforming together, and thinking of this man's fashion being better than another; I say there is no one, but blesses himself and kissing his idol, saying {at least in their hearts} now God will bless me, now I am in a better condition, now I have my hearts desire; and to all other men they say secretly, "stand farther off, I am holier than thou," Isa.65:5, I am in a better way than any other church, and so censor all that go not in their new fashion, and after

their new cut. But be assured for all these thy graven images which thou hast so bedecked, and that are so sacred, that no man may speak against them, but he shall be censured for a devil, a blasphemer, a son of Belial; yet the Lord when he comes with his light, he will discover thy nakedness, thy witchcraft, sorceries, and he will let thee see that thou art no saint, as thou wouldst be thought to be, but a devil transformed into an angel of light, II Cor.11:14, and thou shall be made to confess this, and all thy goodness shall be as the morning dew. Hos.6:4. And thou shall see that all thy enchanters, and sorcerers, and magicians, and soothsayers, with all their cunning and neat interpretations of Scripture {to serve their own terms, to maintain their delusions and sorceries} all these will not {when Christ shall come in his light} stand thee in any stead. But both thou and they shall be utterly ashamed and confounded together, for when Christ shall once speak that word in thee in the power of the Spirit, "confounded be all they that worship graven images," Psal.97:7, then, both the maker, the former, and the worshiper thereof shall be in a most miserable condition, inasmuch, as men have taken more pains about their idols and images, and made them more neat and curious; and inasmuch as they have spent more time herein, and have been old worshipers of old idols, so much the more will be their shame and their confusion. 'Tis true, you may call them ordinances and give them neat names, but Christ will then ask, "who required these things at your hands?" Isa.1:12. And yet they were the things

he did require. But think you I am pleased with sacrifices or bodily worships, which profit not at all, and which never could make the comers thereunto perfect? Heb.10:1.

If Jesus Christ appear not in these, and strip thee of thy idols, and of thy sorceries, thy ways lead down to darkness and to the bottomless pit, and thou shall never enter into the New Jerusalem, but will be without among liars, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and dogs, Rev.21:8; 22:15, for even thou, who pretends to serve Jesus Christ, thou art the very man that has crucified him, and put him to death. Thou art he that has slain the two witnesses who lie dead in the street of the great city, Rev.11:8, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord is crucified. When man thinks that any good thing is in him, or shall deny that Christ is alone wisdom, righteousness, power, goodness, &c., he hath slain and crucified Christ, and killed those two eternal witnesses. And these are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks which shall forever stand before the God of the whole earth, Rev.11:4-5, and these two answer one another forever, and run and empty themselves into each other forever before the presence of God; and if any man shall dare to hurt these two witnesses, which the eternal God hath ordained to stand before him forever, then fire proceeded out of their mouth and devoureth their enemies, and if any man hurt them, he must in like manner be killed.

When Christ will arise and will raise up these two witnesses, which are slain by all the sons of

men, and which lie dead in every street, in every nation, and in the streets of the great city of the whole earth, this is no other but spiritually Sodom and Egypt, where our Lord was and is crucified, and not only at Jerusalem where he was literally and externally crucified, but here in Sodom and Egypt spiritually, where was and is that true crucifying that every believer experiences in himself, for else how suffered he in Sodom and Egypt?

When Christ appeareth thus in man, then he appears as the great and true Messiah, then he comes into his own temple, and takes his own throne; then he casts out the prince of darkness who hath all this while usurped his throne in man, who is this temple; and here he makes a whip of many cords, and whips out the buyers, sellers and the moneychangers, who trade for themselves, Mark 11:17, and aim at their private ends, seek their own glory, and not his glory who is Lord of the temple, and when he does this in man, then never before can it be called the house of prayer, then is Jesus Christ Mediator and Intercessor, then hath the Father made him King, Priest and Prophet over his church; for then all that he did in the flesh is made good, acted and revealed to thee; then thou hast experience that Jesus Christ is he who was dead, and is alive, Rev.2:8, then hast thou experience of those two eternal and immutable witnesses; then hast thou the testimony of those two olive trees, and the two candlesticks which continually run one into another, and continually feed one the other; and this light is the light of Christ which cannot be put out,

but stands forever before God. Here are the true discoveries of life and death; these are the great changes in mutations of which all the changes in mutations, all the lives and deaths in the world, are but types, shadows and symbols. Here now is Jesus Christ indeed whom the Father sends. But if man says, lo here is Christ, or there, or he is in the wilderness, or he is in the secret chamber, believe them not, go not after them. Matt.24:23. If they say, lo, he is in this form, or that mode; in this rule or that discipline; and that this man's church is modeled after the purest form, and the neatest cut. Here thou shall find rest and satisfaction; here is he whom thou seekest; here is thy Beloved. Know that all things of this nature are but lies and delusions, except thou find Jesus Christ coming thus to thee, and seest that apart from such sheer grace coming down from the Father of lights, thy heart is but an habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and the cage of every unclean and hateful bird. Christ manifests to thee were death and life is really, and he discovers death and hell, and darkness, and sin, and the bottomless pit, and Satan and antichrist, and the Dragon and the like, mentioned throughout all the Scriptures, to be all in the souls of men; and that these are the things that are to be destroyed and consumed, and that here Babylon is fallen within you, and is that great whore whom the Lord will judge. Rev.18:2. Then shall the merchants of the earth weep and mourn because they can merchandise no more, Rev.18:11, and stand afar off and bewail her downfall, and here it is that the saints

sing hallelujah to him that sits upon the throne, Rev.19:6, because he hath taken unto him his great power, and will reign forever and ever.

If Christ be not thus enthroned in thine heart, doing over again all those things spoken of in Scripture {under several and divers allegories and metaphors} then is the Prince of Darkness still reigning and sitting in full power upon his throne in thy soul, and there he sits and there he reigns, the strong man keeping possession, Luke 11:21,22, Lucifer not yet thrown down, nor Satan fallen from heaven like lightning, Luke 10:18; Antichrist and the Great Whore are still sitting upon the seven hills and many waters, Rev.17:1, arrayed in purple and scarlet, and decked with gold and precious stones, yet full of filthiness and fornications, and thou art not yet come out of her. Rev.18:4. That great word, "come out of her my people," is not yet spoken by Jesus Christ to thy heart; though thou hast been many years a worshiper of Christ, with pretended affection for him; yet if these things be not effected in thee, whatever duties, forms or fellowships thou hast taken up, or any exact observances, Jesus Christ is not yet formed in thee, since he is not in this man's way, nor in that man's church, as men blasphemously speak; for, hath any one a church but only Jesus Christ? Will any man dare to assume to himself any part of the immaculate church, or of any one member of Jesus Christ, and say this or these are my churches and my people, and my congregation? Oh blasphemy in the highest degree! And though these talk of heresies and schisms, and

charge them upon others; yet judge ye, who are those that make rents and utter blasphemies against the honour and glory of Jesus Christ, that one eternal Saviour, and that great Shepherd of the sheep. Heb.13:20. And who is Paul and Apollos, and others, but ministers and servants by whom you believed? Are they anything, or is there any glory due to them? But if Jesus Christ come into thy soul discovering himself by casting out the strongman, and antichrist, and letting thee see death and hell, and all evil to be in thee, and hath quite slain man in all his excellencies and glory, then he will arise in thee, and appear to be life alone, glory alone, and power alone; and until then men merely delude themselves under all forms, pretending strictness, conformity, and obedience to Christ, when indeed though they have preached and prophesied, and in his name done so many great works, Matt.7:22-23, which shall amaze the people of the world, and the general sort of professors, yet Christ who searches the heart shall prophesy unto them, "I never knew you depart from me you workers of iniquity." Though men may admire them, and esteem them the highest, the wisest, the holiest, the meekest, the gravest, the strictest of all the sons of men, yet he sees them to be the worst, the most wicked, the most profane, the greatest workers of iniquity, the purest hypocrites for that which is highly esteemed amongst men, is in the sight of the Lord abominable. Lk.16:15. For man hath nothing of good in him, but all his imaginations are evil, and only evil, and continually evil; and Jesus Christ is good, all good,

and continually good, and nothing else but good; and he that gives other testimony, either in word or deed is a liar and the truth is not in him. And those two witnesses are in him slain, and lie dead in the streets of the great city; that is, in the whole nature of mankind; which two witnesses can never be raised and stand up upon their feet till Jesus Christ himself come and revive them and cause them to live. Rev.11:8. Here is wisdom, and let him that readeth understand; and he that hath read these things in himself, he alone can understand these things.

And when the Lord is thus doing this work, we may see the manner of his working and proceeding with the sons of men, and the following words, "it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD, that I will cut off thy horses out of the midst of thee, and I will destroy thy chariots" Micah 5:10, that is, whatever it be that man rides upon, or trusts in, or thinks to be delivered by, all his helps or refuges, all his hopes or confidences that are below or less than Jesus Christ himself, the Lord will cut off and destroy; though his confidence be ever so great, and that wherein he trusts be ever so strong, and his chariots ever so many. In that day when the Lord will arise, they shall be all cut off, all utterly overwhelmed like Pharaoh and his chariots in the Sea. Let it be what it will wherein thou trustest, and thinkest to sit safely in the midst of wrath and storms; if thou trustest anything that thou hast chosen, and thinkest thyself ever the better, or safer for them, all these shall be cut off from thine hand.

Nay, though thou art in the very chariot of religion, and highest profession of the truth, and hast chosen to thyself the purest forms, ordinances and Church fellowships; washings, breaking of bread, or anything else in thine hand, which can be named except Jesus Christ himself whereby thou hast quieted thy spirit, and hast whereby gotten to thyself peace and rest, all is a delusion and an idol. It may be, thou, when thy conscience began to accuse thee, and wrath appeared to amaze and affright thee, thou saidst within thyself, I must now do something, that I may deliver my soul from this guilt, I must quench this flame, for I am not able to bear it; I will run to this duty and take up that form, and observe such and such rules, and then I shall do well, and I shall secure myself from wrath and hell. As the Pharisees; for what think you drove them to the baptism of John? Certainly it was this fear, and this guilt upon their spirits; for saith he to them, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" Matt.3:7. As if he should say, when ye were frightened and terrified, you thought coming to my baptism would secure you, but you are but vipers for all this; and this submitting to baptism, doth not declare true repentance. But know, "the axe is laid unto the root of the trees; therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." Matt.3:10. And further, you boast of being the children of Abraham, and the seed of the faithful, and because you are members of the true Church; but, all this is to little purpose, for "God is able of

these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." So that you see, for all your forms and fellowships wherein you trust, you shall be in that day of the Lord stripped naked of all your garments, and of all your refuges; all those horses and chariots which you thought should preserve you, and carry you out of all danger, they shall be broken and cut off, and thy soul plunged into the bottomless pit, and thou shalt have no rest in thy bones, because of thy sin, Psal.38:3, and by reason of thy misery, for thou shalt not know which way to turn thee, for all thy idols, and all thy images shall not in that day be able to help or deliver thee; for, the wrath of the Lord shall burn as an oven, Jer.4:4, and then thou must stand naked before the presence of the Lord, who is a consuming fire, to burn up and consume everything but Himself.

And not only so, but as it follows in the next words, "I will cut off the cities of thy land, and throw down all thy strongholds." As when outward enemies came upon the people of Israel and invaded their land, and the Lord had said that they should go into captivity, then nothing should be a defense to them, but the enemy should break into their strongest places, and their cities should not secure them, nor any of their strongholds which they had made for their defense to do them any good. This now was true in the letter, but this is also as true in the mystery, in the living and spiritual sense. When men have made themselves defenses, and think to themselves that they are secured from wrath and hell, and all storms, and that no evil shall touch

them, neither will they be carried captive by Satan, nor by the Prince of darkness; and although by their wisdom they contrived these forts and strongholds, and thought themselves never so secure therein, yet all of them shall be vain, hopeless, and helpless; and nothing within them, nor without them shall help them, and the wrath of the Lord shall make them vile, odious, and abominable, which before they got coverings for; now, whether they will or not, they shall see themselves as they are, and they shall not be able to have one good thought of themselves, but the contrary; for the light of the Lord discovers their blackness, their deformity, and there is no power nor wisdom which can help them, but only the good will and the good hand of the Lord, nothing but his mere goodness, and they shall see that there is no power, no goodness, no mercy, anywhere but in the Lord alone; and, if the Lord doth not pity them, there is no mercy at all for them.

Not only so, that men have their horses to ride on to carry them swiftly away, that no danger may overtake them, and chariots wherein they ride and put their trust; so likewise they have cities and strongholds for their security, so that all the wisdom and power of man cannot make them more strong and safe to bear off the wrath of God, but also {saith he} in the next verse, "I will cut off witchcrafts out of thine hand; and thou shalt have no more soothsayer." Micah 5:12. Men have their jugglers and diviners, their soothsayers and their witches, all that witchcraft whereby men have deluded and deceived their own souls, in that day shall be

discovered; those false seers who cried peace, peace, when there was no peace. All that witchcraft which men used in the things of God, in setting up images and forms and shadows, and herein deluded men, making them believe they were the things themselves; and though they have wrought them up ever so curiously, and made them as near the life as might be, yet in that day they shall come to see they were but images and dead things, which could not help at all; and now they shall no more live upon them, or hang, depend, or call upon them for help or relief, though they were made after the best pattern, and ever so like the things of God, yet they shall then come and see clearly that they were deluded and bewitched, and all discovered to be mere fancies, and enchantments; but then 'tis here promised that they should have no more soothsayers, no enchanters to deceive their eyes; who have so much cunning to keep up their trade in their credit, and their maintenance, that they can make things appear as they are not, and to keep things from appearing as they are; as you know, that is the way of jugglers and those that use slight-of-hand and hocus-pocus tricks, for they deceive and delude the eyes of the beholders, with their nimbleness, and with a slight of hand. So do these spiritual jugglers, by their wit, and by their learning, they blind the truth of the Gospel, and make you take the shell for the substance, and iron pyrite for gold. Now, when the Lord himself will arise with his light, all these enchantments shall vanish, and all the enchanters be confounded, you shall be no more

deceived with fine, smooth, soft words; and there shall be no more a magician, nor a soothsayer, nor a peeper, nor a sorcerer, nor any that worketh a divination, and he will deliver his people out of their hand. "Therefore ye shall see no more vanity, nor divine divinations, for I will deliver my people out of your hand, and ye shall know that I am the LORD." Ezek.13:23. As Balaam said, when he would fain have cursed the Israelites, and wrought by divination, and put upon them an enchantment, he saith, "surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel; according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, what hath God wrought!" Num.23:23. That soul that is enlightened by the God of Israel, and hath experience of the truth, cannot be enchanted by these liars, or by these soothsayers, they have no power over them, for they are built on a rock, on Jesus Christ that eternal and unchangeable rock of ages, Matt.7:25, who is that immovable basis on which all the saints in all generations have built and rested upon, for their faith stands not in the wisdom of men, or on the power of men, but in the wisdom and power of God. "Because I will publish the name of the LORD; ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are judgment, a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he." Deut.32:3-4.

And then he goes on in the next words, "thy graven images also will I cut off, and thy standing images out of the midst of thee; and thou shalt no more worship the work of thine hands." Mic.5:13.

Now what is an image, but the picture and form of that thing to which it relates. Those images and pictures which men by their own inventions have framed to imitate the things of God, and have squared them {as they conceive} very like the pattern, and have made them very neat and curious, so that they pass for current, and they are generally received, and the men themselves esteemed rare workmen; yet this day of the Lord will discover all these things, as they shall all be taken away; nay, though they be old received idols, and of long-standing, and made by the most exact and curious workmen, and scarce ever questioned in many generations, but received as if made by God himself; yet even these things shall be discovered and detected, and the idols and idol-makers shall be confounded together.

And why shall all these things be done? It follows in the last words read, "and thou shalt no more worship the work of thy hands." Beloved, what do all men when they by their wisdom and inventions cut out forms and platforms of religion, and one squares his idol this way, and another the other way; this church hath this way and rule, and to another a different form, as everyone thinks the best. So many churches, {as they call them,} so many several forms, and these they esteem, and adore, and admire themselves in admiring them; this form and that new cut, and that mode; and the next he must mend, and pare, and add, and he thinks thereby to beautify it, and to make it more palatable and commendable, and so more generally

to be received, that the more may like it, and he may have the more to be of his members and church, and they may be esteemed the best reformed, and nearest the rule. What {I say} do all these men do but worship the work of their own hands? And because they are squared according to the rule {as they think} and have stood long in the esteem of the world, therefore he that shall question their way, and their wisdom, and their religion or their principles, must be no less than an heretic, deceiver, pretender, &c., anything.

Look upon the papists, and observe how many generations they have stood in their form of worship, and how generally it hath been received in one half of the world; yet we conclude they are no other but isolators. And if we shall examine, and bring to the touch many received opinions concerning Christ, and concerning the Scriptures, and the word of God, and washings, and baptizings, and the breaking of bread, as they are now commonly used, and as they are and have been generally in use, we shall find them no other but inventions of men, according as they understand the Scriptures, and say, these are the things themselves, though not in words yet in their practices they say no less, and are no other {as they use them} but idols, and the work of their own hands, and these they worship, adore and bless themselves in using thereof. And though they may go so far as to give the sense, and hit the literal meaning, yet they may be and are far from the mystery, the true meaning and the mind of Christ,

as the Apostle calls it, and the knowledge of truth, as it is in Christ Jesus. Eph.4:21. For if they do hit the letter, and square their discipline according thereunto, alas they have not the life and power for all that; they who think themselves most exact, and think to hit it, and imitate it to a tittle, yet they reach but the shadow and the image, the dead letter, and not the life, II Cor.3:6, and the things themselves, for they are of a far more excellent and spiritual nature, which no man {as man} could imitate nor follow, nor observe, but only he who is taught of God, and that it is given him from above to believe and comprehend; for, the dead letter is not the life, but all things that the eye sees, and the ear hears, are things that must pass away, they must be removed, that so the heavenly things may come in the room thereof, even those things of which all external things are but the patterns and similitudes, even Christ himself after the flesh; and this is that mystery of Christ which is hid in God, Eph.3:9, and kept closed from all ages and generations, Col.1:26, but is now revealed in his Son, only by the Holy Spirit; for, saith the Apostle, "it was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." Heb.9:23-24. Therefore all things but Christ must remove and pass away, else the heavenly things cannot appear; for whatever is not

of the Father's setting up and planting must be rooted up, John 15:2, and 'tis the Lord himself must teach his own worship. For Paul clearly confesses that he had his knowledge in the mystery of Christ by revelation; for all his great knowledge in the letter, yet he saw he was blind and ignorant of that, as you may see he expresses that large in the third chapter to the Ephesians, and elsewhere. And none know this but the Church, and those that are true members of Jesus Christ; nay the angels, and principalities and powers know not these things, which he calls the manifold wisdom of God. Eph.3:10.

