



MISCELLANEOUS QUESTIONS.

QUEST. 1.

WHETHER OR NOT THE SINS OF BELIEVERS WHILE UNREPENTED OF,
MAKE THEM LIABLE TO ETERNAL PUNISHMENT ?

THERE are two things which the children of God ought diligently to study ; what they are in themselves ; and what they are, and do enjoy, in Christ. The consideration of the former will serve to keep them humble ; and the knowledge of the latter will be a store house of comfort against discouragement, a magazine of armour, wherewith they may resist the devil in his assaults, and will afford unto them great matter of thankfulness and praise, which well becometh Christians. For, to exalt Christ is the Christian's great work ; and no wonder, seeing it is the great design of the gospel to exalt him, and the riches of free grace, as the Apostle Paul almost every where teacheth. Wherefore we may safely lay it down for a certain conclusion, and rule of doctrine, That whosoever doth most exalt Christ and free grace, so as it have a native tendency to a holy walk, is a gospel-truth ; which, if duly noticed, will readily lead us unto a true answer to the question proposed. Now, amongst all the privileges which believers do in their own person enjoy, the liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free, is not the least ; which, how far it extends itself with respect to the sins of believers, is the subject of the present inquiry. In which, that we may the more happily proceed, I shall premise these few things to be considered.

1. Sin is a relative term, and denotes somewhat to which it hath a relation ; and that is a law ; “ for where there is no law,” saith the Apostle, “ there is no transgression ; and sin is a deviation from the law of God, to which the creature, in point of right, is subject ; and therefore is called *anomia*, 1 John iii. 4. Now, there are two things in the law which are here to be taken notice of ; the command, which is the rule of life ; and the threatening, which is a denunciation of the punishment the guilty doth incur.

Agreeably thereto, there are two things in sin, besides the action itself, (in sins of commission, which may be called the *substratum*, or the *To materiale* of sin, which is metaphysically good). *First*, The disconformity of the action (in sins of commission), and of the power and principle of action (in sins of omission,) to the law of God; which may be called the *To formale* of sin, being that which constitutes the action, or the power, sinful. *Secondly*, There is the guilt of it; which is an obligation to punishment: and this is a consequent of sin, flowing both *ex natura rei, et. ex institutone Dei*; from the nature of sin itself; and the sanction of the divine law.

2. The guilt of sin may be considered two ways (1.) *In actu primo*. (2.) *In actu secundo*. As it is considered under the former notion, it denotes the intrinsic demerit of sin, whereby the sinner, in whatsoever state he be, doth indeed deserve the wrath and curse of God for his sin, and that so much the more as the sin is aggravated by light, mercies received, and the like. And thus believers are more guilty than others. In this sense, guilt cannot be separated from sin, no more than risibility from a man, or heat from the fire. The guilt of sin considered *in actu secundo*, denoted an actual obligation to undergo the penalty denounced in the law, whether a remission be to follow or not. There is a vast difference betwixt these two, and therefore the distinction is carefully to be noticed in this question. The difference betwixt them is as great, as betwixt a man's deserving a sentence of death to pass upon him, and the actual passing of the sentence. And although guilt under the former notion is inseparable from sin, yet in this sense it is separable therefrom; even as the three children in the fiery furnace were *in actu primo* combustible; but not *in actu secundo*;* the fire could have no power over them. The pardon of sin takes away the guilt of it in the last sense, though in the former it still remains. And so Christ took on our guilt in the latter, but it remains with us in the former sense. Turretine calls the one *potential* guilt, the other *actual*; † the one, says he, respects condemnability, the other condemnation.

3. We must also distinguish betwixt actual guilt, or the actual binding over the sinner to punishment; and the execution, or actual inflicting of the punishment. The former may be where the latter shall never follow; as the elect unconverted are lying under the condemnatory sentence of the law, though it shall never be executed upon them. The confounding of these two cannot but lead men into mistakes. All the three do clearly appear, if we compare the case

* Mares. in dist. Castan. p. 19. Ameoii medulla, cap. 12. thes. 5. † Loc. de peccato.

of a sinner with that of malefactors committing capital crimes. The malefactor by his deed first deserves death, then he is adjudged thereto, and last of all the sentence is executed. All these are not only to be distinguished, but they may indeed be divided; which I need not stand to enlarge upon.

4. Punishment is taken either largely or strictly. Largely, it is used for the afflictions, or *mala tristia*, that come upon men,* whether good or bad, for their sin. So the scripture useth it, so orthodox divines use it sometimes; and therefore we may make use of the word in the present inquiry without any imputation of heterodoxy. Strictly so called, it respects only those evils that are inflicted for sin upon men, by the Lord as a just judge, without any mixture of fatherly love; and so it is termed judicial punishment, in opposition to the evils inflicted on the children of God, flowing from fatherly love. In respect of the end of punishment, it is either correctory or vindictive. The first is inflicted for the correction of the offender; the other for the satisfying of justice without respect to the amendment of the party; which I understand of God's intention simply: for as to the vindictive punishments inflicted on the reprobates, on this side of time at least, the amendment of the party may be justly looked on as the *finis operis*, though we cannot rationally suppose it to be the *finis operantis*, seeing it is not effected. In respect of its duration, it is either temporary or eternal. Correctory punishments are temporary, in regard the end of them is effected, therefore are they confined within the limits of time; but the other are eternal, and never have an end, in regard men are never able completely to satisfy the justice of God.

5. *Lastly*, The sins of believers are of two sorts. *First*, Some such as they having fallen into, do lie in, at least for a time, through the growing power of corruption, not having risen therefrom by the renewed acts of grace. In this case was David when Nathan came unto him, 2 Sam. xii. *Secondly*, Some they have fallen into; but, by the influences of the Spirit upon the principles of grace in their hearts, putting grace in exercise, they have recovered therefrom, having renewed their faith and repentance. In this case find we David, Psal. li. These things premised, we

ASSERT I. That the sins of believers whether repented of or not, in regard of their disconformity to the law of God, make them liable *in actu primo*, not only to temporal, but to eternal punishment. This is so clear that none who know what God is, or what sin is, will deny it, but will cheerfully subscribe to the truth of it.

* Lev. xxvi. 41.

Lam. iii. 39.

Therefore David testifies,* that no man living can be justified in God's sight; and when the worst comes upon us here from our Father for sin, we must still say, "That with us he hath not dealt as we sinned.† Therefore believers not only may, but ought to confess their sins, mourn over them, condemn themselves for them, &c. And the contrary practice is so far from a gospel spirit, that it doth evidently argue a licentious spirit, regardless of the honour of God, and the purity of his law. Believers, so far as in them lies, by their sins do cast themselves into the fiery furnace of eternal wrath, so that if there were not one with them, "like unto the Son of God," the fire should actually fasten on them; wherefore they may look on themselves, as indeed they are, "brands plucked out of the fire; and sing that song, "Not unto us, Lord, not to us,"‡ &c. And the truth is, as one says well,|| In some respects the sins of the godly are worse than the sins of others; for they grieve the Spirit more, they dishonour Christ more, they grieve the saints more, they wound the name of God more, they are more against the love, and grace, and favour of God, than other men's sins are.

ASSERT. II. The sins of believers while unrepented of, make them liable actually to the temporary strokes of God's fatherly hand. So that a guilty conscience in a believer, fearing a stroke from the hand of God, doth not fear where no fear is: for though God "sees no iniquity in Jacob, nor transgression in Israel," so as to punish them in a way of vindictive justice, as he does the reprobate, though Papists would have it so, yet no doubt he sees it in them, so as to punish them with the stroke of a fatherly hand; which is manifest (whatever Antinomians say to the contrary) from the many instances thereof recorded in scripture, as Moses, Samson, David, and many others; and from that plain scripture, Psal. lxxxix. 30, 31, 32. "If his children forsake my law—Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, &c." of which more anon.

ASSERT. III. The sins of believers, even while unrepented of, do not make them liable, *in actu secundo*, to the stroke of vindictive justice, or make them not actually liable to eternal wrath. Take it *in hypothesi* thus: David being a gracious man, even while he lay under the sins of murder and adultery unrepented of, though he did lay himself open to the temporary strokes of God's paternal anger, and deserved eternal death thereby, yet he was not actually liable to eternal wrath.

ARGUMENT. I. That promise Psal. lxxix. 30, 31, 32, 33. seems to carry it so, "If his children forsake my law—Then will I visit

* Psal. cxliii. 2. † Psal. ciii. 10. ‡ Psal. cxv. 1. || Bridge's Lifting up, p. 60.

their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes Nevertheless, my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail." Where it is evident, that by the rod and stripes, he means only temporary strokes of his fatherly anger. This is a repetition of that promise, 2 Sam. vii. 14, 15. Let us inquire to whom these scriptures do relate, that it may be seen how they favour our purpose. To exclude David and his son Solomon here, and the continuance of David's line and kingdom, were unaccountable, especially considering that clause, 2 Sam. vii. 15. "As I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee." But surely it looks farther than to David and his seed, even to the Lord Jesus Christ; as appears from 1 Chron. xxii. 10. He is the true Solomon, the builder of the Lord's house, whose kingdom is established for ever indeed; and of him Solomon, the king was a type. David himself testifieth this, while he shews that these promises were to be fulfilled in him, 2 Sam. vii. 21. "For thy word's sake (says he) hast thou done this." Compare 1 Chron. xvii. 19. "For thy Servant's sake hast thou done all this." Where it is observed by Witsius* and others before him, that whom he calls in the one place, the Lord's Word, in the other place he calls, the Lord's Servant, meaning thereby the Messiah. But the Apostle puts it beyond all doubt; when speaking of Christ, he cites that scripture, and applies it to him, "I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a son," Heb. i. 5. From all which it seems to be plain, that the promise mentioned does belong to Christ's spiritual seed; that is, believers; "who are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John i. 12, 13. Here then is a promise of temporary punishments, which are to be merely correctory, to bring them in from the extravagancies into which, by temptation, they may fall. And I think I may call it a promise of the covenant: † for it is much to be doubted, if the gospel and covenant of grace know any threatenings properly and strictly so called. And truly this fatherly nurture is that which the children of God cannot want; yea, these rods and stripes are the peculiar privilege of those who are his; and they have as good right to them by the covenant, as to any other benefit. Here we have a discovery of the Lord's way of dealing with his people as plainly laid down as any where else: yet not the least hint of any actual liableness to eternal wrath. So that we may justly conclude, that their liableness to temporal strokes, is their utmost hazard; which will more clearly appear, if we consider,

* Exerc. de serm. Deo. th. 18. Rivet in Psal. ii. 7.

† Wits. de œc. fœd.

under what notion the Lord deals thus with them; even as they are Christ's seed, the fruit of his soul-travail under the pangs of death, in which he having taken on their guilt, they can be no more liable: only the rod of a reconciled God remains to them, called "the rod of men,"* 2 Sam. vii. 14.

ARG. II. If the sins of believers, even while unrepented of, do make them actually liable to eternal wrath, it must be by virtue of some law: wherefore there must be one found in this case, who may say of the believer, as the Jews said of Christ, "We have a law, and by our law he ought to die;" or, which is all one upon the matter, he must be liable to death by some covenant: for however God might have exacted obedience of man, and threatened and inflicted punishment in case of disobedience, merely upon the account of his sovereignty, without making any covenant with him; yet being pleased to enter into a covenant with man, he deals with him covenant-ways; which I think I need not stand to prove. But I say, there is no such law, and no such covenant, by virtue whereof the believer can be made actually liable to eternal wrath: for if there were any such, it must either be the covenant of grace, or the covenant of works. I can scarcely think it will be said, That it is the covenant of grace, by virtue whereof the believer under sin unrepented ought to die; for that were to bring in the law, with its cursing and condemning power, into the new covenant, and so utterly to overturn it, and make it a covenant of works. The tenor of the covenant of grace runs thus, "Believe, and thou shalt be saved;" but it does not say, "He that believeth not, shall be damned;" for the covenant of works says that completely, and secures the destruction of those that despise the covenant of grace: but *Frustra fit per plura*, &c. It must needs be said then, that it is by virtue of the covenant of works, or by the law. But the Scripture teacheth us, that believers being now under the covenant of grace, are no more under that of works; for a man cannot be under both; they are therein incompatible. We are plainly taught in God's word, that believers are "dead to the law," Rom. vii. 4. "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body," *i. e.* the sufferings of Christ in his body), (*Pars pro toto*, Senec., that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead; that is, to Christ. It seems then that the Apostle is of opinion, that a man cannot be married to Christ, unless