So that in these words read before you, it appears to me, there is included these two things. First, here is a description of a man's day, and what he does in that his day; he gets unto himself horses of his own, and chariots of his own, and he builds unto himself strong cities, and strongholds, that is, places of security of his own inventing, and in that day his hand is full of witchcrafts, delusions and lies, and he gets to himself soothsayers and diviners to promise to him peace, safety and security; and in that day he is full of graven images of his own making, and he cleaves mightily to his old, ancient, and standing images, which both he and his forefathers have received.

Secondly, here is a threatening of an approach of the day of the Lord, and that his hand shall be upon all these things; he will cut off his horses, and destroy his chariots, and the cities of his land, and will throw down all his strongholds, and

will cut off all his witchcrafts, and soothsayers and graven images, &c.

And however most interpreters do take this in a literal sense only and look upon it as a history of what God did outwardly and externally amongst the Jews when they were destroyed and carried into captivity, yet to me there is much more in it; for all those relations are types of spiritual things, the word of the Lord endureth forever as David saith, "I have seen an end of all perfection, but thy commandment is exceeding broad," Psal.119:96, and in this sense, it is promised that there shall be no more an enchanter in Israel.

But, we will endeavor to apply all this to ourselves, and to make use thereof. First, hence we may safely conclude that all men without distinction until Christ be revealed to them, are all joined hand-in-hand in one way of idolatry and false worship; and that all those histories and descriptions of idols and idolaters in Scripture are but figures of what man does in his day; and however they go not all one way in regard of themselves, as many censure and condemn each other, yet to God they are all idolaters, enchanters, soothsayers, &c., and are gone a whoring after their own inventions, and are mad after idols, Jer.19:13, they all have their horses and their chariots, and cities of confidence, and strongholds, their sorcerers and enchanters, and follow the way of Baalim, I Kings 18:18, and their god Ashtoreth, just as their fathers had taught them. "Thus were they defiled with their own works, and went a whoring with their own inventions."

Psal.106:39. All that the spirit of man can find out by his own wisdom, power, or invention is nothing but as many Sauls going unto witches and wizards in the day of their distress, everyone in this way leaving Urim and Thummim, Exod.28:30, which the Lord hath commanded, and all going to a weak woman and one that hath a familiar spirit, I Sam.28:7, and all this he does by taking counsel of his own heart and following his own inventions, and does not wait upon that divine teaching of the Father, and that never failing Urim and Thummim which the Lord himself hath commanded him to wait upon.

All these inventions of man are but his horses and chariots to carry him swiftly away from his enemies and pursuers; when conscience is awakened in a man, and he begins to apprehend wrath and vengeance, and he sees what a vile, ugly creature he is, and what ways he hath taken, and how he hath followed after witches and wizards to inquire of them, who have made lies their refuge; now man gets to himself all the refuges, defenses, and deliverers that he possibly can to save him from this wrath to come, Matt.3:7, he rides swiftly from the pursuer of blood and the wrath of God, Deut.19:6; I say, let this be the first use we make of this point, even every man before me, and all to whom these things shall come, to examine himself seriously, if these things be not so. Let him deal plainly with his own heart, let him get into his chamber and be still, and there commune with himself, and he shall find that all his goings out, and

seekings, and inventions have been nothing else but to stop the mouth of conscience, to allay the fire that began to burn within him, and to get some drops to cool his tongue, Lk.16:24, and to cover the fire and the smoke of the bottomless pit.

Did not all your undertakings arise from a sight of a want, and emptiness, poverty and misery? And have you not gotten horses to ride far away from this guilt of conscience? Have you not with the prodigal gone out from your father's house and spent your inheritance upon harlots and riotous living? And nothing could ever cause you to return, but though ye were never so poor, and had spent all, yet you would join yourselves to anything in the first place that may appear as a rich citizen, wherein you may not fear want, but for all this, your poverty and misery still coming more and more upon you; you, rather than that you will return home and discover your folly, misery and nakedness will live upon husks, shadows, and figures; and they not being able to fill your belly, nor supply that infinite emptiness in your souls, then you have been forced to return and come home unto your Father, empty, naked, ashamed, miserable, lost and undone. And until this be, there is not one of the sons of men that can ever come home or return to their father's house, not until they have nothing at all left, no goodness, no love, no wisdom, no power, &c., but see that all these are in their Father's house, and nowhere else. Being persuaded that there are bowels of love, there is the rich robe, there is bread enough, there are the embraces, there are the

kisses of love, there is the dancing and the melody; and until this day comes, the prodigal is never received with joy, his Father never falls upon his neck and kisses him. Beloved, I appeal to every soul here this day, and to all the poor received saints and people of God, if they have not found all these things fulfilled in them, and a thousand times more after this manner, more than ever can be expressed.

Have all thy goings forth to this thing, or to the other thing, been any other than the gourd of Jonah, to sit under the shadow thereof, to shelter thee from the burning sun and the heat of divine wrath? Jon.4:6. Examine thy heart, didst thou ever take up any duty, any form, any way of worship, purely for love to God, because thou didst behold him "the chiefest among ten thousand," Cant.5:10, because that he was the joy of thy soul, thy portion, thy inheritance, thy all and all? For until then, God is not thy God; if any other thing be thought good or excellent but he, thou hast not chosen him for thy God. Do but examine thy thoughts and thy ends in all those things, and thou shall find satisfaction in thyself, securing thyself, getting happiness and a rest for thyself, was the chiefest moving cause in all these endeavors, and being so, {for I'm sure it is, till man's see himself empty, naked, and a miserable prodigal,} what's all thy acting, doing, sacrificing, washing, breaking bread, forms and modes?

What's all thy highest rules and strictness and walking up to the rule {as thou dost call it} but working for thyself, and working for a penny, Matt.20:13, and mere mercenary working by force,

for thou dost nothing by the constraint of love, II Cor.5:14, 'tis not for the excellency of holiness and love to the Lord himself, but so thine own head may be covered, and thou mayest be clothed, and that thou mayest have cities to dwell in and to live happily therein. Saith Satan, "doth Job fear God for nought?" Job 1:9. Thou hast peace and riches, and satisfaction to thyself, and therefore thou dost serve him; if thou hast not thy penny, thou wilt rather stand idle in the market, Matt.20:6, all thy working is to be freed from misery and to get that which thou dost call heaven. These are thy horses to carry thee from wrath to the place of rest, where thou mayest with the prodigal live upon thine own, and spend lavishly, and indeed it tends to no other end but to run thyself out of all, and to bring thee to misery.

Beloved, from hence let everyone, every particular form, every several division and distinction of worshipers examined themselves from what principle they act and work, for if it be not to carry them into a far country, Lk.15:13, that they may not see their misery, nor remember hell, nor the wrath of God, and their forms have been their horses and chariots which have saved and delivered them, silenced their consciences, shut the mouth of hell, kept off the gnawing worm, and when they have got into this chariot of religion, and these forms of worship, then they think themselves safe, and well fortified from all evil. How many thousands of people are now got into these ways, and joined themselves to these rich citizens, who never yet were emptied, made miserable, and nothing, never

lost their own lives, never took up the cross of Christ, nor have forsaken themselves? But having taken up a form suitable to their liking, say they, now I am safe, now I am well. Whatever others do, I am in a good condition, I have secured one, I am wiser than others, I am holier than they, stand farther off, for I am now somebody, and every particular form and denomination think themselves in the best way, and censor all others, and applaud and desire themselves; but in the day of the Lord, all their helps, hopes, idols, witchcrafts, shall be cut off, nothing of thy own planting shall stand, but thou shall be left empty, naked, helpless, hopeless, so that thou shall be utterly stripped of thy whole self, and no way left to escape by all thy forms, wisdom, inventions, and thou shall be so distressed that there is nothing left to help thee but a naked Christ, only mere mercy and the good hand of the Lord. So that except thou canst stand in this light, and bear this discovery, there is no help for thee.

And when man is brought to this condition, he will look every way for help, any man to direct and offer him any likely way, any chariot to carry him from the presence of the Lord, Gen.4:16, that hell may not pursue him, and that he may outrun his own guilt. With Cain he will go dwell in the land of Nod, thinking to get from the presence of the Lord; he hath now with the prodigal lost his father's house, that is, he hath put himself out of his father's love, care and protection, and he will manage his own portion, and provide for and direct himself. But all this is to cover with a covering, but not with the

Lord's Spirit. Isa.30:1. To the land of Nod, what's that? That is, to the land of forgetfulness, or to the land of dizziness, and there he hath a portion, and patrimony upon which he spends, and there he happens among harlots, and lives by his own wisdom, and inventions, and he gets to himself anything that will but uphold his spirit; though he become almost to beggary, yet he will shift still, before he will discover and acknowledge his folly and beggary, he will live upon husks, upon his own duties, and his own forms shall be his life, though there is no nourishment, no life in them. And yet he says to his soul, soul take thine ease, thou hast goods laid up for many years, and there he feasts himself, lives deliciously every day, he eats and drinks, and is merry, and will not think of returning to his Father, nor acknowledge his rebellion. And this is the far country that he is departed into, that so he may not see his own misery, his own lost condition, but in this day of the Lord all these things shall be discovered, and he shall see that he is deluded, and hath fed himself with dreams, and that there was nothing real with all which he enjoyed, but all, even the best of his dainties, was but husks, a lie, and a deceit. Then shall even the very sinews of all his strength be cut asunder, all his foundations removed, and himself utterly beggared and undone; the very earth, and the works thereof, and all things therein shall be burnt up, and elements shall melt with fervent heat, II Pet.3:10, and he shall be at his wits end; and this day of the Lord shall be like the refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap. Mal.3:2. Then he

shall discover the magicians and enchanters of Egypt to be all liars and deceivers. When they told thee, lo here, and lo there, in this mountain, and on that hill, in this way and that form thou shalt find peace and rest, then he whom thou hast crucified and murdered by thy sins, shall appear in the clouds to judge thee, and will set all thy sins in order before thee. Psal.50:21. Then thou shalt see that thou hast crucified and put the death thy innocent Saviour, that meek one of the earth, who is all mercy, pity, and loving kindness. Him, who came to save thee, and ransom thee from thy cruel bondage, and thou hast murdered him; and that thou hast chosen Barabbas, a murderer, rather than this innocent one. And in that thou hast followed thy own ways, and thy own wisdom, and hast been thine own guide, and by this hast crucified and murdered the honour and glory of thy glorious Redeemer; and all this was, because he would have condemned his and thy adversaries, because he would have destroyed thy hellish and devilish spirit, so therefore thou hast labored to destroy and crucify him, and hast buried him, and rolled a stone upon him, so that thou thoughtest he should never rise again.

But tis not all the powers of darkness can keep him under, for after three days he will rise again and triumph over his enemies, and appear in glory and majesty. Then it will be discovered who are those deluders that cried, lo here, and lo there, and said that he is in the chambers, or he is in the wilderness, Lk.17:23, or he is in the secret places. Then he will speak that word in thy soul, go not after them, join

not with them, for they lead thee from thy beloved; and then thou shalt see, that he whom thou calleth a seducer, a devil, a blasphemer, shall now be thy judge, and those that thou runneth after, and thoughtest thy friends, will be found liars, deceivers and blasphemers.

Now this day of the Lord man fain would put off with all his wit, wisdom and inventions; and this day of the Lord cannot be meant merely of a literal day, or a natural day, for that cannot altogether be, for who is able to put off one day? And as man cannot put off a natural day, nor the rising and setting of the sun, nor day, nor night, so he cannot put off this day of the Lord, but when it will come, it shall come, and he cannot put it off with all the art, wisdom, power, and all the inventions and subtleties he can devise, but Christ shall be born in Bethlehem, Mic.5:2, as it is prophesied of him. In Bethlehem, that is, the house of bread, for he is the true bread, and the bread of life. Man never had true satisfaction, or any true bread, till he was born from above, for Christ's body is bread indeed, and his blood is drink indeed. Then all man's wisdom and power, and all his fortifications and strongholds shall be blown down, then shall the walls of Jericho fall at the sounding of these rams horns; and then, when Christ is once born, Herod and all Jerusalem shall be troubled; then is the day when Rachel shall mourn for her children, and will not be comforted; yea, all those children which the children of men have begotten, and thought they would be a comfort, and rejoicing to them, and a support to them, they in

this day shall all be slain with the sword, and that light of Christ shall tell them, that all their wisdom and endeavors, that all their righteousness, and conformity is nothing worth, and that when they have done the utmost that they can, they are but unprofitable servants, Lk.17:10, and the best of their strictness is not worth one bit of bread, and that God is not bound to them in the least, when they have done ever so much, but hell is their portion for all this, "therefore depart from me you workers of iniquity." Lk.13:27.

And this day of the Lord will come on a sudden when neither man, nor all their magicians, nor soothsayers, nor their sorcerers, nor all their witchcrafts, by which they delude the eyes of the understanding, shall be able with all their wisdom and cunning to put it off, but they themselves shall be cut off and destroyed, though they have used their utmost devices to delude the soul, and carry it captive, and win them to a liking of their ways; and though Satan hath so deluded people that he appears not a devil and seducer as he is, but hath transformed himself into an angel of light, II Cor.11:14-15, and his ministers into ministers of righteousness. And for proof of this consider but of two or three places of Scripture and you shall see it clear.

First, the Apostle in II Thes.2:9-10, speaking of antichrist and his workings in man, saith that he shall be revealed and made known, and consumed with the Spirit of the Lord, and with the brightness of his coming; even he, "whose coming is after the

working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved." Though they seem saints in appearance, and to be endued with power, yet they are but lying wonders; and though they seem to have a righteousness, yet it is a deceivable righteousness, a righteousness wrought by the power of enchanterers and sorcerers, and magicians to deceive and blind the understanding, for there is no such thing but the contrary; for 'tis no other but the power of Satan, and the workings of Satan, and they are his signs and lying wonders, and in that day of the Lord all these things shall be discovered and made naked.

Nay further, that Satan may hide himself, and not be known to be Satan, he hath this further policy and enchantment, for he can cry down an enchantment in one form that he be made more secure in another, and yet be Satan still, and all to conceal himself from being made known; for if he be discovered, and the day of the Lord reveal him, then he shall see him fall down from heaven like lightning, Lk.10:18, therefore Satan will change his shape and cast out himself, and in this case Beelzebub will cast out Beelzebub, the greater devil will cast out the less, and that so he may take fuller possession. And all this is done by no other art but by magic, enchantments and sorcery. Nay often times the devil will call that enchantment which is furthest from it, even the wisdom, power and righteousness of Christ, because he knows that if he can but make

men so apprehend of it, they will fly from it, for he knows himself hated. And except he be disguised, he can do nothing; yet many men will cry out against sorcery and enchantment, and heresy, and errors, and delusions, when they know not what they are; nay, when they themselves are most deluded and surprised by enchantments, so that Satan is furnished with his subtle devices, and yet keeps men ignorant of his devices, and they shall not know they are enchanted, but cry out upon others to be so. They cry out such are heretics, seducers and Jesuits, and see not the real divination in themselves.

So that by this you may see when God or the Scriptures speak of sorcerers, magicians, charmers, enchanters, soothsayers, diviners, necromancers, peepers, or women with familiar spirits or the like, they not only mean that external way of magic, {though some things in that case may be lawful, which may through ignorance be railed against,} but God by those names chiefly intends to discover and set out the prince of darkness in man, and the man of sin, and antichrist in man, and the working of Satan in man; this the Scripture chiefly and ultimately intends all along, but men will not see it, nor acknowledge it, because they are under the power thereof and cannot endure the light, neither will they come to the light lest their deeds should be made manifest. Jn.3:19.

Add to this another Scripture, Exodus 7:11, "then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers; now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments." These were

Jannes and Jambres which withstood Moses, {which were the names of some of the magicians, which wrought against Moses,} which are in all the sons of men and cited by the apostle, II Tim.3:8, where he applies it to the working of Satan in man. "Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth, men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. But they shall proceed no further, for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was." They would undertake to do the same things by their power which Moses did by the finger and power of God, they would be apes and imitators to make the world believe they did the same thing, and by the same power; but it was made manifest that they were no other but deceivers, enchanter, magicians, and wrought by the devil, and such shall all those be discovered to be who pretend to obey Christ and work by the power of Christ, but are no other than dreamers, enchanter and charmers. And who these were, that we may know them, he plainly lays them forth there, they were men, that had the form of godliness, but denied the power thereof, II Tim.3:5, for they were lovers of themselves, boastful, proud, blasphemers, unthankful, unholy, truce breakers, false accusers, fierce, despisers of those that were truly good, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women, and these men make the last days perilous times. II Tim.3:1-7.

And as Jannes and Jambres resisted and affronted, and labored to weaken the credit of him who came with true miracles, and with the power of God, so these resist and oppose, and counterfeit the spiritual Moses, as if their works were wrought in God, and done by the power of Christ, all which is no other but magic, sorcery, delusion, charming, and enchantment.

Also, take one place more, that in Isaiah, "and when they shall say unto you, seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter; should not a people seek unto their God, for the living to the dead? To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Isa.8:19-20. Now according to the letter, there are none in words that will openly counsel one to go to wizards, {as such,} and to such as peep and mutter, and that they know deal with the devil; but of necessity, these words are spoken secretly in the hearts of men, and there they hearken and obey the council and wisdom of the flesh. There is the chief magic wrought which Satan uses in deluding and drawing away the souls of men, to hearken to these enchanters, who can counterfeit the graces and things of Christ, that so they may be taken for members and ministers of Jesus Christ. And that those who truly have his life and power, may be counted deceivers; for this is one of Satan's greatest depths, as we may see in the prophet Jeremiah when he had told the people of Moab and Ammon and Tyrus the word of the Lord, that they should go

into captivity, and therefore should submit and put their necks under the yoke of the King of Babylon. Jer.27:9. Now there were others that pretended that they were prophets also, and brought the word of the Lord, and told them that they should not consent to serve him. Says the Lord in that ninth verse, "hearken ye not unto your prophets," nor to your diviners, nor to your dreamers, nor to your enchanters, nor to your sorcerers which speak unto you, saying, you shall not serve the king of Babylon, for whatever they prophesied was but the devices of their own heart, and therefore they should not hearken to them, but that which he threatened, because it was the word of the Lord, that should and must come to pass.

And the apostle uses the same word in Gal.3:1, which includes all those words of sorcery, enchanting, witchcraft, &c., when he says, "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?" Which word bewitched is the same word in the Greek which signifies witchcraft, sorcery, charming, or the like, thereby signifying that whatever it was that was set up in man to cause him to mistake Jesus Christ, or is set up in the room of him, was enchantments, witchcrafts and sorceries, though they were never so like him if they were not in him, and turned us away from the true Jesus Christ, they are foolish and worldly rudiments; and are you so foolish {says he} in the third verse, "that having begun in the spirit, you should think to be made perfect by the flesh?"

If any fleshly or carnal, or external thing be set up in the room of Christ, this is no less than witchcraft, sorcery and delusion, and whatever name the Scripture gives to any external witchcraft or sorcery, it is to hold out unto us that spiritual, deep, hidden and wonderful charming that Satan uses to cause us to mistake Jesus Christ and that his power may be taken for the power of Jesus Christ, and his wisdom and seeming holiness for the wisdom and holiness of Jesus Christ.

Beloved, these things, {as our Saviour saith,} I have spoken unto you, and have often pressed them upon you, that when ye find them true and come to pass, you may believe, Jn.14:29; for except you find these things as effectually wrought in your own souls you cannot believe them. But whoever shall teach no more, but that these things are only literally fulfilled, they do delude, deceive, enchant and charm you, but the same things which have been done externally, must be fulfilled internally; for what is it to us what they did, and what they saw? Why does thou meddle with or talk of Christ and his miracles, and sufferings and resurrection, if these things be not done effectual in thine own experience? Art thou ever the better for all that was then done? Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness, I Tim.3:16, for as Christ was manifested in the flesh, so he was justified in the Spirit. What is it to thee what enjoyments Paul had, or John or any of the apostles, if thou hast not a measure of those truths wrought in thy own spirit? Without question, this is the truth and the life,

whatever the men, or the masters of the letter, or of the city of the letter say unto you. "The words that I speak unto you {saith our Saviour} they are spirit and they are life," Jn.6:63, they are not only a dead letter to the ear and to the understanding, but they are a quickening spirit declaring true death and true life in us. The Scripture in every path thereof holds forth either good or evil, death or life, light or darkness, heaven or hell, the temple of God or the temple of idols, Christ or Belial; that is, either man in his lost, miserable, blind, dark, undone, and hellish condition; or else Christ the Saviour, the life, the light, the glory, the happiness, the Redeemer of sinners. Now, if we have not the experience of either of these two in ourselves, all our reading, hearing, preaching, praying, sacrificing is but in vain, and the Scriptures are no other to us but the killing and deadly letter. II Cor.3:6.

Lastly, we will name one more of their sorceries and enchantments, and so conclude, and 'tis a very great one, in that they take upon them the very office and place of Christ, they think themselves, and call themselves teachers and divines, and men must come to them as to the oracles of God, and they are the priests lips which shall preserve knowledge; come to us, and hearken to us, and we will direct you, and teach you, what means, and what rules and ordinances ye shall use, and which is the way to heaven; when as Christ saith plainly, "call no man your father upon the earth, for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters, for one is your Master, even Christ.

But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted." Matt.23:9-12. And saith again, "no man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." Jn.6:44. And again, "I am the way, the truth and the life," and yet they say, come to us, join yourselves in fellowship with us, and conform to us, and walk with us, for we have the best means, we will show you the best way, we have overlooked and examined all other church fellowships, and there are none like ours, we are squared according to the primitive pattern, and to the mind of Christ, and the word itself justifies all our rules, and our way of worship; and they say moreover, we have the word of the Lord with us; and for us, and we have the mind of Christ with us, I Cor.2:16, we have a dream, and we have a revelation, and we have seen the vision; when indeed they have seen nothing, but have stolen the word of the Lord from others, and borrowed off their neighbour, of this and that author, and have searched what this man says, or what that man writes, of such and such points, and then come and cry, the word of the Lord, when the Lord hath not spoken in them, nor to them, but boast of things without their measure, II Cor.10:14, and speak not the things that they have seen and heard, and that their hands have handled of the word of life, I Jn.1:1, but as the Apostle saith, "who seek to commend themselves," boasting of other men's labors and experiences, and not of their own, II Cor.10:15, boasting beyond their line of things,

not distributed to them; and yet will say, the Lord hath spoken, and this is the word of the Lord, and yet have never found it the word of the Lord in them or to them; neither have they seen anything, nor hath the Lord spoken unto them. "They have seen vanity and lying divination, saying, the LORD saith, and the LORD hath not sent them, and they have made others to hope that they would confirm the word. Have ye not seen a vain vision, and have ye not spoken a lying divination, whereas ye say, the LORD saith it; albeit I have not spoken." Ezek.13:6-7. And therefore whatever they may say, they cannot make it out to the hearts of others, but they talk of it at random and by guess; and they say, this is so, and it must not be questioned, for all other received Orthodox men {forsooth} have said it. Are these prophets, think you, of the Lord's sending? Have these received the word at his mouth? Ezek.3:17. No, no, but they are furnished by their learning, and parts, and requirements, and so of and from man.

And so likewise, not only is the prophet deluded, but the people also, for they have joined themselves with these prophets, and there they will stick, and their faith is pinned upon their sleeves. Oh such a man, he is a sound man, and he cannot err, and they will hear no one else. And so this prophet {as thou takest him to be} becomes thy pope, and thy holy father; for to him only thou givest heed, and him you will follow and obey. And this is the great enchantment in our times, when men forsake Jesus Christ the true and only Teacher, and depend

upon men. This is a great mischief, and a grievous plague; but the world is not sensible thereof, but bless themselves in this great evil. What {say they} shall we forsake our ministers? Shall we let the Gospel, and the preaching of the Word fall to the ground? God forbid. As though men upheld the Gospel, and men could teach the Gospel. It is then Gospel to thee, when Jesus Christ makes it glad tidings in thy heart, and when there is nothing in heaven and earth more welcome to thee, and when thou hast forsaken and laid down thyself, to receive it. But until we come to see that there is no other father, no other master but Jesus Christ and all the world, in heaven or earth, we are certainly enchanted and deluded, and are under a spiritual charm.

It may be objected, that being so, then what reason is there that we should hear you, or receive what you say? 'Tis true, if I should say otherwise in regard of myself, I should also be a deluder, a liar, a charmer, and a soothsayer. I would by no means that you should look at me, or regard me, as if I could do anything. I desire to be no other but as a dead instrument used by the Lord, and would not be thought of or esteemed anything. I am no more fit to speak than any of you all; if God will speak by you, you may all prophesy one by one as the Apostle saith. God forbid that I should think myself better than any other saint of God; or think myself more honored by standing in a high place above you. The Lord he knows my heart! A hill or a mountain in the field were as fit for me; any place, I pass not, but

only for conveniency of hearing. So the Lord will but set up himself, and magnify his own name, {which he will do,} let my praise, my glory lie in the dust, and I would be no more stirred and disquieted in spirit with any such thing, than a man that is naturally dead.

And therefore let them look to it, who love to be called rabbi, or by the blasphemous title of divine, and that they must be honored above other saints of God; and that they are the clergy, and others they are but the laity, of a meaner rank than we, say they. And how do they love to have greetings in the market, and the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the like? Well, let them look to it, for God will judge them one day for all their sorceries and enchantments, and for standing up between him and his glory, to whom alone all praise is due, but to every man misery, shame, confusion of face, blackness of darkness, hell and condemnation. But hence we may see that it is no new thing to be bewitched by the sorcerers and enchanters, and the magicians of the world. The Galatians themselves were so, for there are many antichrists in the world; there are legions gone out from the prince of darkness to deceive the whole earth; and if any from Christ speak but the truth, he by his cunning devices will disfigure it, under the shape of heresy, schism, antinomianism, or some odious nickname or other, that so the truth may not be owned nor known; that so man may stop their ears against the heavenly voice of Christ, which brings down all things adored or loved in or from man, and sets up nothing else but the power,

wisdom, goodness, holiness and all sufficiency of the LORD alone. He cries, man's heart, and all the imaginations thereof are only evil continually, and that there is none that doeth good, no not one; they are all gone out of the way, and everyone is become abominable, there is none that understands or seeks God. And that there is nothing in man of good, but all is evil, sin, death, darkness, abomination, a lie, and utter desolation. Psal.14:3; Rom.3:10. But Satan cries, in the mouths of his ministers, let men do something, for he can pray, he can hear, and let him follow those rules that we prescribe, and they shall bring peace and rest to his soul. But if man were but content to hear the voice of Christ, and to stand in the light of the Gospel, he should be convinced that he had no power, no goodness, and that nothing but only the power of God could carry him out, and that he is dead in trespasses and sins, Eph.2:1, and that the voice of Christ alone can raise them from their graves, and that no less power can quicken or raise, but the eternal Almighty power, which raised to Jesus Christ himself from the dead. Rom.8:11.

It is not, as men say if you will come to us and join and walk with us, and be dipped with us, or break bread with us, will give any life, any peace to the soul, but the standing in the light of Christ, that so man may take to himself death and darkness, misery and wrath, and here to stand and dwell, and that in him is no good thing. Then this light would follow also him, that in Christ is all life, liberty, fullness, satisfaction, peace and rest, and nowhere

else. If men did but abide in this light, it would debase and keep low the lofty thoughts and those great expectations of and from man; it would also give Jesus Christ his due, as it would not suffer him in the least to act against the glory of Christ, but man would be dead and buried, and Christ would only ascend and sit upon his throne. There would nothing be esteemed in heaven or earth, but Christ, and he would be content to sell and lose everything for him. Matt.19:21. This light would curve every wicked act, every desire of the flesh; this alone is the means to crucify and kill thy vile nature, and not by any outward external thing, by washing or dipping in water, or eating such a poor, empty and carnal thing as a bit of bread, or drinking a cup of wine. This thing never did, nor never will do it, but to eat and drink that which Christ gave, which was not a little bread and wine only, but HIMSELF, and by feeding upon him, eating his body, and drinking his blood, this will nourish to eternal life. John 6:56. "When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper," I Cor.11:20, for the bread which we break is the communion of the body of Christ, and he that eats and drinks it unworthily discerns not the Lord's body in these things.

One may object, but may I not use these things? Yea, so you think yourselves never the better for using them; for 'tis not they that can feed nor comfort thee; nor 'tis not going on in thy own power, nor thy using of means; for Christ alone is the way, and the means. As if you come to a feast,

you are not invited to eat the platters or earthen dishes which bring the meat, but you are invited to the meat itself; they do but bring the meat, and if you eat not the meat thou must starve and die. And so, if thou follow the dreams of thine own heart, and thinkest thou eatest, and dost not, what a horrible delusion and enchantment is this? But of these things we may have an opportunity to speak more fully hereafter. Thus you see what are those things which the Lord will cut off, in that day when he shall come, thy horses and thy chariots, thy cities, and thy strongholds, thy witchcrafts, and thy soothsayers, thy graven images, and thy standing images out of the midst of thee.

FINIS

THE SECRET SOOTHSAYER OR THE HIDDEN SORCERER DISCOVERED.

SERMON II

**Preached by Mr. John Webster at All
Hallows Lombard Street, London.**

"And I will cut off the cities of thy land, and throw down all thy strong holds; and I will cut off witchcrafts out of thine hand; and thou shalt have no more soothsayers; thy graven images also will I cut off, and thy standing images out of the midst of thee; and thou shalt no more worship the work of thine hands." Micah 5:11-13).

I have beloved, according to the grace of Christ afforded me, showed the meaning of these words according to the spirit and the mystery thereof, declaring that great work which is brought to pass by Jesus Christ, when he appears gloriously in the world, in the souls of men, and is exalted as Lord and King, and then it is when Jesus Christ is exalted in the earth, and not when men are exalted, or when there is peace and plenty in outward things. But all the speakings of the prophets, and of Christ himself tend to set out that kingdom and personal reign of grace, Rom.5:17, which generally all men know very little of, and neither will nor can own for a glorious state, because not accommodated with outward power, riches and external glory; but in that day

when Jesus Christ will come and arise in power spiritually in the souls of his elect, then is that great day, {and one thousand years will be as one day,} when he will accomplish these things; and also all those glorious prophecies declared by himself, and by all his prophets. And this work is begun by way of destroying, conquering and cutting off all those things that stand in the way, and hinder the setting up of this glorious kingdom. And that is, all man's refuges, defenses or strongholds, whatever hath been a rock, or stay, or peace, or rest to his soul to depend upon, and whatever it is that he hath trusted in to deliver him. As first, all his horses and chariots, to carry him out of all danger; whatever he rides upon and thinks it will carry him swiftest away from fear, wrath, or destruction. All these things, when Christ comes to reign gloriously, shall all be cut off and utterly destroyed; he shall have nothing left him to flee with or ride upon.

Secondly, all his cities and strongholds shall be razed and thrown down; whatever hath been raised up by man for his security, shelter or safety, to prevent or keep off the day of evil; not anything shall stand which he promised himself safety from; but when Christ is to come, he will send before him such a destruction and overflowing deluge that shall quite carry away all man's building, and there shall not a stone be left upon a stone of anything built or set up by man.

Thirdly, not only so, but all his horses and chariots, all his cities and strongholds shall be quite removed; but whatever witchcraft or sorcery, or

enchantments he hath in his hand, though they be ever so cunningly contrived and full of subtlety and delusion, yet all these shall be discovered and cut off, so that he shall have no more soothsayers, necromancers, cheaters, sorcerers, diviners, peepers, mutterers or dreamers. Then he who is the man of sin, II Thes.2:4-12, shall be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped, so that he as God sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. But then shall that wicked one be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming, Rev.20:3, this antichrist, who shall no more delude nor deceive the nations with all deceivableness of unrighteousness, though they work as subtly as Satan himself, showing as if they had power and righteousness, by their glorious pretenses and great signs and shows; but in that day the Lord will appear in his own light and life, and they shall be discovered to be but lying wonders, and deceivableness of unrighteousness to delude those that perish. The men of the world, and all your professors and pretenders to religion, they shall no more deceive, they shall no more make a show of that which they are not, but all their neat and curious contrived jugglings shall appear to be no truth nor reality, but only the form and the likeness of things. But the truth and light of God appearing, all these things shall be laid open, that the eyes of men be no more deluded with false and lying shows and pretenses, but they shall be discovered by the

truth and light of Christ, and thereby destroyed and cut off, and they shall be no more.

Fourthly, the Lord will also cut off all the graven images, all those idols and images which man hath made and set up by his own wit and invention, even all his religion, and all his forms, wherein he is so much pleased with himself. And although he have bestowed ever so much carving and engraving, and decking and painting, to make them seem neat and curious, to take the eyes of the beholders; nay, though they be made of silver and gold, and be ever so glorious, that they can even dazzle the eyes of the beholders, and cause them to run wondering after the glory of the beast, Rev.13:3, yet all these graven images shall be destroyed and quite cut off. Nay, not only the graven images, but the standing images, though they have been of ever so long standing, and ever so generally received and owned for the truth, which have scarce ever been questioned, and have been received and rested on from generation to generation; yet these shall appear in the light of Christ to be but images and lies, and shall all vanish in that day of the Lord, and man shall have nothing left him of all his strength, riches, horses, chariots, strongholds, witchcraft, images; so that he shall have nothing at all in his hand to trust to, and these men for all their strong confidences shall be utterly distressed and stripped naked, and shall no more worship the work of their own hands; that is, there is nothing of man which can stand, nothing of his righteousness, wisdom, power, acting, working, worshiping,

nothing but only the righteousness, power and work of Jesus Christ alone, who saith, "behold I make all things new." Rev.21:5. Write, for all these things are faithful and true; whatever men say, write this for truth.

These things in part we have opened in the morning, especially two; first, his cities and strongholds for his defense; secondly, his chariots and his horses. And in case the former will not secure him, yet his chariots and horses shall and will uphold and secure him, {as he thinks,} that at last he may be free from danger and secure himself from the pursuer. Thirdly, the Lord promises that he will cut off witchcrafts, and that they shall have no more soothsayers. From hence we held out this, that till the day of Christ's appearing, man is led by the defilement of his own heart, and by no other guide but by Satan and his instruments, by the father of lies, deceits and enchantments. He always harkens to the council of the serpent which is more cunning and subtle than any other beast of the field, and so cunningly are his devices contrived, that if it were possible he would deceive therewith the very elect. Matt.24:24. And there is none that can throw out this deceiver, nor this cunning serpent in man, but only the holy seed of the woman, which alone can break his head and destroy him. There is none else can overcome this dragon but only Michael the Archangel, nor consume the man of sin, but only the mouth of the Lord, and the brightness of his coming; for he is full of signs, deceits, and lying wonders that none but the light and truth of Christ can discover

his delusions; but even all the world having received the mark of the beast, Rev.14:11, and they running wondering after him, and they having in them the strongman armed, Lk.11:21-22, and what power, wisdom, or strength of man is ever able to take off the one, or bind up the other? But when the day of the Lord comes, then men shall no more be deluded by sorcerers nor enchanters, nor by those that mutter and peep, and have familiar spirits, and such as do no other in all their religion, but inquire after the dead, as the prophet speaks. Isa.8:19. What's this? Who inquire not after the living, the substance, and the truth, but after the dead, and all their delight is to be amongst the graves, and the tombs and dead things which have no power, nor life in them. But all things of this nature in man shall be cut off when Christ shall arise in us and become Lord and King, and be all and all, viz., to be alone King, Priest and Prophet to us. Then we shall hearken and give ear alone to him, having no other guide, nor any other teacher or master but him; and when these things come to pass, then all the delusions within us, and all in others without us shall all be discovered and vanish; and indeed we can never discover those spiritual sorcerers and enchanters without us, until we have found them out and discovered them within us. Then Christ alone shall shortly tread down Satan under our feet. Rom.16:20. Then this Michael will throw down out of heaven the dragon and his angels which deceived the nations; for only the breath and coming of the Lord can discover those depths of lies, and infinite deceits that are received and rooted in

the heart of man, and nothing but the good hand, wisdom and power of the Lord Almighty can deliver the soul.

From hence then we may hold out thus much, and it is very clear. First, that there is no greater deceiver to be found than him who is within man; no more cunning devil, no greater antichrist, no worst idolater than what man hath in his own heart; so that he hath in him all things described by the name of evil. There is in him the devil, sin, antichrist, the red dragon, and the beast with seven heads and ten horns. There are in him, conjurers, sorcerers, soothsayers, witches, consulters with the dead, that is, delighting and resting in formal and dead ordinances, and with women which have familiar spirits and with the great whore, and even with all things that belong to the kingdom and power of darkness. And all these things, and whatever else can be named of this kind, they all make up but one body, all these are but Satan and his members, and they all have but one and the same head. As Jesus Christ consists of whatever is good, righteous, holy, pure, undefiled, and the seed and sons of God, and all things of that nature are his body, and he their Head; so all the seed and sons of Satan do make up but one body and one building which is antichrist and the Great Whore, and the Dragon, and Lucifer and the rest; and however man is carried out to look for all these things without him, yet be sure these sorcerers, these wizards, these necromancers, these dragons, devils and antichrists are all in thine own bosom. Here is the true necromancy and witchcraft,

the true antichrist; all other without are but shadows, pictures and representations of the true and real body of antichrist, and the great whore, and the like. If you would find out antichrist, and the true necromancer and soothsayer, it is thyself. When you inquire and ask counsel of thine own heart, then thou consults with a familiar and lying spirit; when thou maketh a show of that which thou art not, then thou art a necromancer, and a sorcerer, and so the nature of every one of these evil ones according to their names you shall find in your own bosom. And truly beloved, herein lies the great and mighty delusion amongst the sons of men, that Satan is so cunning, that he always carries them out of themselves to find out antichrist, and wizards, and soothsayers, and the great whore and the like; and the true reason is, because the devil would not by any means have these things be discovered to be in man's own breast, where indeed is his temple and seat, more than at room externally, or literally in any other place. There is Antichrist, &c., there is Belial, &c., and there be the soothsayers and the sorcerers in thine own heart. But man will by no means endure this doctrine, and so long as Satan can blind, delude, and deceive man, making him look for that evil one, and the son of perdition, and the mystery of iniquity out of himself, so long Satan rests secure and safe; but if the light of God comes and discovers where his lurking and hiding places are, viz., to be within and at home, even whilst we have been running up and down, far and near to find him; then the soul either fights against this light, or else blushes and is

ashamed, and confounded in itself, and now it will trust no longer to itself, now it sees the greatest cheating and witchcrafts to be acted in itself.