* Be She Bet Ana Shim, with the rods of old or weak men: for even as an old man layeth on but a weak blow, so doth the Lord correct his children but with a faint blow. *Weems cit. Leigh in Crit.*

he be dead to the law, more than a wife can be married to two husbands at once; that is plainly, one cannot be both under the covenant of works, and the covenant of grace, at one time: for if to be married to Christ, signify the bringing of the man within the covenant of grace, which I think cannot be denied, with any colour of reason, by those that acknowledge consent of parties necessary to the making up of the covenant; the being dead to the law, must be freedom from the covenant of works. Now, I pray you, what is it that makes the believer liable, in any case, to eternal punishment? If there be any thing, it must needs be the law; but we hear he is dead to it; but if dead to it, how can it have any power over him? To be dead to the law, says Luther,* is to have nothing at all to do with it; not to be held by the law, but to be free from it, and not to know it. And so the orthodox teach with one consent, that believers are free from the law, as to its cursing and condemning power; for "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us."† And indeed, according to the Apostle's reasoning in the fore-cited place, the law, as it is the covenant of works, and as to its condemning power, has no more to do with believers, or no more authority over them, than a man has over her, who alive was his wife, but is now dead; and therefore the believer needs no more fear the threats of the law, nor concern himself with them, as directed against him, than a dead wife, the threatenings of him who sometime was her husband; for what has the law to do with him now, when death hath dissolved the relation? The Apostle teacheth the same doctrine, Rom. vi. 14. where, speaking to believers, he tells them, it is their privilege, that "they are not under the law, but under grace." The law and grace have two distinct dominions; therefore a man under grace is not liable to answer at the court of the law, he not being under the jurisdiction of the law, or covenant of works. So that the law, with its condemning power, can no more reach the believer, than the laws of this kingdom, those that dwell under the great Turk.‡ From all which I may thus argue, He that is thus divorced from the law, that lives not under its dominion, but is as a dead man unto it, cannot be condemned by it, nor by virtue of it made liable to punishment; but such is every believer. *Ergo*. And I doubt not, but if we were as much dead to the law in point of practice, as we are in point of privilege, we

* Luth. Com. in. Gal. ii. 19.

† Gal. iii. 13.

‡ The godly often think that Christ will accuse and condemn. This comes hence; they are not free of the flesh, therefore the terrors of the law return, &c. Luth. in Gal. iv. 4.

would more easily believe this. But the truth is, that, in respect of practice, believers are rather dying than actually dead to the law. And it is not easy for a man that is exercised, to quit living to the law: and therefore Luther,* speaking of this privilege of believers, has that feeling expression, “These things (says he) are easily said, but happy he who knows them well in the conflict of conscience; that is, who, when sin rushes on him, when the law accuseth and terrifieth him, were able to say, What is that to me, that thou, O law, makest me guilty, and convincest me that I have committed many sins? That is nothing to me. Now am I deaf, I hear thee not, because I am dead to thee.” This will be yet more clear and convincing, if we consider, that the law is dead to them, as well as they to it, Rom. vii. 1. “Know ye not, brethren, how that the law hath dominion over a man, as long as he liveth?” So our translation reads it: the words in the original are, *eph’ hoson chronon ze*; and may as well be rendered, “as long as it liveth, referring the life to the law, not to the man. And I think the context does fairly carry it this way: for all along this discourse, the Apostle speaketh of the law under the notion of an husband, even the first husband to elect sinners; and it is clear, that in the two verses immediately following, he speaks of the life and death of the husband: “The woman is bound to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead,”—ver. 2. “If while her husband liveth—but if her husband be dead,” ver. 3.† So the connection of the fourth verse with the former, plainly appears; for having premised that the law is dead to the believer, he concludes, that therefore they are dead to it, and their relation to it is now ceased. And thus it is read and understood by several judicious interpreters, both ancient and modern. The Apostle more clearly asserts this, ver. 6. “That being dead wherein we were held; *apothanontos en ho cateichometha*.” The context also cleareth this exposition: for the Apostle adds, “that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the latter;” importing so much, as that “that wherein we were held,” made us to “serve God in the oldness of the latter,” viz. of the law: which cannot be properly said of the flesh, or of sin, for that stirs up, even to sin against the letter of the law; but well may be said of the law, with its threatenings, which forcibly sets on even the unregenerate to outward obedience. Whereunto well agrees the term used by the Apostle, speaking here of the law, “in which (says he) we were held;”* the word signifies forcibly holden, and is used of

* Ubi supra.

† Origen, Ambrose, Tindal, Erasm. cit. Mar. of Mod. Div. p. 142. So Aretius.

those who are detained in prison and custody, which the Apostle Gal. iii. 23. doth plainly speak of, the "keeping under the law;"—"We were kept *ephrourometha*," kept as in a prison, and shut up, &c. And this word held, seems plainly to answer to that, ver. 2. "The woman is bound to her husband." Now, that husband is dead, even the law wherein we were held. Thus said Luther,† "The law which bound me, and held me captive, is now bound and holden captive by grace." The law then is dead to the believer. Christ, by his death, hath been the death of the law, in point of condemning power: the law, which was the strength of sin, that is, whereby sin had a power of binding over the soul to eternal wrath, is now gone by the death of Christ, 1 Cor. xv. 46. By his blood he hath "blotted out the hand-writing, (Col. ii. 14.), nailing it to his cross." For to the cross two were nailed, the Son of God, and the law of God. The law nailed Christ to the cross, and Christ would not die alone, but crucifies the law that crucified him; as Samson at his death was the death of those that were the cause of his death. Upon which consideration, Luther‡ brings in the believer insulting over the law, with a kind of holy pride, and thus speaking to the law: "I do nothing value thy terrors and threatenings, because thou hast crucified the Son of God. Therefore the sin which thou hast committed against him, is unpardonable; thou hast lost thy right; and now hereafter thou art not only to Christ conquered and strangled, but also to me believing in him, to whom he hath gifted that victory." Thus he. All which being considered, I think it will be very hard to shew, how a believer can ever be actually liable to eternal wrath.

ARG. III. Those scriptures which declare the believer to be "free from condemnation," plainly teach this doctrine which we now prove. John iii. 18, "He that believeth, is not condemned; but he that believeth not, is condemned already. It is easy to see what the meaning of this is, which is said of him that believeth, if we consider the antithesis in the text; "He that believeth not, is condemned already;" not that the sentence is already executed upon him, but that he is sentenced by the law, and so liable, *in actu secundo*, to eternal wrath: so he that believeth is under no sentence, or is not liable so as the other is. So John v. 24, "He that believeth, shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death to life;" where it is plain, that the same thing is taught; for passing from a legal death, to a legal life, which is nothing else but the taking off of the sentence of death, whereby the soul is made actually liable to

* Leigh's Crit. Sac.

† Ubi supra.

‡ Com. in Gal. iv. 4. 5.

eternal wrath, is opposed to coming into condemnation. The words in the original press this more strongly; *eis krison uk erchetai alla metabebeken ek tu thanatu*; cometh not, in the present time into judgment, but hath passed, &c. ;* the word *krisis* here, and *krinomai* in the former, being simple words, do no doubt signify judgment, and to be judged, but tropically condemnation: only properly, I think the judgment or condemnation here spoken of, relates not only to the judgment and condemnation to come, but also to that which is in this life. But nothing can be more plain than what the apostle hath, Rom. viii. 1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." But believers even lying under sin unrepented of, are in Christ Jesus; therefore there is no condemnation even to them. I shall not say with Jackson,† that the meaning is, there is no cause of a damnatory sentence in them; but I shall say with judicious interpreters,‡ that it holds forth freedom from guilt, whereby they might be bound over to eternal punishment; and am well content to hold by the argument from this place, which Wendelin says the orthodox use against the Papists for the perfection of justification. The argument is this "Where there is no condemnation, there is no punishment; but to the justified there is no condemnation: Ergo, To them there is no punishment; or, they are bound over to no penal satisfaction. The proposition is proved, because condemnation is an adjudging to punishment."|| Thus he. How shall the force of this argument be invalidated? Will any say that this privilege is restricted by the following clause, "that walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit," and so belongs not to those who lie under unrepented-of guilt? This were to make two sorts of persons in Christ; some in Christ, that "walk after the Spirit;" and others in him, that "walk after the flesh:" and if there be such, let us no more ask, what concord Christ can have with Belial, light with darkness? But the apostles plainly applies the not walking after the flesh, but after the Spirit, to all believers, to all in whom the "righteousness of the law is fulfilled, ver. 4. And the walkers after the flesh, he makes the same with them that are in the flesh, ver. 5, who cannot please God, ver. 8. have not the Spirit, and are none of Christ's, ver. 9. If any shall say, that the meaning is, There is no actual condemnation to them, though there want not something condemnable in them; it is the truth, and the very thing we plead for, viz.

* Leigh's Crit. Sac.

† Concord. ‡ Piscat. annal. in loc. Zanch. tom. 4, loc. de peccato, col. 81.

|| Syst. Theol. p. 599.

That though by their sins they deserve to be damned, yet there is no sentence passed against them, binding them over to eternal wrath, even though this sentence should never be put in execution. But this is not the meaning of those that make this exception; but thus they understood it, as we commonly say, They shall never be damned; that is, the sentence shall never be executed upon them; the wrath they are actually liable to by their sins, shall be diverted; the antecedent being put for the consequent, condemnation for the execution of it. But if so, I would fain learn of those men, what the apostle hath done, in asserting this, seemingly at least, great privilege of believers beyond others? and why he adds this NOW to it, importing, as it would seem, somewhat which those persons had not before? Are there not thousands out of Christ, that are as highly privileged as they? Are there not many that are yet enemies to Christ, walking after the flesh, regardless of the Spirit, who shall never have the sentence of condemnation executed upon them, but shall certainly be saved? Is it not as true of the elect unconverted, that the sentence shall never be executed against them, as of believers? Yea, surely. It must needs then be meant of this actual liableness to eternal wrath, the freedom from which is the peculiar privilege of believers.*

ARG. IV. If believers under sin unrepented of, be actually liable to eternal wrath, or the strokes of vindictive justice, then they are liable to pay a debt over again which hath been once already paid to the full; which is absurd, and unworthy of the divine Majesty, impeacheth his justice, as our divines say against the Papists, and reflects dishonour on the merits of Christ's death. We believe, that "by once offering Christ hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified;" he hath fully paid the believer's debt, and satisfied for all his sins past, present, and to come: and shall the believer himself be yet liable to pay that debt? This argument Beza hath pithily holden forth in his confession of faith,† "Thou wilt say then," says he, "that there be infinite iniquities in me, which deserve eternal death. I do grant; but I add more to it, which thou, (Satan) hast maliciously omitted: that is, that the iniquities which be in me, were sufficiently revenged and punished in Jesus Christ, who hath borne the judgment of God in my stead. So upon this I make my conclusion contrary to thine; that is to say, Forasmuch as God is righteous, and will not be paid double, and Jesus Christ,

* Sin hath a potential, but not an actual guilt, as the sins of the godly; here is *reatus concupiscentiæ, sed non personæ*. *Weems Christ, Syn. p. 294.*

† Confess. point 4. art. 10.

God and man, hath, by one infinite obedience, made satisfaction to the infinite Majesty of God ; it followeth, that my iniquities can no more fray nor trouble me, my accounts and debts being assuredly erased and wiped out by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, who was made accursed for ME." But here it will perhaps be said, that if this prove anything, it proves too much, viz. that the elect unconverted are not actually liable to eternal wrath, for Christ hath satisfied for their sins, as for the sins of believers. In answer to this, it would be considered, That there is a vast difference betwixt a man's paying his own debt in person, and another's paying it for him. When he pays it himself, he is *ipso facto* discharged of it ; but when another pays it for him, the debtor is not presently discharged from the debt, in regard of the surety, but to be discharged when the surety pleaseth. Now, our sins were charged on Christ as our surety, and he did pay our debt ; look therefore, when he pleaseth, we are discharged from them, and that (saith he*) is upon your believing, not before, Rom. v. 1. So Bridge.† It is certain, the remission of sin, which takes away actual liableness to eternal wrath, is not communicated but to those who believe ; for as Parisiensis saith, As the damnation of Adam doth not pass, but by natural generation, upon those that are carnally generated of him ; so the grace of Christ, and remission of sin, doth not pass but by regeneration, to those who are spiritually regenerated through him. Further, it is to be considered, that although payment be made by the surety, yet the debtor is still liable in law, till it be instructed that the debt was paid for him in particular ; the ground of which is the union betwixt the cautioner and the principal debtor. Now, it is certain, that the union betwixt Christ and a soul is made by faith only ; that is, when the soul believes, and not till then. It is true, that from all eternity there was an union betwixt Christ and the elect, in the designation and decree of God ; but as sure it is, that *Decreta Dei nihil pomunt in actu*. To this purpose speaks Mr. Durham,‡ " It is not," says he, " the cautioner's payment simply, that is sustained, as a relevant defence in judgment, till that be instructed, and except the defence be founded thereon ; for so the law provideth : so it is not Christ suffering simply, but his satisfaction pleaded by faith, and fled unto, that justifieth." And thus I think there remains nothing in this exception to invalidate the argument : for the elect unconverted are still liable to eternal wrath, in regard the time set by the surety

* Christ in Travail, p. 101. † Ct. Bridge, *ibid.* p. 114 in Marg.