But till this day of the Lord come, and this great light shine around about him, man rides on boldly and confidently as Saul to Damascus, Acts 9:1-2, and is not smitten down from his horse, neither sees he what he is doing, but blesses himself, and thinks that all is well, and he censures this wicked man and the other, and he can curse the devil and antichrist without him bitterly, and thee whom he thinks to be at Rome, and concludes that there he must fall and be brought down, and never remembers that there is one in him whom he knows not; but if any shall say unto him as Nathan to David, thou art the man, antichrist is in thee, and Adam is in thee, and the serpent is in thee, and in whatever is said or related of Adam, or Satan, or Antichrist, or Lucifer, or of Eve. What they did, behold I say unto thee, thou art the man, II Sam.12:7, all this thou mayest read in thine own actions, in thine own practices.

But oh, how tart and harsh is this doctrine to all the wise, sober, grave, holy and learned men of the world! Oh how do they hate and deride this teaching! But let me tell them before the Lord, angels and men, I Cor.4:9, that for all this while they are blessing themselves, from the devil and antichrist and the rest, and scorning that these things should be in them and think that they have discovered them here and there, behold they are nigh them, they are within them, in their hearts and

mouths, though they see them not. But if ever with all thy learning, and parts, and righteousness thou hast had but the light of Christ in thee, it would have showed thee the devil and the true necromancer, and let thee know that for all thy vain boasting, and swelling, and high, and proud conceits of thyself, that thou never yet hadst the light of Christ, and that God never yet answered thee by the true Urim and Thummim, Exod.28:30, where thou ought to inquire, but thou hast still inquired of Baal and Astaroth, and of wizards and familiar spirits, and the councils of thine own heart; otherwise, all thy high conceits had been laid low, for thou goest out to sorcerers, and soothsayers, to Astaroth or any such thing, and consults with them, and they tell thee of one thousand devils but themselves; and they will tell thee that thou art wise, godly, and holy; yea, who more holy? Nay, thou art a saint, and all others, especially such and such are devils to thee. This man sees everything nought, and evil, and out of order, but his own heart. And what deep and desperate witchcraft and lies are these, when all these are in himself? But when Christ comes, then the mind is quite turned, altered, and changed; then he sees that his heart is deceitful above all things; then he is amazed to see those unspeakable deceits that are there, how loathsome and vile he is, then he wonders that Christ should descend so low as hell to bring his soul out of thence, then he sees how all those things which before he would never believe to be in him, they are now laid open, and now he sees that Christ alone hath led captivity captive.

Secondly, this doctrine notes out unto us the vanity of the minds of all men, while they are anywhere exercised but within themselves, in their own hearts, for all good and evil comes out of the heart, and 'tis that which comes out thence which defiles the man. And again, "a good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things." Matt.12:35. Therefore the main of all is to know a man's self, for a man to have high and great thoughts of himself, and in the meantime to be no other but a devil, a wizard, a sorcerer, to be an enemy, and a deluder to himself, to think himself to be light when he is in thick darkness, to call that in himself evil - good, and good - evil, darkness - light, and light - darkness. Isa.5:20. This is one of the devil's great delusions, and witchcrafts in man, to carry him still out of himself, even in point of religion to look abroad and meddle with this man and the other man, and neglect himself; other men's faults and errors, but he neither sees nor once finds fault with his own. Some men also are much carried out in company, and are full of talk and high discourses, and curious notions, and these they trade withal and think to be somebody, and get themselves a name, and all these things tend to this main end, to make man seem to be what he is not, something when he is nothing, as the Apostle speaks, Gal.6:3, and to cover and hide these devils, these witchcrafts, these sorceries, these enchantments from his own and others beholding. If the devil can but hide himself,

so that he is not known to be as he is, he knows he shall rest secure enough; then the soul is quiet enough, and he thinks all is well, and so the man sleeps in the devil's arms, and knows nothing of his own misery, until he lie down in sorrow, and condemnation forever; and this is that which the devil labors to do in man with all his might. This hiding and covering, and deluding is merely the work of the devil. Now the work of Christ is to undermine and to counterwork all this, viz., by discovering and laying open all these mischiefs and deceits, and by letting man see his own folly, delusion and misery; for the devil would by no means be discovered, lest he should be cast out; therefore he cannot abide that man should dwell at home, and be over busy with his own heart, to see the enchantments and cheatings that are there. For, there it is that the prince of darkness rules and sits as king of the bottomless pit, and he knows he can delude and deceive, and be too hard for all the men in the world, except Jesus Christ to undertake to uncover and unmask his delusions.

But when Christ will discover him in thee, then thou shall see thyself to be all these things that we have spoken, and that all those lying divinations are in thee, then all thy deceits and lies shall lie under the sentence of condemnation; then and never before, canst thou discover or bear witness against antichrist, and the prince of darkness; then thou shall come to know whether thou art indeed a member of Jesus Christ, viz., by finding these discoveries to be made in thee, for then thou canst

witness indeed that flesh and blood never revealed these things to thee. Matt.16:17. Then thou shalt see experimentally, what it is to be in captivity, what it is to be in Egypt, in Babylon, and that thou wast in such cruel bondage once, and bound with such strong fetters, as no hand could deliver thee, but only the hand of the mere mercy of God; and that it is that only which maketh thee to differ, and not any power, wisdom, or watchfulness of thine own, nothing but that almighty hand hath delivered thee from the witch, and the deluder, and the sorcerer, and destroyed the destroyer, and all this out of mere mercy and goodwill to thee.

And then also this will follow, if thou hast found these things done, and acted in thyself, thou canst not choose but pity and pray for all those that are yet under the same enchantments. When thou beholdest them, thou canst not choose but say, alas poor souls! I know full well that there is none but only the hand of Jesus Christ that can help and deliver them, for I was in the same condition; what was I more than they, that so much mercy has been showed to me, and in seeing their misery, thou canst not but remember thine own, and so thou seest thyself in seeing them. This the apostles did when they beheld others, they confessed that they were by nature children of wrath as well as others, Eph.2:3, for 'tis only the mercy of God that pulls thee as a brand out of the fire, Zech.3:2, while others are burning there still. Jude 23. And 'tis only his infinite and undeserved goodness that hath delivered thee from all those great delusions and

enchantments, from the devil, and from antichrist, for thou hast truly seen and found that same principle of hell and darkness in thine own bosom, that is in any other; and that there be none that do good, none that seek after God, Psal.14:2, though they pretend ever so much to him. All this considered, in seeing it true in thy own heart who art now set at liberty, and knowing all these legions of devils cast out of thee, Mark 5:9, thou wilt be so far from insulting and abrading any in this condition, that thou wilt pity them in thy very soul, from a fellow feeling of the same misery.

Again further, this will be another effect. If Satan and antichrist be discovered and cast out in thee, it will bring thee not to wonder to see such infinite multitudes of men carried away with the spirit of enchantment and delusion, for 'tis a wonder anyone is brought from under these delusions. There are but two spirits in the world, either we are carried away with the spirit of enchantment, or else with the spirit of Christ. All the saints can bear witness to this, and none else, for they only have experience of both states; they know the snares of the hunter, Psal.124:7, and they are not ignorant of his devices, II Cor.2:11, and they have the voice, the leadings, the teachings of their only Master, John 10:5, and they know what doctrine savors of his life, and what savors of the flesh. They know his voice from the voice of a stranger, and a stranger they will not follow; for this is the spiritual man who judges all things, and yet he himself is judged of no man. I Cor.2:15. They hear his judgment, for they know his

judgment is true, Rom.2:2, and they can distinguish the voice of Christ from the voice of all the enchanters, diviners, soothsayers, or from any stranger in the world. He cannot be {as formally he was} deluded with lies, shows and pretenses.

Beloved, this is that which the world cannot endure to hear of, that their doctrine, or their ways should be censored or judged; but the saints who are really freed, they have such experience of all these things that they can truly distinguish the voice of Christ from the voice of antichrist, and their own dear Master {who hath done so much for them} from all deluders, necromancers and soothsayers in the world. The spiritual man hears, owns and follows, and loves his Master; and knows him not in conceit or notion, or opinion, or persuasion, but by a clear revelation and manifestation of the person and work of Jesus Christ; and he hath found that till then he was in darkness, and the strongman kept the house, and he had an opinion that he was alive, but yet was really dead; before he had high opinions of himself, and of his serving God, and pleasing God, and had concluded within himself that he had brought every high thought, and every lofty imagination into subjection to Christ, and that he had observed every rule, not omitting the lease command without conformity to it; he did not pick and choose, but he was universal in his obedience {as he thought} and he barely knew anything amiss in himself. He was conformable to forms and duties, and washings, &c., but alas, to an exercised saint in Christ, all this is but delusion, for his very speech

will betray him, since he cannot but speak of himself, of his doing and acting; and you shall never hear him complain of himself really, from a true sense of evil {but formally he may} but he is still vomiting out his own pride, and vainglory; showing his gifts and parts, and glorying in his wisdom and holiness, and still telling forth what great and goodly things which he hath done.

But all this is but man in the beginning, and man in the middle, and man in the end, for this man was never fetched out of himself, has never yet seen the abominations of his own heart, has never yet loathed himself, Ezek.20:43, and how can anything of God come from him, who never in himself had anything of God, but all his actings were from man, and from self, and from parts gained and acquired by his own diligence and self-improvement, and "do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" Matt.7:16.

From hence also it is further clear that all charms, lies, enchantments, sorceries, and all the secret workings of Satan and antichrist which lie hidden and undiscovered until the day of Jesus Christ, for Satan will never discover himself, Beelzebub will never really cast out Beelzebub, though he by the Pharisees falsely cast that upon Christ, Matt.9:34, merely to hide and keep himself undiscovered, for his subtle working is, that he would have Christ taken to be the devil, and he would be the Christ, II Thes.2:4, and this is the great policy of the devil, who hath so wonderfully prevailed in the world upon this account. True, Christ

is the devil to the world, and to all false professors, and the working of man and self, and of the devil in man, this is received as the Christ; in this is in such a white and glorious and innocent attire to the world that not all the men in the world, nor all out of Christ, could never have discovered him convincingly, or cast him out. 'Tis only the finger of God that discovers, cuts off, and destroys this witchcraft from amongst us.

But, so this devil will not be cast out, for he will shift anyway to save himself, he will take up any form, any way to worship Christ, be conformable to any external thing, being no other but false apostles, and his ministers shall be ministers of righteousness, though they be deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the very likeness of the apostles of Christ, as they are called in the Corinthians, "and no marvel, for Satan himself will transform himself into an angel of light." II Cor.11:13-15.

Nay, though he is a devil, yet he will have a form of godliness, II Tim.3:5, as the apostle saith. Therefore the devil must by no means appear to be a devil, for then he loses his creditability and possessions, he knowing that if once he appears as a devil, as a devourer, as a destroyer, tormentor, and seeking the death of the soul, as a red dragon thirsting after blood; if Jesus Christ once discovers him thus, there is no staying for him in that soul, for then out he must go; but still this is the devil's method and his deep design to hide himself, still to appear in a way of juggling and conjuring, as you know the serpent did to Eve, speaking to this

purpose, I came not but for thy good, I come not to hurt or destroy thee, I come to make thee more glorious, more happy, and more like unto God, more wise, &c., the devil never appears as a destroyer, but as a friend to man; he always governs his subjects, especially in the religious parts of the world, as an angel of light, II Cor.11:14, as hating ungodliness and the ways of sin, and loving the ways of righteousness and conformity to the external letter and rule of Christ which these men call godliness. As our Saviour told the Jews, "ye are of your father the devil, and his works ye will do." Believe it, this was very strange and harsh doctrine to such great and learned, and eminent professors and teachers of religion; but he not only saith but proves that they are of their father the devil, for all their great shows and external strictness; for {saith he} there is no truth in him, he was a liar from the beginning, and the father thereof, and so continues; he doth nothing but lie in all his religious servants, for they will take up any form of religion, and are as conformable as may be, as though they were the true servants of Christ; but in all this they do but lie and dissemble, and enchant and delude. And my brethren, is not the devil as fair in his pretenses nowadays, in taking up forms, duties, conformity, strictness, and following the mind of Christ? Many say they will do nothing, but they will have the rule of the word for it, and they will undertake to open the Scriptures and give out the mind of Christ. These servants of Satan come not on the account of profaneness, or ignorance, but professing

knowledge, and religion, and learning, and they are the great searchers into all knowledge, and think themselves not ignorant of anything, but obedient in all things; and indeed whom more knowing, or more obedient according to the external letter than they? These are very high and fair pretenses, yet who were more learned and knowing, and more seemingly zealous than the Pharisees? Whose abilities were amply manifested in their marvelous cunning questions to entrap Jesus Christ; these men though they know not the wisdom and the knowledge of God or Christ, yet they are notable apes and imitators of them; though they know not the truth, they will pretend that they do, and think verily they do, and they will frame themselves and their notions as near as man can to understand the Scriptures, by his learning, wit, and industry; but alas, while they make a show of knowledge, yet they are ignorant of the truth and the mystery; and all this is nothing but a lie, and 'tis no other but the language of the beast. For man's bucket can never reach the truth and the water of life, and no man in heaven or earth was counted worthy to open this book, and loose the seals thereof, but only the Lion of the tribe of Judah, Rev.5:5, and there is no man that knows the Father but the Son, and him and to whom the Son will reveal him. Luke 10:22.

Beloved, all things in the world are from these two principles or roots, they are either from the wisdom that is from above, which is pure, peaceable, humble, meek, long-suffering, and full of good works; or else they are from the wisdom which

is from beneath, which is earthly, sensual, and devilish. It is given to catching, carping, ensnaring, reviling, lying, slandering, &c. Now the wisdom from above never teaches men to carp and lie lurking to catch the innocent and simple man, Psal.10:9, such was and is the wisdom of the Pharisees in all ages, for they will be very forward to argue, as though they would willingly know all truth, but they do but argue to catch and ensnare, and when they cannot understand or comprehend, then they will invent some gin, and force some lie or another.

Again, this wisdom from beneath, it's very full of judging and full of pride, and it magnifies all things of man's inventions and whatever man magnifies; but do you think any of this is from God, or from the Divine Wisdom? No, the attributes of Divine Wisdom is to be made humble, to lay aside all things of self and flesh, and to become teachable, and nothing in its own power or wisdom. This is the property of Divine Wisdom in man, but when men would act, and be something, and undertake to observe this rule and the other, and they can undertake {the alone work of the Spirit} to lead men into all truth before Christ comes in by his light, power and wisdom, and they will be journeying before the Lord remove the cloud, Exod.40:36, all this is from the wisdom of the serpent in man, who can transform himself into an angel of light, II Cor.11:14, and his ministers into ministers of righteousness.

What do these men more than the Pharisees? For they by their own power, conformed to all

outward rules, and indeed unquestionable ordinances, appointed by God himself, and how exact were they in performing them, even far beyond the strictest nowadays, of all those things {they say} are ordinances, and yet they are not sure that they are so, though they cry out, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, Jer.7:4, and call for the ways of Christ, and the rules and mind of Christ, yet how sharply doth Christ fall upon them and call them hypocrites, and painted sepulchers, and blind leaders of the blind, Matt.23:27; nay, and calls them devils for all their strictness, "ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." John 8:44. In all this they pretend to serve God by; for in all this wherein they seem to be so holy, and strict, and to surpass and outrun all others, 'tis only the devil that carries them out in their own power, and the fruit of it is nothing else but the glory in man and in the flesh. The Jews they had an outward and worldly sanctuary, and a formal worship, and this they boasted of and gloried in; and so it is now, men have taken up some things equivalent and like unto these; for now Satan appears in things that men call Ordinances, as outward washings, and calling these the true baptism, church order and fellowships, and say this is according to the rule of the Gospel, and partaking of bread and wine in the sacraments, as they call this the eating of the Body and drinking of the Blood of Christ.

Now in nothing doth the devil more delude men than in these things, calling them the ordinances of Christ, when indeed they are not. As

you see how the Jews stood upon it and justified themselves, that they were the true seed of Abraham, when he told them of being made free men, he would have convinced them of their unknown bondage, but they answered, "we be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man; how sayest thou, ye shall be made free?" John 8:33. Now indeed there was a kind of truth in it, that they were the fleshly seed of Abraham, and that they had submitted to circumcision and to those external rules commanded, and this seemed to be somewhat, as to outward appearance, as if they were the true seed of Abraham; but that was not it, and though they had circumcision, yet were they not circumcised in heart, neither were they his true seed.

And so many boast of ordinances, and washings, and baptisms, and breaking bread, and Church Fellowship, and laying on of hands, and observing the rules of Christ, and following the pattern of the Apostles, when alas poor souls they quite mistake the matter. It is true, it is like baptism, but this it is not; and they are like the ordinances of Christ, but they are not such; they would seem to make and ordain ministers, and they speak of giving the Holy Ghost; but alas, I say all these are but resemblances and shadows, they are not the true ordinances of Christ; and notwithstanding men's using of these things with so much appearance of strictness and exactness, yet they have them not. For they are under bondage still, being never yet delivered, set free indeed, never baptized with the

baptism of Christ, never yet fetched off their own bottoms, never taken into union with Christ; who will undertake to give the Spirit and the Holy Ghost, and yet never had the Spirit themselves; and therefore all those things that these men are nothing but shadows, shells and carcasses of the true Ordinances of Christ.

You know that many came to John's baptism, even of the Pharisees, and yet they were but a generation of vipers, Matt.3:7; their consciences told them that John was a true prophet, and they began to smite them, and they thought it was a duty that they were bound to, that thereby they should prevent the wrath to come, and they presently take it up as having power of their own to do anything in religion, and here they thought themselves secure, and that they had really prevented the wrath to come. But the true baptism, and the true ordinances, and the true worship are things of a far higher nature. There is a heavenly baptism, and a heavenly worship, and an heavenly Ordinance. I {saith John} "indeed baptize you with water," but there is One "that cometh after me," who is preferred before me, "he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire," Matt.3:11-12, "he must increase, but I must decrease." John 3:30. My baptism is nothing, for I must stand by when He comes; I baptize but unto repentance; but he gives repentance and the Holy Spirit. The heavenly things are of a higher nature; these are but the pictures and the shadows, the shells and the outsides; the other the life and the power, the Holy Ghost and the

fire itself. Now they that receive these things, are indeed the children of the free woman, and are the true seed of Abraham; all others are the children of the bondwoman, and are Hagar who is in bondage with her children to this very day.

For as it was with Hagar, so it is now, and hath been always, in all ages and generations, the children of the bondwoman do always exalt themselves, and are very saucy and peremptory towards the children of the free woman, and why? Because they are circumcised, and submit to ordinances, and think themselves of the seed of Abraham, therefore they grow proud, lofty and censorious, and usurp too much over the children of the free woman, even as their mother before them {Hagar} despised her mistress and lifted up herself more than was fit for her. Therefore this is determined concerning her, "cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman." Gal.4:30. When once the handmaid {who is in the house but by sufferance} will exalt herself above the mistress, and her son born after the flesh begin to persecute them that are born after the Spirit, then away with her, cast out both her and her sons too.

And further know this, that when the appearance of the power of Christ comes into the soul; that is, when the bondwoman and her son are cast out, then the soul does not as some imagine and teach, work out its own liberty, nor is it made free by its own power, but Christ brings in this liberty

with him, and from this liberty the soul acts and works. The children of the freewoman do not work to be set free, but because they are set free, therefore they work freely, and cannot but so work. Herein lies a broad difference between the children of the bondwoman and the children of the free woman. When the sons of the bondwoman hear of anything that man is required to do, presently they think to work themselves to it by their care, watchfulness, resolutions, &c., but now it is quite contrary with the sons of the free woman; they having a principle of freedom, act and work from this; the one worships God from an internal principle, in the power of the Spirit, the other from an outward compulsory cause, and not from the power of love.

So likewise the one doth all his actions out of love to Christ, doing good to all men in the world, being willing to serve all out of love; pitying all, counseling all, willing to help all, as far as in them lies. Imitating their heavenly Father who doth good to all, to the good and evil, just and unjust, Matt.5:45, and merely from a heavenly principle of mercy, pity and loving kindness and bowels of mercy. But the other, his religion consists in outward forms, in washings and dippings and conformity to fellowships; and whatever they do, it is not from the power of love, or from the nature of their heavenly Father in them, but from some external cause, from something without them, from fear or hope, &c., either to prevent some danger, or to procure something which they conceive in a general notion

to be good for them, to make them happy and the like, because hell they hear is a terrible place, and full of horror and destruction, and heaven is a place of peace, joy and rest, and there they shall live forever in pleasure, which shall never end. Upon these two grounds most men act and take up the strictest forms of worship, and hereupon they may be very constant and very zealous and sincere, as they conceive; when alas, all these things are nothing at all, for the truth is, hell they love and live in, and yet know not, that they are in it; and that which is true heaven to the soul, they hate and run away from, as being the place of misery, death and torments to them. Therefore you may see what a miserable delusion and cursed veil is generally upon the hearts of most men, which call themselves men fearing God; and that which they call the worship of God is no other but inventions of their own {as they practice them} and will worship; and though they make a great deal of stir about ordinances and breaking of bread; yet alas, how far they are from the ordinance of Christ, let the effects of their practice and lives declare, for how little do they feed on Christ as they pretend to do? He that feeds on Christ, partakes of his nature, as Peter speaks, and they hear the word and keep it, Luke 11:28, and these truly feed on Christ, and do it in remembrance of him.

But these pretenders to ordinances and outward duties, they instead of feeding on Christ, or being fed by him, they are fed indeed, but by whom? Even by Satan himself, for he makes them live and

rest upon these shadows and pictures, and to have their dependence and life on them, and to make idols of them; and in this case saith David and the apostle Paul, they sacrifice unto devils, and not unto God. Psal.106.36; I Cor.10:20. And yet none more precise, none more holy in words, and gestures, and in their apelike imitations and carriages than they, none pretend more justice and piety, and gravity; and was it not thus with the Pharisees? They made a great matter to be outwardly just to men, and stood much upon their praying, fasting, paying of tithes, not keeping back so much as that of the smallest consequence, mint, anise and cummin, Matt.23:23, yea, what were they for all this, but hypocrites, dissemblers, whited sepulchers without, but full of rottenness and dead men's bones within. Matt.23:27.

But those that are indeed saints and members of the true body of Christ, their minds are first changed, and they have a new nature, and from this they work, and worship and do acts of justice and mercy. The other {whatsoever they may pretend} change but the outside, and wash but the outside of the cup and platter, but the inside is as foul and loathsome as ever; they can be very strict in their performances, and carriages, they can make long prayers and seem very devout, but then they must be thought to be somebody, and they must be honored, or else all the fat is in the fire, {as the proverb is,} and they must have the uppermost seats, and grave greetings by the name of Rabbi, Rabbi, and they must be thought to be the only holy

men, and are mighty circumspect to keep their distance with all, but whom they think well of, and hereby they think to keep up their honour and respect, and they are very conversant in reading, prayer, and expounding the Scriptures, {as they themselves understand them,} and this is their holiness and their religion, and these things make them to be feared and honored, {as they think,} and this makes them bold, and this strikes an awfulness on the spirits of others, and makes them terrible. Alas poor, ignorant deluded souls! These things may be called holiness and holy duties, and their many words and their long babblings may be called prayer by themselves and others who are as blind as themselves, who cannot see their pride and vainglory and self-confidence, and lifting up themselves; and indeed men know them not, for saith Christ, "for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them," Lk.11:44, but as for those who have the Spirit of Christ in them, and a spirit of discerning given to them, they see plainly that all this is vanity.

They see that all their highest and strictest zeal and performances are a mere sound of words without any real spiritual life, to be no other but as sounding brass, or a tinkling symbol, I Cor.13:1, which vanishes and comes to nothing, it being no more but air and emptiness, having nothing of truth or reality in it. The long prayer of the Pharisee was no prayer at all, but was rejected, when the poor dejected Publican saying but a few words was esteemed a prayer and was accepted, and he went

home justified, and not the other. "And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other, for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Luke 18:13-14.

These Pharisees are furnished at all times, they can preach and pray, and do anything, they are fitted at all times, they can at any hour command themselves, they can pray either in their chambers, or in the temple, or in their closet, and can keep their set rules and hours; and this is their holiness, and all that do not follow their modes and their forms are but loose and profane, and they can judge and censure a brother for a mote in his eye, but perceive not a beam in their own eye. Matt.7:3.

These are the men our Lord so much aimed at, and had so much to do to convince, and him they so much hated, because he had such a slight opinion of them, and of their holiness, and because he censored them for Hypocrites and blind Pharisees, nay the worst of all men, yea worst than whoremongers, thieves and murderers, Matt.23:26-33, nay he calls them serpents. But the other who worship God in the spirit, and have their help, strength, and dependence upon the Lord, they see really their own insufficiency and they receive all by waiting upon the Lord. These cannot speak nor preach, nor pray but when he doth all this in them; they will not be unjust to men, because they have

an inward principle that conforms them to the mind of Christ; having a new nature they work all their works from that principle of grace; being good, I John 5:18, they cannot but do good; but the other, they do good things thinking themselves thereby to make themselves good, and to procure favor and acceptance. But the sons of God know that whatever is notated from the Spirit of God working in such, is no other but from the devil, and is no other but witchcraft, sorcery, enchantment, &c., in brief, the one keep a great deal of stir, and are very busy and exact about outsides, and forms, and times, and places and the like, when as the other see the vanity and folly of such things, and having a principle of holiness within, from whence they do act and work.

This they know is the true circumcision, who worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Jesus Christ, and have no confidence in the flesh, Phil.3:3, and doing any duty from this principle of the new man, or the new creature within them, this they esteem to be an ordinance, because it is done with life and power, and in the spirit of Jesus Christ; and they cannot call anything an ordinance but only this, whatever all the wizards, soothsayers, diviners, enchanters in the world say to the contrary.

FINIS

ROOTING UP OF EVERY PLANT NOT PLANTED BY THE HEAVENLY FATHER.

**Preached by Mr. John Webster at All
Hallows Lombard Street, London.**

"But he answered and said, every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone, they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch." Matt.15:13-14.

These words contain an answer of our Lord unto his disciples. For they having heard how the Scribes and Pharisees were much offended at some things he had preached, they being very strict for the outside and formal part of religion, and being generally taken for great professors, and our Saviour knowing their hearts, knew that though the outward was clean, amiable and beautiful, yet the inside was foul, stinking, and loathsome, for all their observations of washings, fastings and the like. Hereupon our Saviour to undeceive the people concerning him, calls the multitude together and tells them plainly, wishing them not to be fooled and deluded, but hear and understand; and in the 11th verse, saith he, "not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man." The Pharisee's hearing of this perceived that he spake this of them, and being very much offended that he so much reproached them, and so much laid open and took away their glory,

estimation and high esteem with the people; hereupon I say, they became greatly, bitterly and maliciously offended with him; and the disciples hearing, and observing of it, they being somewhat troubled in themselves, as not seeing so much into them as he did, they now coming to him and saying, "knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?" Now our Saviour presently makes them this answer, "every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up." As if he should say, 'tis true, generally all men take the Scribes and Pharisees and it may be yourselves have taken them to be men of great holiness and purity, and to be very strict in their lives, and indeed they seem to be men of great learning, and to be very conscientious and zealous teachers of the truth; but I would not have you so deceived, for true religion stands not in outsides, in observing of rites and ceremonies, in the washing of cups and platters, and observing outward ordinances; but know, these men are no other but hypocrites and dissemblers, and well did Isaiah prophesy of them saying, "this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men." Isa.29:13. Therefore though they be offended at my speech, yet be not you offended, "let them alone, they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch."

And for all this great learning, and great shows of zeal, and knowledge in the letter, yet Christ

saw their insides, and there was nothing but impurity, blackness and ignorance. And indeed men that may have and attain so much strictness therein, and yet have no saving knowledge of God in the spirit, nor of the truth of it as it is in Jesus. Eph.4:21. Now, saith Christ, let them alone, I know that they have a high opinion of themselves, and they would by no means lose their glory in the esteem of others, but be you not troubled, let them alone, they are blind, though they will not see it, and both the leaders and those that are led shall fall together. Now upon this account Christ using such cutting, cauterizing words, can any wonder that they should be offended? I, and deeply offended! Hereupon it is, that the children of the letter and of the bondwoman always hate and persecute the children of the mystery and the freewoman. Gal.4:29. As the children of the New Jerusalem are heavenly, divine, and spiritual, like their mother, for they are born of the second Adam which is the Lord from Heaven, and they bear the very image of the heavenly, and as is the heavenly, such are they that are heavenly; and as is the earthly, such are they that are earthly. I Cor.15:47-48. They are still carried out very zealously toward outward observations and carnal things; and if any shall in the least touch them, in them they are presently offended, raging and mad, for you touch their Absalom, their very lives. The flesh always lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, Gal.5:17, and these are directly contrary the one unto the other, these two principles are so directly opposite and contrary one to the

other, that they can never agree, but ever were and shall be at enmity, never to be reconciled.

These Pharisees are always very much offended with the neglect of small matters, and of things indifferent, which either the doing or leaving undone is no sign of sincerity or insincerity; but they can neglect the weighty matters of the Law themselves, and suffer others to do so, and never be offended. As here in the second verse of this chapter, the Scribes and Pharisees which were of Jerusalem, that is they were the chief preachers of the nation, because they were preachers at the chief and metropolitan city Jerusalem; yet these great, and learned and sage divines {as they are so esteemed and called} come to Christ; and what was the great business they had to offer to him? "Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders, for they wash not their hands when they eat bread." Our Lord answers them very pertinently, "why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?" Matt.15:2-3. They were more strict in observing the traditions of their church and of man than of the Commandments of God, and the weightier matters of the Law. They were careful in observing washings and constant in outward forms of worship and times of prayer and the like, but never minded what was in their hearts; as evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, lies, malice, false witness, blasphemies, &c., these things they neglected and passed by as final matters, they could hate the truth, and bely the truth, and persecute the true professors thereof,

even to the death; but they could not endure that any should speak a word against their formal and outward worships; they could neglect relieving their father and mother, and showing love to others, and with them this was nothing, so that they did but bring a small gift to the temple, and call it 'corban,' this should excuse them and cut off all other charity, or whatever others might be profited by them. Mark 7:11.

Now Christ thoroughly discovering their hypocrisy, in their showing great care of the outside, and of that which was obvious and apparent to the sight of men, but they had little or none of their heart and inside, upon which the all-seeing eye of God was fixed; therefore he applies to them the words of the prophet Isaiah and tells them, that they were the men that he spoke of, when he said, "this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men." Isa.29:13. For these are not the things that God looks at or regards; and therefore all their worships and all their washings, and all their prayers, and all their conformity to these things, were all in vain; and this was no religion at all, nor was it any more accepted than the offering up of swine's blood, or the cutting of a dog's neck, Isa.66:3, and he that sacrificed, as if he were a murderer; and he that offered incense, as if he blessed an idol. They were with him no better than murderers and idolaters for all their fine forms, and although they were ever so curious and exact about

them, neatified, carved or contrived with ever so much wisdom; yet if they were done merely by the art, wisdom, power and industry of man, and not by the wisdom and hand of Jesus Christ, all was nothing; and they were in all their prayers and duties no other but as sounding brass and as tingling symbols; for that which defiles man, is not anything without him, but that evil and sin which is within, that principle of darkness, from whence all evil actions come; this is that which our Saviour labors to clear and make out. Now this was such spiritual doctrine, and such soul-searching teaching, and that which the Pharisees in no age could ever abide; for no sooner come within them, and turn them inside outward, but presently they are offended; and then, they will show what is within. The poor blind world thought that they were made up of purity and conformity, but when Christ comes to preach, he discovers that in their hearts is nothing but malice, murder, thefts, blasphemy, and hatred to the truth, cruelty to the people of God; and then all this shall come forth, and be no longer hid by their fine words and smooth shows and pretenses, but out it shall come and be discovered. Matt.15:18-19.

This is that serpentine wisdom that lies hidden and lies lurking in the hearts of all the sons of men by nature, which can never be discovered by all the examinations and preachings of men, but only by the Son of God, and by his teachings in the soul; and indeed he is that Stone that is disallowed indeed of men, refused and rejected by the master builders, but chosen of God and precious. Psal.118:22;

Matt.21:42; I Pet.2:4. Now this heavenly doctrine the disciples themselves could not well bear, for they had as well as others a good opinion of these eminent men, and they thought that this doctrine was somewhat too harsh to call them hypocrites, dissemblers, and rotten sepulchers, though gloriously painted. They thought that their Master might have been a little more moderate, and they feared something of bad consequence might follow, for these were the men of the greatest esteem, and most in favor with the magistrate; and they for their parts could expect no other but reproach, hatred and persecution. Now these things much troubled them, they not being fitted to suffer, but now Jesus Christ their Master, he was delivered from all these slavish fears, he stood not in fear of man, nor what he could do, but would in despite of all their power and malice, hold forth the truth and the light, that it might discover the hidden things of darkness and the bottomless depth of sin and darkness, that was rooted in man's evil heart, and in them chiefly reigning, who were ignorant of these things, and yet had a high and great opinion of their own holiness and excellency.

Hereupon our Lord, to stay and quiet the trouble thoughts of his disciples makes them this answer we have now read to you, "every plant which my Heavenly Father hath not planted must be rooted up."

One would think this was not to be a resolution or pertinent answer to clear his former doctrine, but he goes on, "do not ye yet understand,

that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man." Matt.15:17-18. What congruity is there between these words and his doctrine formally urged to be as approved to justify and maintain it? Truly unto fleshly wisdom it seems to be a very impertinent and no wise answer. But if we take it according to the spirit, and the divine sense, it is very pertinent, fit and congruous; for, 'tis as if he should say, be not careful, take no thought about them whatever they say, act or do; for they indeed are very strict and careful to follow and obey all outward rites, ceremonies and worships, and they glory in these things that all others applaud, and honour them for the highest and most zealous worshipers; but for all this, they are no other but dissemblers and hypocrites, being only gilded over with a form of piety and religion, but within they are nothing but rotten and stinking sepulchers, which are full of stench and dead men's bones. Now be not offended though they are mad and rage against me and my doctrine, and though they incense the whole multitude against me; yet I am not troubled, neither would I have you to be troubled; for this plant which they would make the world believe is from heaven, it is not so, but it is only of and from man, is from the earth, from beneath, and this religion in its true savor favors of the earth, earthly. For saith he, "every plant which my Heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up." But that which is from

heaven, and is planted by the hand of my Father, that shall grow, and root and flourish; and though to man it seems poor, and weak and despicable, and men will not own it, yet it shall flourish, and neither men nor the gates of hell, nor all the powers of darkness, nor all the subtle wisdom of the flesh shall ever be able to prevail against it.

Therefore I say, that these words are a pertinent answer to establish the troubled minds of his disciples in bidding them to forbear and let them alone, and not to be troubled to see them prosper and flourish in the world, nor to see them rage and storm; for my Father is all-sufficient, and he is able to manage his own business, and to maintain his own cause, Psal.74:22, and I know also that they are blind, and they lead the blind, and you shall see that both will fall into the ditch. And therefore do mind what I say, and do not what they say, for they are blind, and you by all your talking and reasoning with them, cannot make them see. You will but trouble your own peace, and make them more mad, for they are blind and there is a ditch before them, prepared for blindness and blind man, wherein they are sure to fall.

So that these three things I would have you to take special notice of, from these words. First, that 'tis the Heavenly Father's own hand that plants every plant that must grow and prosper. Secondly, that every plant which is planted by any other hand or power, shall not prosper but be rooted up. Thirdly, that those which see not these things so, and cannot leave them to God, they bring upon themselves

much trouble and unquietness. Worldly trouble and fretting brings nothing about, but causes death. II Cor.7:10. For the wrath of man accomplishes not the righteousness of God. Jam.1:20. Though these great blustering doctors undertake to teach, and others gladly and attentively hear them, and they magnify one another, yet be not troubled, they shall both fall together.