‡ Com. on Rev. iii. p. 145.

for their personal discharge is not yet come; they are not yet Christ's seed by regeneration; they are not yet united to Christ; nor have they by faith pleaded his satisfaction before the bar of the court of heaven. But believers being united to Christ by faith, even then when they lie under sins unrepented of, cannot be liable. And therefore the believer, even in this case, may look the law in the face, and say, "It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?" I was crucified with Christ, in him I obeyed, in him I satisfied thee, O law, in whatsoever was demanded; I am therefore no more liable to thy condemnation: and with Luther,* "O law, thou hast no power over me, in vain dost thou accuse and condemn me; I believe in Christ, he has poured out his life most largely for me, besides him I will hear and see nothing." This I say a believer may do *de jure*, though he cannot *de facto*, under those sins that waste the conscience, and darken the sight of his interest in Christ.

If it be alleged, that there must still be a fresh application of the merits of Christ's death, before the soul have the benefit of them for the particular sin, and repentance must be renewed for the same end: this is a mere begging of the question. But I truly wonder how repentance comes in here: for it can have no instrumentality here, consistent with the nature of the new covenant; for it is a giving, not a taking grace; and therefore the Lord hath made it to be "of faith," not of repentance, "that it might be of grace," Rom. iv. 16. As for that of the necessity of faith, it is more tolerable; and there is no doubt but it is necessary in order to the attaining of the comfort of the pardon of after sins, as repentance may likewise be. But I believe, that the righteousness of Christ is a perfect righteousness; and that at the first moment of believing, we put on the Lord Jesus with his perfect righteousness; that the Lord seeing us clothed therewith, declareth us perfectly just; and that we remain for ever without interruption clothed with the same, and are thereby kept from all liableness to eternal wrath in *actu secundo*. So that there is no need of fresh application here for this end, the thing supposed being false. But I would gladly understand what they mean by a fresh application of the merits of Christ's death here: for either they are applied to them before that application, or not till then; or that righteousness is theirs before the fresh application, or not till it be anew applied. If they say the latter, then the state of justification is interrupted by the believer's after sins; if the first, then they cannot be liable to eternal wrath.

* Com. on Gal. iv. 4, 5.

This must only be needful for the comfort of their privilege. And this leads us to another argument ; which is,

ARG. V. Believers, even in their worst case, have a perfect righteousness, and so are perfectly righteous : therefore they can never be liable to eternal wrath. The reason is, because to be perfectly righteous, is to be conformed to the law, ; but to be perfectly conformed to the law, and yet to be liable to the condemnation of the law, is a flat contradiction. It is true, that the righteousness is not originally and inherently theirs ; but it is derivatively theirs, and imputed to them ; which, with respect to Adam's sin, was sufficient to make us actually liable to eternal flames : and why shall not the imputed righteousness of Christ be sufficient to make us free from that actual liableness to the revenging wrath of God ? Are they not perfectly righteous ; Hath the law any more to require of them than what it has got ? There were but two things it could demand, according to the strictest tenor of the first covenant ; to do and to suffer perfectly ; and they have in Christ their head both done, and suffered accordingly, Rom. viii. 3. 4. " That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us," &c. Rom. vi. 10, 11. Gal. iv. 4, 5. " We learn (says Beza.*) to pay by him, who hath set himself debtor and payer for us, who hath put himself in our place, and hath paid our debt, as the principal debtor, even unto the uttermost penny, in such wise, that the rigour of the law, which did before fear us, now comforteth us in Jesus Christ ; forasmuch as life eternal is due to those who have fully obeyed the law, and Jesus Christ hath fulfilled the same for us." Now, surely, what Christ hath done for us, is as good as if we had done it ourselves ; yea, for the honour of the law, it is a thousand times better, because of the incomparable dignity of the person. What then should make them liable at any time to eternal wrath, being at all times clothed with this perfect righteousness ? It cannot be, that falling asleep, and faith not being in exercise, they let the grips of it go, and therefore they are thus made obnoxious to divine vengeance. But surely it is not so easily made ineffectual. If inherent grace remain so securely under the grievous backslidings of the regenerate, that they cannot become children of the devil ; much more doth the imputed righteousness remain, so that they cannot become children of wrath, that is, actually liable thereto, Eph. ii. 2. If they cannot keep the covenant, the covenant will keep them. If any shall say, that God will not impute it to us for the covering of that particular sin or sins we lie under

* Confess. point 4. art. 23.

for the time, till we do anew receive it by faith for that end; it is false: for if a perfect righteousness be at all imputed, it covereth all sins. The ground of this opinion seems to be a mistake anent the imputation of Christ's righteousness, as if the imputation of it were a making of it ours, and that this imputation were carried on by repeated acts, so as it is still made anew as the soul stands in need of it, falling into new sins. That the first of these is a mistake, appears from this, that Christ's righteousness is ours before it be imputed, I mean not in order of time, but in order of nature. It is not ours, because it is imputed; but is imputed, because it is ours. It is evident, that it is used in this matter forensically, and is a judicial word and act; and is nothing else but a legal accounting of a thing to be ours. Now we know, "that the judgment of God is according to truth; and therefore he cannot account that to be ours which really is not so.* And the word itself will import no other: for whether you understand the primary signification of it to be the casting up of an account, and finding the total sum, as Arithmeticians do; or the concluding of a thing by reason and argument, as in Logic; it still imports the being of the thing so, before it be imputed; as two tens are twenty, before the Arithmetician cast up the number, and the Logician finds the conclusion in the premises, before he gather it out of them. So, in this metaphorical sense, we are sinners in Adam, before Adam's sin be imputed to us, or we be reckoned guilty of his sin; and also righteous in Christ, before his righteousness be imputed to us. Hence I cannot but judge, that the Westminster Assembly, in their definition of justification,† are much more accurate than several learned foreign divines, who make our justification formally consist in the imputation of Christ's righteousness: for indeed, as they accurately give it, it is presupposed to our justification, as the ground thereof. Now, the way how Christ's righteousness becomes ours, is by faith, (as the aforesaid Assembly teacheth), and that as it doth make up an union betwixt Christ and the elect person; which I conceive to be the primary and immediate effect of faith. Hence issues a communion betwixt Christ and the believer; so that as all his sins, wants, &c. become Christ's; the righteousness, obedience, and death of Christ become theirs; which so being, God accounts it, and judicially owns and acknowledgeth it to be theirs, as indeed it is; and therefore justifies them; that is, pardons their sins, and accepts them as righteous upon the account of the righteousness they appear before him clothed with. So Witsius‡ teach-