Every plant which the Father plants not shall be rooted up. Now if we should hold only to the letter and the grammatical sense, which the men of the letter cry out so much for, what an absurdity were here; to call spiritual things, by the name of a plant, and that they must be rooted as a plant, before they can flourish and grow; but the Scripture is very frequent in this manner of speaking by allegories, metaphors and similitudes to set forth to our apprehension the nature of divine things; for if we look upon the bare letter of the word, what is there and it? But by an allegory or figure there is always something resembled or shadowed out to us, besides and beyond an allegory or metaphor. Therefore by the plant here mentioned, is meant the new creation, or the new man created in Christ Jesus, Eph.4:24, and there is nothing that can thrive or flourish but only this, which is only planted by the Lord himself, every other plant must be rooted up, and this new man is of God, spiritualized, of his own begetting, who knows and understands the things of God; let there be thousands of religions in the world, yet only that which the Father hath planted, and is from heaven, that alone shall stand.

I would, for testimony to this truth, refer you to two or three places of Scripture in consideration thereof. I will not name nor multiply many, for I will not weary you with tumbling over the letter {as the manner of some is} neither is it of much use, or of any proof, or convincement to any, but those who have the heavenly things themselves made good to them. Take that in John 15:1-2, for there is the same similitude being used as is here, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away, and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." So that this shows that Jesus Christ is the only vine, and his Father only minds and husbands this vine and every branch in it, for the root and branches are all but one vine; and the Father, he alone hath planted it, and he alone dresses it, and waters it, and prunes it. Jesus Christ in himself and members is the true root of Jesse whom the Lord will establish upon the throne forever; and 'tis only the root of David, Isa.11:10, that hath prevailed, and no other. Rom.15:12. All other vines are as a wild olive, and bear no fruit, and therefore must be taken away and cut off, for except they abide in him, they cannot bring forth fruit, for without Christ they can do nothing. John 15:4-5. That which is a wild vine or a wild olive bears no good fruit, therefore men reject it and root it up as good for nothing, but to cast into the fire to be burnt, and so doth the Heavenly Husband-Man reject, whatever is wild and not planted by Himself. Out of him all the fruit they bring

withers and dies; nay, they are fruitless, without being grafted into him, having his spirit and his divine nature, that they are members of his body, flesh of his flesh, bone of his bone. Eph.5:30. So that by this place you may see that the Heavenly Father is the true Husband-man, and the only true plant is Jesus Christ, and everyone which beareth true fruit, they are branches proceeding and growing in and from this root.

Again, look at that place of Romans 6:5, "for if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." So that still the Scripture carries it along in the person of Christ, and not to own anything, or any fruit brought forth by any of the sons of men, but as they are rooted and bring forth fruit in him. He is the choice and tender Vine, which brings forth fruit, acceptable to the Heavenly Father; he is the tree of life in the city of God, spoken of in Revelation 22:2, planted by the river "which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month, and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." And again Christ is that tree spoken of in Psalms 1:3, "planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season," whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. Every believer is a member of Jesus Christ, a plant planted by the Lord himself, and none can possibly cause any branch in him to wither; all else out of him cannot but wither and die. So also take notice of that place in the Psalms 92:12-14, "the righteous shall flourish like the palm tree; he

shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing." Jesus Christ is also that spiritual house which the Heavenly Father hath built, not made with hands, but eternal in the heavens; and every saint is a spiritual stone in this spiritual house; and these are all beautiful stones, being placed in this house by the Lord himself. These are fruitful trees being planted there, which shall bring forth fruit and shall flourish when they are old, and bring forth fruit to eternity.

One place more shall suffice, that in Jeremiah 17:7-8, "blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit." These places are sufficient, as I need not further enlarge, for they give testimony and witness as far as the letter of Scripture can.

And what is the letter to that man who hath no testimony nor witness of the truth thereof in his own heart? He can never set his seal to the truth thereof, and it can do him no good, except it be a word of evidence, and he hath a witness within, it being true in his own heart. But the men of the letter, if they hold forth any truth, then they heap up Scriptures {as they conceive} to prove it, and think they have done such an act, when as if there

be not to convincement and a witness thereof within, the letter will never convince men; but when the same thing as written in the heart, then man closes with it and answers to it; then the word is, as David said, "more to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold, sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb." Psal.19:10. Else 'tis no other but a dead letter, and then is fulfilled that promise of the New Covenant, "but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people." Jer.31:33. "And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord, for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest." Heb.8:11. And thus I hope that there are many here that shall find this truth made good in themselves, and will set to their seal, that all other plants which the Father hath not planted must be rooted up.

And if it be so, as most certainly it is, then this discovers to us who is that One Tree that the Father only hath planted, and that is only the root of Jesse, which Isaiah speaks of, "and in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek, and his rest shall be glorious," Isa.11:10, which the apostle applies particularly to Jesus Christ, "there shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust." Rom.15:12. Then what wickedness is this in the sons of men to think that anything they plant shall stand

or that they have any holiness, love, purity, goodness, power, wisdom or the like? And are menstruous rags termed graces? Isa.64:6. For whatever is out of Jesus Christ, and whatever is not planted in man by the Father, and so rooted in the Father and in the eternal and ever blessed reign of grace, must be rooted up.

And take that for a second use, and know that it for certain, for you must receive it as an undeniable truth, that no other tree ever did, doth or shall stand but only this; and indeed this is the tree of life in the garden of Eden. Gen.3:24. And that spoken of in Revelations, "to him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God," Rev.2:7, and there is no other tree that grows or increases, or prospers but only Christ, neither is there any true fruit, but what grows out of this root; and therefore for men to say either in word or practice, that there is any other wisdom, any other fruit, any other power, any other righteousness is to rob Christ of his honour, and to give that to man which alone is due to him. No, there is no other plant but Christ, none loved of the Father but he, he is the choice and chosen olive, whose fruit is only accepted, and our actions only as they are accepted in him, and through the virtue of his merits; if we be in him, we then are branches of this tree, and so the root bears us and not we, as most men assert in their practice, that they must do, and that they must work, and that they must conform themselves to Christ. What's all this wasted effort but they to bear the root and not the root

them? And they to bring forth Christ and not Christ them. And therefore men should be more cautious and understand and mind what they say and do, when they say I will do this, and I can do that, and I must perform this and that duty. Alas poor creature, what canst thou do? And who is it that bears thee in all thy proceedings? Canst thou indeed bring forth God and Jesus Christ and the Spirit? Or rather doth not he bear and bring forth thee? Hast thou anything of thine own but evil? Hast thou any fruit unto holiness? Any flower blossom that can be accepted which is not received from this tree and from this root? Why then does thou so much look upon thyself and talk of thyself; and why does thou boast and glory as if it were thine own, and thou hast not received it?

In this thou dishonorest Christ thy Head, I Cor.11:4, for he that can do anything, either pray, or preach, or prophesy, or do anything in the Church of God with his head covered, he dishonors Christ who is the Head, and who ought to have the sole glory of everything that is good, of all grace, of all power, wisdom, and righteousness. "But let the woman be covered," for all weakness and sin be laid upon man; but let the Husband have all the glory, all the praise, for the spouse of Christ hath no riches but in his riches, nor any righteousness but in his righteousness alone; nor any glory, but in his glory alone. And therefore in all your sayings, actings, speakings, carriages, expositions, exhortations, see that you never dishonour your Husband, but give him the glory due to his name, and take shame and

confusion of face to yourselves; do not so much as once think that man can do or act, or believe, or repent, or work, or do anything of this nature, for in such thoughts ye dishonour Christ, and blaspheme your Husband. What do you in all this but to forsake the tree of life, the knowledge of good and evil which is so strictly forbidden to all the sons of men as much as to Adam? From whence they continually eat death and damnation unto themselves, and they can do no otherwise, whilst they forsake their Father and Husband, and run a whoring after their own inventions. Psal.106:39.

Beloved, what a stir is there in the world everywhere about man's doing and man's working, that he must strive and he must improve grace; that he must cherish this plant, and do something that he may be accepted, and he must watch, and he must water, and he must lop and prune this branch and the other branch, and by his power and wisdom and watchfulness he must cut off this sin and the other evil; and this is the great religion of the world in all ages. And alas, what does he all this while, by doing of these things in his own name and by his own wisdom and power, he does but undo himself; for what else can he do but bring misery, sin, and darkness upon himself, and plunge himself deeper in the pit? For, when men are bid to do anything, repent, or believe, or watch, or pray, or work out his salvation with fear or trembling, and make his calling and election sure; what do you think it was ever meant that he should do these of himself, or do them out of Christ? No, there was never any such thing

intended by the Holy Ghost. But say they, man hath received a power and a talent from Jesus Christ; and of this he must take care and use it, and employ it to his masters use. I answer this false, for there is no such thing, for a true Christian enjoys nothing out of Christ, nor done apart from him, but all in him, and his works if right, tis Christ doeth them in him and not he; yet how ordinary is it with men to put man to do it, and why is he not so-and-so? And men are so senseless, that they are not sensible that man dead in trespasses and sins; though they acknowledge it in words, yet in truth they deny it, and declare that they know not what they say. For, can any other thing raise the dead but only the voice of the Son of God? Eph.2:1. Though Jesus Christ hath said, that every plant that the Heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up, yet for all this {say they} man must be doing and planting; for he cannot wait the Lord's time, and this is the reason why men have so little experience of the true work of God, because they are running and acting, and working before it be given them to work or act, for they will not believe but they can do something without Christ, although he hath said expressly to the contrary.

But know this, {let men say what they will,} there are but two roots in the whole earth, either God or Belial; Christ or Antichrist; and therefore you must either make the tree good and his fruit good, or else the tree evil and his fruit evil. Matt.12:33. Know this, that man as considered in himself is nothing but death, sin, darkness, misery, want and

emptiness. And yet will you have him to live, arise, walk, and do the works of the Lord? What a most sensible ignorant thing is this! Doth not the blind {in this} lead the blind? Do not these men declare that they are utterly blind in experience as to the things of Christ! I tell you, and know it for an undeniable truth that when a Christian is spoken so to do or act, it is not to him as being in the old man, but as in the new; and when anything is required of any other, it is only to show him his weakness and inability, and how infinitely short he comes of that he should do. But therefore know, if anyone shall call upon a dead man to live, and a blind man to see, or express anything to this purpose, this language is no other but a strange language which the house of Jacob must be brought out from. Psal.114:1. This is the language of the beast and the false prophet, Rev.19:20, and to speak in the work and root of darkness, and in which these men are, who would make more roots of good than One; and make man to be something, and to have a power and a wisdom to himself apart from Christ, &c., yet this is frequent doctrine even of those you call your orthodox men, nothing more common with them. Many of these men would not be thought to side with or own Arminius or Socinus by no means; but the truth is, though in word they may renounce them, yet in their practice they receive and embrace them, and they run hand-in-hand together, and establish in all their practices which they themselves deny in words. But if these men had any true or real experience of themselves or of the ways of Christ {as they

pretend} they would never speak and teach as they do, in not holding the Head, to the dishonour of Christ who is the Head of all things; as the Apostle speaks, "and not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God. Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, {touch not; taste not; handle not; which all are to perish with the using;} after the commandments and doctrines of men. Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh." Col.2:19-23.

Beloved know this, if we be in Christ, then we see that we are but twigs and branches in that tree of life; if we look on ourselves any otherwise, we are deluded, nor will it be ever otherwise with us, until we see and know experimentally, that we bear not the root, but the root us. And therefore men should be very tender and cautious how they speak in the dishonour of Christ the Head. Do the branches bear the root, or the root the branches? Hast thou any flower, any blossom, any fruit, any grace {in thy account} which is not from this Tree of life? It must all be cut off and wither, and be burnt up. And if they all grow out of him and from him, why does thou not ascribe all the power and glory to Christ alone? Why does thou look upon thyself as anything, or as better than another? "For who maketh thee to differ from another, and what hast thou that thou didst not

receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it," I Cor.4:7, and so takest away the glory from Christ and givest it unto man? Oh, let men be ashamed thus to profess Christ in words only, and dishonour him in practice, to let him wear a crown of thorns, and they wear a crown of gold; for them to be seen to be something, and Christ as good is nothing. And therefore all their sayings and exhortations, and councils, and pressing of natural men to grow and bear fruit, and walk holily and the like, they all proceed from ignorance of themselves and of the work of Christ; and indeed it is no less than blasphemy against the power, wisdom, honour, omnipotency and all sufficiency of Jesus Christ. It is no other but denying the Tree of Life, and living on the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

All the saints of God have but one Root, one Life, one Light, one Language as growing up and out of that One Root. "In his temple doth every one speak of His Glory," Psal.29:9, for they have nothing to say in praise of any other. When men cry out that, "thou must do, and thou must be holy, and thou must be watchful, and thou must grow, and thou must walk exactly, and thou must keep close to God," Oh beloved; this sounds not like the language of saints; for this sounds harsh in their ears; for they cannot endure to have their Head dishonored. But when they hear that Jesus Christ is all light, all life, all power, all glory; and that man is nothing but sin, emptiness, death, darkness, misery, these are the songs, and these are the voices, and the melody in

the Temple. This they know is the voice of Christ and of their Beloved, and to these songs their hearts can echo and answer. Oh how pleasant is the voice of my Beloved! They know that in Adam they all die, I Cor.15:22, but in Christ they are all made alive, and in him they can do all things. Phil.4:13. They see Christ to be the Master and Teacher; and that he is such a teacher as not only teaches the ear, but instructs the heart. That he not only commands, but he gives wisdom and understanding, and repentance, love, hope and joy, &c., thus he sees that he hath no sap, no nourishment, but only as he abides in the Root; the truth is, they have no confidence at all in the flesh, because it is weak, and crooked, and dark, and nothing at all of good in it; but he sees Christ alone is his root, his life, his sap, his bread, his fountain of living waters, Jer.2:13; and if men knew Christ aright, there would be no mention of any good in man; they would have none to praise, none to boast of, none to talk of, none to represent as good or excellent but Christ alone. Thus ye shall find it was with David frequently expressed; and so it is with all the saints. He alone is their strong Rock, II Sam.22:2-3,32, Psal.18:31,36, and their Fortress, and their Deliverer, Psal.31:2-3, &c., he is their song, their praise and their salvation. He is their King of kings, and Lord of lords. He is above all principalities and powers; their Head, their King, the Blessed and Only Potentate, and exalted alone as the Rock of their salvation; for do we ever read that the saints had any other hymns, or any other

songs, but Christ the beginning and end of all their true worship.

Further, let us hence take notice, that if Jesus Christ is the only Tree planted by the Father, then there is no other tree of the Lord's planting but only he; he is the true tree and the whole tree, there is not one heavenly or spiritual branch, but what is of Him; and so tis certain that there is no other tree of life, no other chosen olive to stand up forever before the God of the whole earth, of whose root and fatness all the saints partake. Rom.11:17. But truly beloved, he that will bear out this testimony fully and freely, oh let him be sure that he must prophesy in sackcloth; for the religious world could never endure these preachers, nor these great eternal witnesses, for they have been hated and persecuted in all ages by this beast which ascends out of the bottomless pit. For the world cannot but hate the life of Christ, even when they crown him, and array him in a purple robe and when they see most to honour him, they cry hail King of the Jews, Matt.27:29, Hosanna to the son of David, Mark 11:10, then they are nearest to crucify him.

But know, as this doctrine discovers Christ to be the only tree, so it also discovers the Hand that hath planted it, and that Hand will root it and establish it. "Because I will publish the name of the LORD; ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he." Deut.32:3-4. His work is like himself, perfect, infinite, everlasting, and stands

sure, {whatever men say,} for he alone shall be established on Mount Zion, Isa.28:16, he hath sworn that he shall be a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek, Psal.110:4, and he alone is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Rev.13:8. When a man's eyes are opened, then all the Scriptures, and the whole earth, and the whole creation give testimony to this one tree of the Father's planting, and there is no salvation in any other, Acts 4:12, there was never any other in whom the Father was well pleased. "And lo a voice from heaven, saying, this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Matt.3:17. The religious world speak of obeying laws and keeping the condition on man's part, but there is no law, nor any condition but Christ himself; and if he be the law and the condition, then if we are in union with him, there is no other way of acceptance. Christ alone remains and is established! He stands and ascends up to eternity, and all his members in him. Heaven and earth shall pass away but the Word, this great Word of the Lord endureth forever, I Pet.1:25, and all the elements shall consume and melt away with fervent heat, II Pet.3:10, as the apostle speaks, the earth also and all the works that are therein shall be burnt up, and he shall be the only plant, and the only tree, when the New Heavens, and the New Earth shall appear, then nothing shall hide this tree, nothing shall alter it, nothing shall darken the glory thereof from the sons of God. Then this will be the day of the exaltation of Jesus Christ, and this the day of the revelation of the sons of God. Christ in himself is

yesterday and today, and the same forever, but when this day comes, he shall be so to all the saints; this is the day of which the apostle speaks, Rom.8:18, &c., when the glory of God shall be revealed, and this is the day when the creature also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God, when man is delivered from the bondage of corruption, then is the creature also. They shall not serve the sinful and corrupt will of man {as they do now} but remain in that free state, in which they were at first created, and they shall yield their service freely.

If men be not grafted into this true Olive, they are no other but castaways; if they be upon any other root, they are miserable and undone; if the happiness of a Christian lay in himself, in his own power, wisdom, will, endeavors, alas where is he; and what would become of him? Man is a dead, frail, deceitful thing; he changes like grass, he stands today, and tomorrow he is cut down and withers away, Isa.40:6, but the work of the Almighty, that shall stand fast, and shall abide forever, for in him is the root of all power, wisdom, life and goodness. Oh that men would but hold to this, as they hold it forth in words and notions! In words they confess it, but in the power and practice thereof, deny it.

Again, this is most certain, as Christ is the only Root and the only Tree planted by the Father, so 'tis is as certain that every believer is planted in him; and that he hath no root, no life but in Christ; he is a mystical member of this tree, as he is planted in him. And so far, and upon no other account, he

partakes of the power and virtue, the riches and privileges of Christ; even of the very same nature, sap and fruit that is the whole tree; by this alone he comes to partake of all, when Christ is revealed, and we in him become the hope of glory, Col.1:27, then we partake of his fellowship, of his communion, of his life, glory and riches; then there is also that true communion of saints which men so much talk of, but yet know so little of. Life you know is only in union, when we come to that, that the root bears us, and not we the root; for so 'tis with most professors in the world; they all together bear the root, they think that they must work, and do, and act, and prune, and water, and cherish, and plant, and pull-up, and maintain their spiritual life and communion, and hereby they make themselves the root, and so upon that account they bear the root and not the root them; and hence we may know that 'tis no wonder that they are cursed and bear no fruit to God but leaves, which must be cut down and cast into the fire, Matt.21:19, and shall be cut off from the presence of the Lord, Luke 13:9, and from the glory of his power, and what greater curse than this?

But a poor saint really sees that his life is entirely in the Root, and that he hath all his wisdom, knowledge, teaching, power to act, to suffer, to live, to move, to do anything externally or internally, 'tis all from this union with Christ, and all he hath is from the wisdom, strength, grace, goodness, and gift of Christ and from his shinings forth in them, and not in anything in or of themselves. And, he growing on a good root cannot but bring forth good fruit. And a

child of God may say as John expresses it, "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," I Jn.3:9, for he is a branch in this root which sinneth not, and the branch in Christ cannot sin, for he is a partaker of the divine and heavenly sap from which can spring nothing but good fruit, and he is holy in the holiness of Christ, and rich in the riches of Christ, and wise in the wisdom of Christ, &c., and he knows that whatever he is out of Christ, or as he is in Adam must die and be condemned and perish, and be made no other but meat for the serpent.

Let the world consider then, what will become of them and their works when they talk so much of my holiness, my duties, my parts, my learning, my religion, my working, for it must all be condemned, destroyed and burnt up. You know what Paul saith, "by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." I Cor.15:10. And again, "for of him, and through him, and to him, are all things, to whom be glory forever." Rom.11:36.

This is one characteristic of a true saint, when he speaks of himself, of any grace, of any goodness, meekness, charity, love, of any good in him, he is very tender not to reflect upon himself as holy, or as if men should think him holy or wise, or meek; no, says he, this is none of mine, 'tis the grace of God that is with me; so that this man he hath no sap, no

life, and no goodness in himself; but he lives by receiving, and when thus received he dares not think it his own; for he hath all his sap in Christ, and receives it every minute from Him. He does not look on himself as having a stock or gifts or a talent in his own hands, given out from Christ as most men take it, but he lives upon the Fountain, as the stream upon the Spring, and as the branch on the Root; if the spring stop, or the root give not forth, the one ceases and the other withers and dies. Thus does a Christian suck virtue from Christ every moment, and of this he hath such real experience, that all the world shall never persuade him otherwise, and he cannot endure to hear how the world will talk of their wisdom, their carefulness, their endeavors, their holiness, and the like, for nothing is more harsh to him. This is no other to him, but the noise of hell, and the noise of strangers, Isa.25:5, and the noise of the bottomless pit; but he is well pleased to be amongst them that throw down their crowns before the Lamb, Rev.4:10, that are always singing and saying, Christ alone is worthy to receive honour, and glory, and power, and dominion. He is our rock, our fortress and our deliverer. Psal.18:2. He alone is become our salvation! These are his joy, these are his songs in the night; no melody but this divine melody.

From whence also, this further discovers the inconsistency of the glory of any creature, and that which is in Jesus Christ, for these two cannot stand together; if all be Christ's, then there is none at all to be given to any creature. The prophets of Baal in

this case are many, which cry out for man's power, and man's righteousness, and man's endeavors; but the prophets of the Lord are very few, but be sure that the Lord in due time will appear, and the fire of the Lord will try every man's work of what sort it is, I Cor.3:13, the fire of the altar will come down and declare the true worshipers, whether those that cry up the power and righteousness of man, or those that establish only the glory, power, wisdom, and virtue of the Son of God, and though the priests of Baal be many, and take much pains to establish man's righteousness, and cut and lance themselves for madness; yet I say that the fire of the Lord shall declare it, that the Lord alone, he is God, he is God; and that fire of the Lord will burn up all things that are of man, the wood, the stones, the dust, and will dry and lick up the water in the trench, I Kings 18:38, &c., all man's power, gifts, parts, human learning, and whatever man hath set price upon, and he shall be left bare and naked, and empty, and miserable. And all the priest of Baal in that day shall be ashamed of their confidences and of their idols wherein they trusted, and which they have so decked up, to make the world believe that they are the true worshipers; when as they have done nothing else but set up their own inventions and the works of their own hands, all savoring of flesh, and of man, and human endeavors, and nothing at all of Jesus Christ actually, but merely in words and in names, and in notions.

Hath man any faith, or repentance, or hope, or love, or the like springing in himself, because they

call so much upon man, to be up and doing? Or can human learning, wit, parts, or anything in man work or procure this? Certainly not, if it could, where is the honour of Christ, who is both the will and the deed, and the same God who worketh all and all? "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Phil.2:13. And where is the truth of those Scriptures which declare that the Lord will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. "Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" I Cor.1:19-20. And again, "the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, he taketh the wise in their own craftiness," I Cor.3:19, who "hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes," Lk.10:21, and many such places. Then the wisdom of man, and the power and glory of man, and the power and glory of God cannot stand together. There is no possibility of subsistence; but so far as man is something, or anything, so far God is debased and made nothing. And these men do nothing in all their preaching and declaring but make a hotchpotch, and sewing a new piece into an old garment, and so making the rent worse, Matt.9:16, though it be done ever so curiously and carefully, with ever so much art, as if it were of the same pieces, for whosoever he be that brings in anything of man, as having a power, or being a cause of any good in man, that makes anything wise but Christ, anything fair but Christ, anything beautiful but

Christ, the same is no other but a thief and a robber, John 10:1, a wizard and a soothsayer, who entices to idolatry and saith, "let us serve other gods, even the gods of the nations that are around about us," for, this is held forth by the Scriptures. "If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, let us go and serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou, nor thy fathers; namely, of the gods of the people which are round about you, nigh unto thee, or far off from thee, from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth; thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him, but thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people." Deut.13:6-9. When we withdraw our hearts from the Lord, and set up anything in his stead, we go a whoring and serve other gods, Hos.1:2, although we have ever so fair and fine pretenses and excuses; for when we exalt anything in man, or give anything to man, we at the same time pull down something in Jesus Christ, and take away something which is due to him alone; and there is always a magnifying thereof, and a resting in it and trusting to it, whatever men say to the contrary. But, blessed is that soul that puts his trust only in the Lord. If any think that he has any power, or that Christ hath given any sufficiency to man out of himself, and he having grace given him, he is to

work, and does not see that he lives and depends solely upon Christ, and that he thinks that he can uphold one moment without this living fountain, or without drawing and sucking sap from this root, they are gravely deluded, and live out of the Vine, and are cut off from that root that should feed and nourish them, and every such branch is dead and fit for nothing but wrath and fire. Oh 'tis a sad case for men to think to live upon their own stock, thinking thus, Christ is in heaven, and I have cast anchor there, and he hath given me a stock and a talent, and now I must bestir myself and show myself a good husband and a wise man; I must now improve these graces, and these habits, and get something together that I may live and depend upon hereafter; and if I do so, I shall grow into a rich and thriving believer, and find rest for my soul. I confess most men are led out this way, and they are hard at work, for they are working for life, and to prevent death; but the sadness, and the blindness, and the blackness of these men's condition is exceedingly to be lamented, for herein they shall never find, nor enter into the Lord's rest.

And so for many others who take much delight in reasoning, and talking, and discoursing about religion, and may heap together many fine, high, and curious notions, and hence they suck sap and life for a time; but alas this fruit all withers and comes to nothing, for there is never any rest, peace, or satisfaction in anything below Jesus Christ. And therefore there is no way for these men but to lose all, and to become poor, and for these wise men to

become fools, I Cor.3:18, and to become as innocents and children, Matt.19:14, and little in their own sight, and as it were to lose their very lives for Christ, which all their lifetime they have been providing for, scraping and patching and piecing up together something to live upon another day. Oh, how hardly do such men lose all, for in their own esteem they are very rich, and so must needs go away heavy and very sorrowful. Beloved, this selling all, and esteeming and making Jesus Christ the only riches, the only pearl, Matt.13:46, is such a thing as man cannot abide to hear named, to lose all the opinion of their own goodness, to think basely of themselves, and to be content to let others who had them in high esteem think so of them as well; and to come to rejoice in this, to be nothing for Christ, and in him to lose his religion, his righteousness, his wisdom, and to become as weak as another man, Judges 16:7, and to be glad that Christ hath done this for him, this is to make Christ all in all. And this is to rejoice in infirmities and distresses for Christ's sake, though Christ never called thee to outward afflictions, for when thou art weakest then art thou strongest, and his strength is made perfect in weakness. "And he said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake, for when I am weak, then am I strong." II Cor.12:9-10.

But when men think that holiness consists in their own working, and doing, and observing rules, and outward fellowships, and in dipping in a little cold water, or breaking and eating a little bit of bread, and herein thinking that they have done some great matter; alas, what poor, empty, dry believers for the most part are these! Keeping such a stir about exactness to the shadow and pattern, and never once coming to the truth of the Gospel, never yet tasting how sweet Christ truly is, nor eating of the hidden manna, or the bread of God, or the living water; partaking of Christ's body and blood, being meat indeed, and drink indeed, which is given for the life of the world. John 6:53-58. And yet these men think that they have done so well, and that they have brought forth much fruit, and think to receive a great reward, and mean to knock boldly at Heaven's Gate, for who must enter and enjoy the Kingdom but them? Now for these men to be deluded, and to be served as the five foolish virgins were, Matt.25:12, and to have the gate shut before they arrive, thinking that they had oil, when they had none; and good works and good fruit, and then it shall be said unto them, "depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity." Lk.13:27. Truly, this will be a sad sentence! What will become then of all their confidence, of all their religion? Oh happy had it been for them had they hearkened sooner! But no man could ever make them believe but they had true holiness and true wisdom, and now it is laid open in the sight of men and angels, and they can receive no other for they have kindled a fire and compassed

themselves about with sparks, walking in the light thereof, and in the sparks that they have kindled. "This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow." Isa.50:11.

Then thou wilt wish that thou hadst given ear to the council of the Lord, and to have learned what this meant, their strength is to sit still. "For thus saith the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel; in returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength, and ye would not." Isa.30:15. But this they could not endure to hear of, and he was a false and lying prophet that told them so. No, they would be up and doing, and they would seek out and stir up their strength, and go out valiantly, and go down to Egypt to seek help and make themselves strong, and this was the way to overcome and to live at rest. But as sure as the Lord lives, before whom I stand, this is not the way, but the way for man is to be stripped, made naked, that he may be clothed upon, II Cor.5:4, to deny a man's self and his own life too, or else he cannot be Christ's disciple. If thou wert but poor enough, and empty enough, then Christ would fill thee, and make thee rich, but the thing is, thou art too rich, too full, and increased with goods, and hast need of nothing "and knowest not {for all thy strong conceits} that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Rev.3:17. And therefore I counsel thee, saith the Lord, "to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do

not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye salve, that thou mayest see." Rev.3:18. If thou be once really convinced, and not in words only, that thou hast nothing, nor canst do nothing, then thou will be made willing to hearken to any that will tell thee how thou shall be made rich, and strong, and able to do all things, Phil.4:13, and that is alone by living in the Fountain, and sucking sap from the Root, Jesus Christ, by "holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God." Col.2:19.

FINIS

ROOTING UP OF EVERY PLANT NOT PLANTED BY THE HEAVENLY FATHER.

SERMON II

**Preached by Mr. John Webster at All
Hallows Lombard Street, London.**

"But he answered and said, every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone, they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch." Matt.15:13-14.

From hence {as God was pleased to go forth with us} we have showed these several things. First, that there is no plant which can stand, or grow or thrive but what Jesus Christ himself hath planted. Secondly, that the plant which he plants is but one, which is only himself. All but himself shall be rooted up, for himself is that plant which the Father hath chosen, planted and rooted; as he saith, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away, and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." Jn.15:1-2. And this Vine is but One, and the leaves thereof are appointed for the healing of the nations, and there is no other. Rev.22:2. Thirdly, we showed how 'tis the Lord alone who plants it, and not man. All the inventions, wisdom and industry of men can do nothing at all, either in choosing or planting of this

choice Vine; neither can they cause it to grow or increase in the least, but God the Father is alone the Husbandman. He it is that plants it, waters it, tends it, nourishes and cherishes it, and the wisdom, care, power, providence of man hath no hand at all therein. Fourthly, we have showed that every believer hath no further an interest in Jesus Christ, or in the Kingdom of Heaven, and in the riches and privileges thereof, but as they are engrafted into this Vine and into this Root, neither can they bring forth any fruit but that which is cursed and abominable.

Then if it be so, as most certainly it is, that there is no other plant accepted of the Father, and that Christ alone is the true Vine, and every branch must be engrafted into him, and that they can have no nourishment any other way, nor in any other root; and that all that are in him are his body and members of him, bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh. Eph.5:30. I say, if this be truth, and truth undeniable, then let us hold to this for truth, in practice as well as in words, and not bring in the devices of the dark and ignorance sons of men, implying that man may choose this plant by the power of himself, and by his own wisdom, and that he may plant Jesus Christ in himself, and cleave unto him; or at least {say others} if it be once given {in their conceit} then man must do his part, to water, and cherish and nourish this plant; and what he judges to be a wild branch, or a dead joint, he may prune and cut it off, when as the Heavenly Father hath undertaken that work himself, and blind man shall not undertake his work, and go about to

prevent his power and wisdom and all-sufficiency in carrying on and nursing up this plant.

Let us consider seriously of this, who it is that undertakes this high and heavenly work, for certainly 'tis the Lord, 'tis the Lord that chooses it, and plants and engrafts it. Alas the best of the sons of men with all their wisdom, power and parts, are no better than wild olives, nay they are all that fig tree to which Christ came and could find nothing but leaves, and therefore cursed it, and no fruit ever did, nor ever shall grow on that degenerate root. Matt.21:20. Man is also that earth that the Lord hath cursed, which of itself can bring forth nothing but briars and thorns, and is rejected, and fit for nothing but to be burnt. Heb.6:8. Let not flesh and blood be offended in the holding forth of these things, for the earth and all the earthliness thereof shall be burnt up, for all its best works are no better, and fit for nothing but the fire of hell.

And consider further if it be so, that the Heavenly Father hath taken this work upon himself and quite excluded any other power, wisdom and help; then what hath any of the sons of men to do to undertake to prune, to judge, to censure, to cut off? Certainly it must not, nor cannot be done by any other hand but by his who engrafts. The same hand that engrafts and plants must only pluck up. For, is poor ignorant man fit to be judge in this case? If it should be left to man, he would pull up the wheat with the tares; nay, such is his ignorance and depravity, that he would take wheat for tares, and tares for wheat; and indeed this hath been the

misery of all ages, men thinking themselves able to judge of truth, and the things of God, what is truth, and what is error, although himself being never yet purged, nor ever freed from his own defilements; vain, silly, and yet proud man, who cannot give a reason in the ordinary things of nature, nor give a reason of any color, as why the grass is green, or why the crow is black, or the like, which is within his own sphere and compass, and yet so proud, conceited and presumptuous is he, that he will undertake to judge of heavenly things, and to sift out error from truth, and root up, and plant, and do what he pleases.

But let vain man from this point know that he meddles with that which he hath nothing to do, for all men are alone in the hands of the Lord; he alone is Judge of the quick and the dead, Acts 10:42, in his hands alone are the issues of life and death, Psal.68:20, and no man can come to him except the Father draw him, John 6:44, and yet men will be drawing and driving to Jesus Christ all the day long; and they thinking to beget men, and they like well to be called doctors, masters and fathers, and yet the Spirit expressly saith, "of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures." Jas.1:18. There is no power, wisdom, strength, rules, examples or precepts which can do this, but only the will and power of the Lord himself. As he saith again, "for by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one spirit." I

Cor.12:13. Has one man then any more power than another? Can it be this man's learning, or the other man's wisdom, or another man's eloquence, or power of words, or persuasions? Oh, let not man think so, far be such thoughts from any that profess or exalt Jesus Christ. For what can be more dishonoring to him? And yet how do the general course of the world, and all the pretenders to religion run in this way? Though they say in words, Christ is all, and man can do nothing, and he is dead, yet they in all their practices, and persuasions, and exhortations hold forth that they verily believe the power of man, and that he is but half dead, and that he may raise himself, and uphold himself, and choose this plant Jesus Christ, and engraft himself therein, and nourish, and dig, and hedge about it, and cause it to bring forth some manner of fruit, which is alone the work of the Father. Or at least wise, if they give so much to God as to say he must give grace, yet this they affirm, that man must nurse it, and water it, and cherish it, and maintain it, or else he may quite lose it as some say or imply. And what's all this but to say, that man himself is the dresser and that he does all the pruning, and purging, and rectifying of all things, that he is the true husbandmen.

But the Scripture holds forth otherwise, that these things are done only by the hand of the Lord, and that instruments are nothing; for 'tis only the sword of the Spirit that can cut off all this vain boasting, and the word of God alone "is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword,

piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Heb.4:12. There is nothing else which plants, nothing else that cuts off from the root, but only the Spirit which is as the wind that "bloweth where it listeth," John 3:8, and man hath nothing to do. I say, the creature hath nothing to do but to wait and expect when the angel will move the waters. John 5:4. This is the circumcision which is done without hands, and he is not a Jew that is one outwardly, made so by man, or any power of or in man, but he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God. Rom.2:28-29.

And this work the Lord doth, manageth, and carrieth on by his own strength, and by his own power, for he is not at all beholding to man's wisdom or care, but what is done in man, or by man, 'tis not he that doth it, but Christ in them; his work is not done by any outward and external means, but by a secret, invisible and spiritual power. The Lord is that secret invisible sap that communicates virtue and nourishment to every part and member, throughout the whole body, so that man's power, wisdom, and care is not used at all, but only as an instrument or subject in which, and by which it works; and therefore man have nothing at all to speak of, or boast in; and one man is not more holy than another, or improves more, because he hath more wisdom, diligence, endeavor or the like, for in the work of God all things tending in the least to lift up

man, are to be cut off, but the Spirit works where and when he listeth, and man by all his care cannot fetch in the Spirit but when he himself is pleased to draw near, so that no flesh may boast or glory in his presence, nor one man lift up himself above another. I Cor.1:29. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Eph.2:10. "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; that, according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." I Cor.1:30-31.

Therefore from hence let us make this conclusion, and seal to it, {not in our words and judgments only,} but in our hearts, in our practices, that we may say, these are the very things that we have heard, that we have seen with our eyes, and that we have looked upon, and that which our hands have handled of the word of life, I John 1:1, for there is nothing more usual than to consent to truth, in the notion thereof, and in the doctrinal part only, but when they come to the practical and applicatory, then they declare plainly that they have no experience of heavenly things, and of the work of God in themselves, but they make man a worker, and agent, and a finisher of faith. Some indeed confess that God begins and lays the foundation, but man must carry it on and do his part, or else all is nothing. What a high indignity is this to the grace and power of God! And hence is it that men glory and pride themselves so much in their own doings,

and are so forward to censure and judge other men; when alas, man hath done nothing at all in this spiritual planting and watering, but only taken up a conceit of his own doing, acting and working, and priding himself in a mere empty fancy, without any real doing at all.