* Leigh's Crit. Sac.

† Shorter Cat.

‡ Oec. fœd. Dei. alicubi.

eth. Now, what is it to be righteous, but to be conformed to the law? And seeing no righteousness can be sustained at the tribunal of God but that which is perfect, it remains that believers, at their first believing, are reputed perfectly conformed to the law of God; that is, to have perfectly obeyed and suffered; and this in regard of their union with Christ: and therefore, unless this his state be changed, which can never be till the union be dissolved, which the scripture holds forth as constant and perpetual, he can never be liable to eternal wrath. Hence it follows, that the opinion of a repeated imputation is also a mistake: for the imputation can no more be anew made, than the soul can be anew united to Christ Jesus. And, as Durham* saith, "Imputation being a judicial word and act, it supponeth an instant sentencing of such a righteousness to belong to such a person, as it were, and to be accepted for him: for if he hath not perfect right, there is no legal imputation, (to say so); but if it be perfect, then it is an instantaneous act." I add, and if instantaneous, then it is not repeated; nor is it a continued act, formally considered, though virtually it be; that is, the virtue of the imputation once made in the court of heaven never ceaseth, but remains still in force for all time to come.

ARG. VI. If the sins of believers unrepented of make them actually liable to eternal wrath, the salvation of many of the regenerate is lost; yea I shall add, "Who then can be saved?" for believers may die under sins unrepented of; and therefore, according to this principle, they must needs perish, being actually bound over to the eternal wrath of God; unless you say, either that God saves them, and takes them into glory while they lie under a sentence of condemnation, or that he takes off the obligation after death: both which are absurd. This argument is not so trivial as to be dismissed, as some would, with a, What if they die not in that case? But it is said here, that although God, by his absolute power, can cut off believers in this case, yet, by his ordinate power, he cannot; for he will not do it; he hath secured them in that point, that though they fall, yet they shall arise by repentance ere they go off the world; they cannot die under sin without repentance, because they "are kept by the power of God unto salvation," 1 Pet. i. 5. But this I refuse, as what cannot be made out by the scriptures; and must needs do so till I see a promise of it in God's word; for to expect a benefit not promised, were too great rashness: but such a promise I confess I have never, as I conceive, heard of, or seen in the word of God. The scripture alledged doth

* On Rev. iii. p. 153.

indeed prove, that the salvation of the godly is sure, so that it cannot fail. That we deny not: only we judge, that the doctrine we impugn, is not the doctrine of the gospel; because it is not consistent with this certainty of the salvation of the regenerate, which is here taught us by the scripture cited; but their salvation is sufficiently sure, without this renewing of the acts of repentance, though in some cases at least it is necessary to their comfort. I deny not, but there are promises of the influences of grace for the renewing of repentance, made unto believers: but this I say, that they are no more to be extended to every time, than the promises of increase of grace; so that they are indefinite in respect of time. It is a command to grow in grace, and there is a promise thereof too, Psal. xcii. 13, 14. as well as repentance is commanded and promised. And yet I suppose it will not be denied, but that the last days of some may be worse than their first days, and that believers may die in a time of the decay of grace. But if we may judge of what God hath promised (as certainly we may) by the event, for "his counsel shall stand," we shall soon find that there is no such thing. Let us consider Eli* sitting by the way-side, and in an instant falling back and breaking his neck. Was it not his sin, that the news of the ark of God being taken, did so affect him as to destroy nature? Though this argued much good in him, yet doubtless it was his sin, arising from weakness of faith; which, if it had been duly exercised, would rather have set him on to wrestle with God for the bringing of the ark back again; which faith could tell he was able enough to do. Yet Eli dies under this sin unrepented of; but yet we have no reason to doubt his being in glory. Yea, unless we maintain a perfection of grace in this life, it is impossible to evite this: for suppose that the renewed acts of repentance were the actions of the last moments of our time, yet repentance itself is as filthy rags; there is still sin in it when it is in the most lively exercise; so that either we must never die, or die under sin unrepented of. It will not at all satisfy here to say, that the question is not to be understood of sins of infirmity, but of the more gross sins; that the latter is that which thus makes liable to eternal wrath. For, 1. The distinction is naught here; all the sins of the godly being sins of infirmity, Heb. iv. 15. Wherefore I cannot but differ from Mr. Bridge, who, in his sermon "of the sin of infirmity,"† tells us, that a great, gross, foul, scandalous sin cannot be a sin of infirmity. He gives the reason, because it is a sickness, not a weakness. If a man have some distemper in his body, and yet he bears

* 1 Sam. iv. 18.