For be sure this is the great work which Christ alone hath undertaken, to bring many sons unto glory, Heb.2:10, and in this he will never give his glory unto another, Isa.42:8, he will be free, and his wind shall blow when he listeth, John 3:8, and work when he pleases; and for man to say or imply that there must be any other power, or any other means in the whole earth, is to rob God of his glory, and give it unto another. But the practice of all the saints is, {I do not say in words only, but in their practice,} to ascribe all to Christ alone. How violent was Paul against the truth and the professors thereof; and yet he had attained to be an exact Pharisee, far more strict than any which we shall find in our days; and how zealous was he {as he thought} for the truth; exceedingly zealous against error {in his way} and yet it was no other but madness against the truth, and persecuting both men and women that were of that way, Acts 9:1-2, that he might bring them bound to Jerusalem, dragging them out of every city, and breathing out threatenings and slaughter, and compelling them to blaspheme. Acts 26:11. Who now do you think turned Paul about, and of a Saul made him Paul? Was there any other hand in this but the good hand of the heavenly Husbandman, who of a devil made him a saint? No,

he clearly saw he opposed salvation, fought against it, and he had only a notion of salvation and happiness in his own mind, but really to desire salvation, he neither did, nor knew what that salvation was until it pleased the Father to reveal his Son and Salvation to him, Gal.1:16, and to receive mercy in spite of his ignorance and unbelief. I Tim.1:13. It was alone the Lord's good pleasure to cut him off from the wild olive and to plant him into the true Olive which is Christ.

As the Apostle saith, so say I, "such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." I Cor.6:11. There is not one natural man in the whole world that can desire salvation, but under a false notion, as he thinks it will bring peace, rest, honour, glory, and happiness; but salvation indeed, all men who are not possessed of it, oppose it, fight against it; and should it be revealed to them in the true nature thereof, they would persecute it, and breathe out slaughters against the possessors of it. Then certainly no man loves Salvation, nor no man seeks after it, nor can any use any means to attain it, as men ignorantly affirm and believe. For can a man love his own death? Can any man love crucifying and hating his own life? I tell you nay; but he must be changed, new molded and be leavened with a new leaven, that he may be a new lump. I Cor.5:7. And therefore when men talk of such things, they know not what they say, that man must do, and man must act, and man must use the means and the like; it

declares to me that they were never yet met in the way going to Damascus; they were never yet unhorsed and laid flat to the earth. Oh beloved; this work of salvation is a marvelous work! For the Lord to reveal his Son in man, Gal.1:16; the world knows nothing of it, but they have some notions of heaven without them, and of a Christ without them, and religion is now made an easy and common thing; almost everyone is religious, for religion is the fashion of the age, and it's a shame to be otherwise, and they think this is enough. But to make Christ in us the hope of glory, this is none of man's work, but 'tis the Lord's doing and 'tis marvelous in our eyes, Psal.118:23, for Christ to die for us when we were sinners and enemies to salvation, Rom.5:8, and for him to die for us, and to reconcile us by his death, Rom.5:10, this the world knows little of.

I appeal to every renewed soul here, whence is it, that any of you are come to be a believer, and of men and women of a devilish nature, to be made partakers of the divine nature? II Pet.1:4. Of a briar, and the thorn, and the bramble, which was fit for nothing but the fire and burning, to become a heavenly plant, and a branch in the true Vine Jesus Christ? How came this about? Was it ever your own work, or your own seeking? Nay, did you not fight against this work and oppose it? He that finds it not so, never yet was a partaker thereof; for he could never say, unto me a Child was born, and a Son given, whose name is called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace, Isa.9:6, except he hath found in

himself, {as the Lord saith there in Isaiah,} "every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire." Isa.9:5. This always goes before that Christ is given to any of the sons of men.

Beloved, do but examine your own hearts, and you shall find it was thus, and it must be thus. Was ever the strongman bound and cast out of his house and possession without resisting? Will man lose his life and suffer all his riches and goods to be taken away and never strive nor oppose? And was this work ever done by a still work, and the using of ordinances, and joining here and there, and man never truly disturbed? But that out of his natural and dead condition he hath dreamed and slept himself into a new creature, and into the condition of a Christian? No, my brethren, conversion is not such a guess work that most men hold forth.

And if men see but a want in themselves, and then resolve that they must seek after a heaven to fill up this want, and to that end run to this duty and to that fellowship, and think he must be constant in the use of ordinances, and if he do but believe in an external Christ, then the work is done, and the kingdom of heaven is theirs. Alas, all this is but the way of man, and by all this they do but make proselytes, and those that teach thus, they do but sew pillows under all armholes, and cry peace, peace, when there is no peace, Ezek.13:18, and have made themselves aprons, and bless themselves in an unsound condition, and heal the wound of the daughter of the people slightly. Woe to

these {women} saith the prophet there, for this is nothing but weakness; nay, herein they have made them twofold more the children of hell than before. Matt.3:15. If men are risen with Christ, let them show me how they were crucified, dead, and buried with him. Col.3:1. If they are come to Canaan, let them show me how the alone mighty and outstretched hand of the Lord hath brought them out of Egypt, and how they came through the sea, and through the wilderness. Indeed I confess, these people they talk of signs and marks of the people of God, but to them there shall be no sign given but that of the prophet Jonah, Matt.16:4, for as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so must the Son of Man be buried in the heart of the earth, go ye and learn what this means.

Art thou cut off from thy old root, from the wild olive tree? Hast thou felt this burning; hast thou lost thine own life; art thou buried with Christ; hast thou been three days in the heart of the earth, and in the belly of the whale; hast thou had in thee the battle of the warriors and the confused noise, and the garments rolled in blood; hast thou seen the massacre of thy own life; and the burning, and the spoil, and the strength of fire in thee? Then this shall be a sign unto thee, that to thee the Child is born, and the Son given; and thou hast then seen him to be the Mighty God, the Great Counselor, the Wonderful, and the Prince of Peace. Beloved, you may talk what ye will of this mark, and that sign; for, saith Christ, indeed the men of this generation seek after signs; but let them never once name any

other sign, until they find this sign in them. Have ye found this cutting off from yourselves, and this planting by the Lord alone? Never tell me of ordinances, nor of washings, nor of breaking bread, nor of any of your rules or decorum; mind you only this sign, this mark, before ever ye look for any other, of being risen with Christ and the like. He that knows not these things in himself, knows nothing; Christ comes not to send peace before he hath sent the sword. Matt.10:34.

What's now all your doings, all your dippings, washings, baptisms, if you have not this baptism of the Spirit? All the other can never make the doers thereof, nor the comers thereunto perfect. Heb.10:1. Until this be, all your baptisms and worships are but from men and not from heaven, and all your ordinances are but the ordinances of men; neither do you know what an ordinance of Christ is, for all are but shadows; your sabbaths, your new moons, all things of this nature, for the body is Christ. Col.2:17. If Christ himself will make use of these, then indeed they are his ordinances, and there is life and power in them; but as men use them, they are empty, cold, dead, and they change not the comers thereunto at all; for they are alive still, and their spirit is yet whole in them, and they have no change wrought in them from the men of the world, for they are as much in love with honour and credit and all the things of the world as any other men, for by their fruits you may know them, Matt.7:20, and yet they profess to be risen with Christ, and to seek those things that are above.

Why? Because they mistake things that are above, but because they go to church, and hear, and pray, and fast, and conform to John's baptism, therefore they conclude that they mind the things of Christ, and seek after them. Beloved, to be risen with Christ is another manner of thing, and it must be done by another manner of power than these men ever have realized. Even the very same Almighty Power that raised up Christ from the dead, else they do but delude themselves. This work is done by no other but by his own eternal Spirit, and men need not seek to any other help or means but him, as thinking they can do themselves any good.

But here now comes in the common objection, at which all men {having not the work wrought in themselves} stumble and fall, and over this block they cannot get, although it is true that God does all, and he must give a new heart, and take out the stony heart, and give a heart of flesh. Ezek.11:19. Thus far they will join in with you, but must not man do his part and use the means, that it may be effectual?

This indeed hath been, and is, and shall be the great stumbling block in all ages; for men having not the experience of these things as wrought in themselves, dream away of man's doing, acting, and working, and he must put himself upon this duty, and that performance; when as I told you before, no man seeks for heaven as this heaven; and how then can he use the means for it, when he never once desires the true kingdom of heaven, but hates it, opposes it, runs from it, uses all his inventions and

weapons offensive and defensive to keep it out, and desires the Lord to depart from him, for he desires not the knowledge of his ways, Job 21:14, and with the Gergesenes rather than they will part with their swinish ways, and that mire wherein they wallow, they will meet Christ and desire him not to come near them, but to depart out of their coasts. Matt.8:34. So well do all men out of Christ love him and seek after him, or use means to come to him.

But to answer more particularly; I do not, nor ever did deny the use of means in the hand of the Father; for the means do nothing, but the Father's hand only; and God never intended that carnal means should effect a spiritual work; for, "God is Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." John 4:24. "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal," but spiritual; and they are mighty in the hand of God, not in the hand of man, not in ourselves but only in Him. II Cor.10:4. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." John 3:6. And what is it that men make out about this objection but this, that men must do, and men must strive, and men must watch? It's true, what means soever God pleaseth to use shall prevail; but if used by man, it does nothing at all; for can a spiritual thing come out of a carnal? Can a clean thing come out of an unclean? And therefore it is clear to me and to all the people of God, and to their experience, that the Lord makes no use of man's power, or strength, or wisdom, or watchfulness, or industry; but what is done in man is purely the hand and power of the

Lord. If the Lord speaks the word, "let there be light," Gen.1:3, in such a soul, there is light. If he say to the lepers, "be ye clean," 'tis done. Luke 5:12. If he say to the ears "Ephphatha, that is, be opened," Mark 7:34; and "young man I say unto thee arise," Luke 7:14, and to the sick, "arise, take up thy bed and walk," Mark 2:11, then the work is done. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. II Cor.4:6. But men not knowing the work and power of God, they are always harping on this string of man's power, acting, working, striving, and the like.

I, but they object further, must not man use external means, as preaching, and hearing, and the reading of the Scriptures and the like? Answer. Although he does, yet what doth all this do, except the power of God be in it? The Lord is pleased, in this book of the Bible, to speak out the things belonging to the kingdom of heaven, and he is pleased to stoop so low to us, to represent by external things, those things that are high, and spiritual, and saving; but alas, they are all mysteries, and they cannot be known but in the light of Christ, and not in the light of man, but only as God is pleased to make them out to man; else no man knows what they mean in their own nature. And no man doth teach, nor can any man learn, but only by that great Master, Father, and Doctor. "So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." I

Cor.3:7. And though it be brought in earthen vessels, II Cor.4:7, yet 'tis only the power of God that can affect it; and if carnal man can open them, or handle, or expound them, though he be ever so learned, yet they do but play the madman with the sword of the Spirit, and know not how to use it, but cut down that which God hath planted, and plant that which God would have rooted up, and they help not at all in divine things.

For God's time to work and speak is when all things in man as to his own workings are still and quiet, and when there is the deepest silence; 'tis the Spirit only that can make the sword of the Lord to cut, to kill or make alive. And he that acts or thinks otherwise, 'tis in him no other but blasphemy against the Most High God to say any other power can accomplish this, either in the magistrate or minister, 'tis he that hath said it, "behold, I make all things new," Rev.21:5, and 'tis Christ alone who is set and appointed of the Father for "the fall and rising again of many in Israel." Lk.2:34. And 'tis true, there is also a great stir in the world among these men about three persons in the Trinity; and he that will not own them according to their understanding will be labelled as Socinians and Atheists, and I know not what else, when as they themselves know not what they say, nor whereof they affirm, I Tim.1:7, for they themselves deny the Holy Ghost and his operation, and have not so much as once heard in themselves that there is a Holy Ghost which worketh all the things of God in the sons of men. But the Lord hath denounced a severe and

solemn curse upon all these practices, "thus saith the LORD; cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD." Jer.17:5. And what do these men do else but withdraw their hearts from the Lord, and put their trust in man, and in the arm of flesh? What is this but to set up idols in their hearts?

But all the saints bear out their witness against this idolatry, for they find that never any of their endeavors, parts, or any means they could use, has brought them off from themselves and their own bottoms, nor could cut them off from the wild olive, Rom.11:17, and overcome the strongman in them and spoil his goods, Matt.12:29, but that one work of the Spirit alone, and if no other power can do it, then certainly all other power must fall and must be rooted up. Therefore this shows the intolerable pride and the inexpressible danger of those men who will take upon them the office of the three persons. How many church gatherings are there now in these days? And they will undertake to plant, and gather, and refuse, and take, and pick, and choose, as they judge, and as they think good, and they think that they know the members of Christ and the members of Satan. And if they say such a one is a believer, then their judgment must pass, though they are dangerous and most abominable hypocrites, who have only washed the outside of the cup and of the platter, Luke 11:39, and are only painted sepulchers, Matt.23:27, but within are stinking and

loathsome, being full of pride, vainglory, envyings, covetousness and idolatry, &c.

My friends, judge ye if these men do not take too much upon themselves. But this truth shall stand against the gates of hell, that every plant which the Heavenly Father hath not planted must be rooted up, for there is nothing in the whole earth that can make anyone a member of Christ but the Spirit of the Father, which is the Holy Ghost. And therefore let no man rejoice in men, let no man exalt, extol, or even speak one word in praise of man, "for all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours," and shall all serve you, for they are nothing at all, for "ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." I Cor.3:21-23. And when you say, I am of such a man's church, and I am of such a fellowship, and I am a member here and there, I Cor.1:12, are ye not carnal and walk as men? Is Christ divided, or was Paul crucified for you? I Cor.3:3. Is there any other bond, or any other membership but in the body of Christ? Did any of the apostles or prophets, or any that ever had experience of the work of grace and of being brought home to the great and true Shepherd, speak of any other knot, or any other head, but that Christ alone is that head, "from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God." Col.2:19. All other temples or fellowships are no better than the material temple, of which Christ speaks. Although men have beautified it and

adorned it, and carved it, even to the admiration of the beholders, yet Christ is not affected therewith, as glorious as it is, yet the time is coming when there shall not be left a stone upon a stone which shall not be thrown down. Luke 21:6.

I but Sir, what do you mean to speak thus freely, and so harshly against the churches of Christ, and the saints and people of God? I answer, far be such a thought from my heart, I would not do it for a world; but this I say, if they were the true people of God and of that family of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, Eph.3:15, then they would not keep such a stir about an outward gathering, and an external membership, but they would own the Church of Christ which is spiritual and mystical, for such is the body of Christ, it is universal and not locked up in this way or that form, but here they pitch their love, and all others they behold afar off, who are not squared to their church way; but the saints would own no teaching but the teaching of the Spirit, they would look upon man but as a mere empty pipe, having no worth, no excellency, no goodness at all in him; but whilst man is so much admired, and cried up, in vain do they tell me of their saint-ship, or of they being the people of God; and therefore for my part, whilst men idolize shadows and neglect the truth and the substance, and seek not Christ himself, but content themselves with Christ literally, I must say with the apostle, "henceforth know we no man after the flesh; yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more." II Cor.5:16.

Were the Apostle here amongst us, and should bring such a doctrine, it would seem very strange to tell us, that all our fleshly and external apprehensions of Christ must pass away, and if he himself must not be regarded in that kind, {for the Comforter cannot come except he go away, and the flesh profits nothing, for it is the Spirit that giveth life or quickeneth, John 16:7; 6:63,} then much more all your shadows, forms, ordinances, washings, breaking of bread; for, whilst you rest in these and esteem of these, Christ in the Spirit, or the Comforter cannot come; therefore, 'tis expedient for you that I go away as to all these things; or else, I cannot send the Comforter, who shall lead you into all truth.

I, but this doctrine overthrows the power both of the Magistrate and Ministry, for we had thought they had been the only men to propagate the Gospel. I answer, did Christ ever command you to go to Caesar, or to the ministers to propagate his gospel? He bids you only, to give unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, Mark 12:17, namely, to yield them civil obedience and pay them tribute and afford them your help, for carrying on of the public charge, for the preservation of the nation; but it was far from his thoughts to make the Magistrate a judge in spiritual matters. How ambiguous a way is this? And how often are ignorant and blind men set up, who know nothing in divine things? And indeed, where shall we find men fit to judge, or fitly qualified for that business? If it were so, Christ had laid a ground for the setting up the greatest persecution

that ever the sun saw, for the Magistrate, and too commonly also the ministers call evil good, and good evil, light darkness and darkness light. Isa.5:20. And for the ministers, when did Christ ever or his apostles send you to them? But he saith, "the harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest." Luke 10:2. Is man able to judge, who are fit to be labourers to work in the Lord's harvest? If he be blind, as most certainly he is, he is only fit to lead the blind. Indeed 'tis true in all ages, that the harvest is great and the labourers few, how few are there of those that pretend to be ministers and labourers, and pastors and gatherers of the Lord's sheaves in his harvest, that do so much to know truly the Lord's errand, but bring things taken up on trust, and borrow here, and there, and yet say, thus saith the Lord, when he hath not sent them nor spoken to them, Jer.23:21, but bring forth the dreams and visions of their own heart, so leading people on with mere fancies and dreams, that they are Christians, and they are brought into the sheepfold, when 'tis neither so nor so.

And again, what strange contradicting doctrine do these men bring forth, to say that Christ does all, and that we cannot do the work of the Spirit without the strength of the Spirit, and without this we are in bonds and cannot stir one foot, and he accepts no service but what comes from himself and much to this purpose. And yes by and by that man must improve grace, and he must nourish this plant

and cherish it, and he must preserve the seed of God in him, that it may not die. And he must repent and believe and perform the conditions required on his part to do, and apply the promises, and the like; and doth this not clearly show that they understand not what they say, or whereof they affirm? I Tim.1:7. Is not this to affirm and deny the same thing, both at once? Is not this to begin at the wrong end, and if so I know not what is? But this is the course of the world, to put men upon getting and doing; whereas the way of Christ is to strip man of all his power, to reduce him to his own nothingness, to work the work himself; and he that hath found Christ in him acting and doing, he alone sees that it was none of his work; but whilst men set man thus upon his own doing, man comes to be lifted up in his own sight, and he glories in himself and in his own power, and he thinks himself a forward Christian, and that he is somebody, and that he is a wise man in his own conceit; and those that do not as he does, they are ignorant, wicked and profane; but a true believer finds no power, no deliverance, no planting, but by the hand of the Father, and he lives on that sap and nourishment which he receives from the root Jesus Christ; and though he act or live, yet it is not he, but Christ that liveth in him, and works all his works for him. Gal.2:20. And he finds and knows that if he attempts or does anything in his own name or power, Isa.26:12, or thinks that he must do this, or that he can do that, that in such reasoning, he takes the crown from off the head of Jesus Christ, and crowns himself therewith. This is that which to a true

Christian is nothing more hateful, and he knows in true experience, that every plant that the heavenly Father hath not planted, must be rooted up, and as the prophet Isaiah saith, "behold, they are all vanity; their works are nothing, their molten images are wind and confusion." Isa.41:29.

FINIS