† Prop. 2.

up to meat and to his work, he is not sick, but hath an infirmity. Thus he. Now, I think it will not be denied, but a godly man may fall into a great, gross, and scandalous sin; so then they fall into sins that are not sins of infirmity. Let none then that have fallen into gross sins, take any comfort of that, Heb. iv. 15. "For we have not an High Priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; though he was in all points tempted like as they have been," even to those of the grossest sort, self-murder, and worshipping of the devil. This is strange divinity. The reason is no less strange; because it is a sickness, not a weakness. The learned gentleman Leigh* tells us, that *astheneia*, the word put for infirmity signifies *invaletudo*, *morbus* often, and *imbecillitas*, *debilitas*, *morbus*: for which he cites Plato, Xenophon, and Thucydides. And the Apostle, when he would show what sickness, or rather death, we were under by nature, he tells us, we were infirm, so far were we from bearing up to work, Rom. v. 6. *onton hemon asthenon*. But not to stand on words; Was not Peter's sin in denying of his Master a sin of infirmity? He was resolved against it; and Christ prayed for him, that his faith should not fail; he had a principle of resistance within, by the weakness whereof the tempter gained the day: so that it was a sin of infirmity indeed, yet a gross sin.† But the foresaid author tells us, that, properly and strictly, an infirmity is that sin which a man is taken captive by, against his will, Rom. vii. that is, against the general bent and frame of his heart, which he hath not present strength to resist. So Rom. xv. 1. Thus he. And this is the very truth which the scripture teacheth, Rom. vii. and elsewhere; and thus it was with David, Peter, and others, in their gross sins. But here is the mystery of this distinction according to him, that gross sins committed by a believer are not against his will, nor the general bent of his heart; that there is no resistance at all made to the temptation by the will, but that it goes on with full swing. And so Rom. vii. hath no respect to gross sins: and that law whereby a godly man is brought into captivity, against his will, to the law of sin that is in his members, hath no respect to adultery, fornication, &c.; the contrary whereof the Apostle teacheth, Gal. v. 17, 19; and John, while he tells us, that he that is born of God doth not commit sin, 1 John. iii. 9. But enough of this. The learned Zanchius teacheth more orthodoxly in answer to that question, "But how do the saints make increase when they sin daily, and sometimes most grossly?" His answer is, "They sin of infirmity and according to the flesh; but their mind abides right with God."‡ But, 2. Those sins which are *quotidianæ incurisionis*, as some term them, and the more

* Crit. Sac.

† Ubi supra.

‡ Cum on Eph. iv. 15. p. 147.

gross sins are alike as to the point in hand ; in regard it is not sin as it is lesser or greater, more or less evitable, but sin as “ contrary to the law of God,” that makes men liable to God’s wrath or eternal punishment *in actu primo* ; and sin as it is unrepented of (*ad hominem*), that makes them liable *in actu secundo* ; for a *qua tali ad omne valet consequentia*.

Further, I urge, That a believer may die even under gross sins unrepented of : as we see in the Patriarchs and others their polygamy and incestuous marriages : which I hope will readily be reckoned gross sins : yet it is generally said by divines, that they repented not of these sins expressly, but virtually. Which is no doubt a firm truth. But if any shall make use of it here for an evasion, it will be so far from helping them, that it is a manifest yielding of the cause : for what is virtual repentance, but actual repentance *virtute suce cause* ?* So that the meaning is, That although they did not expressly and actually repent, yet they had a principle or habit of repentance in them, which, *positis ad agendum requisitis*, would have broke forth into action with respect to that particular. But the question is not of this virtual and habitual repentance ; for a believer in the case supposed hath still the habit of repentance, and the act is in the virtue of the cause, power, or habit ; but it is of actual repentance, or else there is nothing said at all. If any shall say, that this is not the virtual repentance they mean, but that it is when a man is heartily affected with such a particular sin or sins as he knows, and for the corrupt inclination that is in him that is the seed of all, though there be some particular which either he knows not, or is not actually in his mind ; yet so he may be said virtually to repent of the same ; because he repents of one sin upon the account which is common to all : I answer, That when it comes to the arguments for it, taken from the necessity of confession, forsaking, &c. more than all this seems to be pleaded for. But however, the necessity of actual repentance is pleaded for in the case of sins known, and minded, but not in the case of sins unknown, or out of mind. But where find they this difference ? Psal. xix. 12. “ Cleanse thou me from secret sin,” will not ground it ; for that is a prayer for repentance, not repentance itself otherwise than was said before ; unless it be said, as is indeed alleged, that the actual turning from one sin unto God, is a virtual turning from all, sufficient to bring the soul from under the liableness to eternal wrath for the sin unminded and unknown ; which I suppose they shall not easely prove : and, if I mistake not, it will be found inconsistent with their own principles ; for they will readily allego

* Mares. indist. cast. p. 149.

for their cause, I mean the necessity of repentance in believers in order to their pardon, David's case, supposing him to be liable to eternal punishment ay and until he renewed his repentance, when Nathan came unto him : and yet I think it will be very hard to say, that David, all that three quarters of a year and more, never exercised one act of repentance for any one sin all that time. So Joseph's brethren remind their sin in selling Joseph, when they say, " We are verily guilty concerning our brother ;" which our adversaries understand of actual liableness to eternal wrath. But who can suppose, that they did not forsake one sin by repentance all that time ; But what more ordinary than for saints to commit sins which they know not to be sins for some time ; or if they do, they slip out of their mind not repented of : yet ere they know that particular action to have been sinful, or before the other come back into their minds, it may be a long time, and they may both have and lose a tender frame, and a repenting heart, in the interval. I say then, in this case, when the sin is known, and minded first before actual repentance for the same, the man is either actually liable to eternal punishment for it, or not. If it be, then the virtual repentance now pleaded for is not sufficient to free the soul from actual liableness to eternal punishment, as is alleged : if not, then actual repentance is not necessary for the taking off the obligation to eternal wrath by known sin ; the contrary whereof is here pleaded. Whence it appears, that this is a mere shifting of the thing that is in question.

Moreover, it were surely worth their pains who stand so much for believers' liableness to eternal wrath by their sins while unrepented of, seriously to consider, whether or not all those that die by their own hands, are set beyond a possibility of salvation ; and whether or not it may be, that some truly godly under unrepented of sin may be struck with madness, or taken with a raging fever, and die in that case ? and whether or not good men in a carnally secure frame may be killed while asleep, and surprised with sudden death ; It may be rationally supposed that many such cases fall out in the world.

ARG. VII. Justification is an instantaneous act, and immediately perfect upon our believing, as is generally maintained by the orthodox : for, as Mr. Durham says,* " If Justification be not immediately perfect, it must either be upon one's not believing in Christ, or because of some defect of the righteousness that faith presenteth, and so faith were not a sufficient shield ; or it must be because the word doth not pronounce him just upon the ground of that righteousness ; which were also absurd." I shall not stand more upon the

* Com. on Rev. iii. p. 150.

proof of this. But from thence it follows, that the after sins of the justified do not make them actually liable to eternal punishment: which I prove thus. The state of perfect justification is either interrupted by the after sins of believers, or not. If ye say it is, then, 1. The gifts and calling of God are not without repentance. 2. A believer is sometimes under grace, sometimes under the law. 3. There is condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus; or, the after sins of believers dissolve the union. I shall say no more of this at the time. If ye say, it is not interrupted by their after sins, then they do not make them liable to eternal wrath; for an uninterrupted state of justification, and being actually liable to eternal wrath, are utterly inconsistent. And I prove the assertion thus.

1. To be justified, is to be absolved from guilt *in actu secundo*. To be liable actually to eternal punishment, is not to be absolved from guilt *in actu secundo*; which is a flat contradiction: The man is absolved, and not absolved; absolved, because justified; not absolved, because he is liable to eternal punishment. I know it will be said, for solving the matter, that it is in different respects that the man is absolved, and not absolved; absolved in respect of sins repented of; not absolved in respect of sins unrepented; he is justified in respect of his state, but in respect of that particular sin or sins he is liable to eternal wrath. But I answer, That this is meant either of the man's past state, whereof he hath no benefit now, or of his present state. If you say the former, then the state of justification is interrupted, in such sort that the man must begin anew again, as at the first moment of believing; and so the believer under unrepented of sin, is in no better case, in respect of justification before God, than he was when unconverted; and if so, why is it urged here? If it be meant of his present state, the distinction is not to be admitted: for the man hath no benefit of that state, more than what flows from former experience of God's goodness, and readiness to forgive; and so his state is not indeed a state of justification, (call it as you will), but of condemnation; for *bonum non nisi ex integra causa, malum ex quolibet defectu*: which, according to the law, is applicable here; for the curse is pronounced on him "that continueth not in all things written in the law to do them," Gal. iii. 10; and the Spirit of the Lord expressly tells us, that "whosoever offends in one point, is guilty of all," James ii. 10.; and when "the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, all the righteousness that he hath done, shall not be mentioned," Ezek. xviii. 24. I confess these scriptures hold forth the Lord's way of dealing with men according to the covenant of works, not according to the covenant of grace; which knows nothing of con-

demning or adjudging to eternal wrath, as was said before. But if men will needs be dealt with according to the law, is it reasonable they take their hazard of all it says. Should the foresaid distinction be used (as it might be on the same grounds) for the comfort of a man, who having been frequently accused of treason, yet was still absolved; but now one treasonable act being proven against him, and he for the same condemned to die; would he not think you miserable comforters; and conclude himself to be in a state of condemnation?

2. The Apostle Paul makes them inconsistent, Rom. viii. 33, 34. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" viz. those of them that believe. *Synec. generis.* * The interrogation is a strong denial. *Q. d.* None shall lay any thing to their charge. † The word *encaleo* here used, signifies to enter action or suit against a man in some open court. Now, if there be none to lay any thing to their charge, yea none so much as to enter action or suit against them *de jure*, then there can no sentence pass upon them, making them actually liable to eternal wrath. So saith Luther, "Every one that believeth on him, is righteous; the law cannot accuse him," &c. ‡ The Apostle goes on in his holy boasting, "It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth?" says he. Not Christ, he is our Advocate; not sin, for Christ "was made sin for us;" not the law, for Christ hath "fulfilled the law for us;" not Satan, for God is his judge; and if he have acquitted us, what can the jailor do?|| We see the ground of the Apostle's boasting his justification before God. *Q. d.* God justifies us, *Ergo*, None can condemn us. Now, where lies the strength of this argument, if to justify and condemn be not inconsistent; or, which is all one, to be justified, and to be liable actually to eternal wrath? If believers may be so liable notwithstanding that they are justified, or in a state of justification, when the Apostle says, "Who is he that condemneth?" he may have an answer to his question. Yea, may the law say, I condemn him, for he lies under unrepented of sin, though he be a believer. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" Yea, says Satan, I have unrepented of sin to lay to his charge. "But who is he that condemneth?" Why? here is the charge, his own conscience cannot deny it. The law then must condemn him, yea hath condemned already; for he is actually liable to eternal punishment, so that there remains nothing but the execution of the sentence. If any shall say, That the Apostle's meaning is, that howsoever the godly be condemned, reproached, &c. by the world, yet they have no ground to be discouraged, seeing God justifies them; I shall not quarrel it, so

* *Piscat. schol. in loc.*† *Leigh's Crit. Sac.*

‡ Com. in Gal. iv. 24.

|| Isaac Ambrose's Media, p. 4.

that it juttle not out the other ; which cannot rightly be done, as the context makes evident. See the golden chain, ver. 29 30. what, knits the links together, ver. 32. and how he goes on in that holy exultation, particularly in the two last verses of the chapter. The ground of non-condemnation here alleged, which is the death, and resurrection, and intercession of Christ, plainly teacheth the same. And indeed it had been small ground of boasting, if a man were still in hazard of the judgment of God, though he needed not fear the world's condemning him. In fine, the words are general ; and it were too much boldness to restrict them. But what if God himself condemn them, or declare them actually liable to eternal wrath ? then I say, the Apostle hath an answer to his question. And their is not so great cause of boasting of the privileges of believers ; for if a man were freed from all hazard of angles, devils, and men, but yet liable to God's wrath, it is too great boldness to boast till that be over. But one would think, that the Apostle had sufficiently secured us against suspicion with respect to God, while he tells us, ver. 31. " If God be for us ;" that is, seeing God is for us, as appears from the context : and so it is that God is for them ; therefore they need not fear he will turn against them to condemn them.

If it be said, Why may not the state of justification consist with a believer's being actually liable to eternal punishment upon the account of some particular sin unrepented of, as well as a state of sanctification with the prevailing of some particular lust, or as well as health and sickness in the same body ? I answer, the reason is plain : Because justification is a legal and judicial act, makes only a relative change, is perfected in an instant, and admits not of degrees : but sanctification is a physical or hyperphysical work, makes a real change on a man's nature, is imperfect, and carried on by degrees. If a man be not perfectly justified, he is not justified at all ; if the least unpardoned sin remain, the law condemns him for it, Gal. iii. 10. But a man may be holy, though not perfect ; and in health, though not perfectly. Suppose a murderer to be lying in prison, dangerously wounded with the same sword wherewith he killed others. The libel is drawn up against him, consisting of several articles. The man hath both the physician and the advocate to employ. The physician sets to work, and by his medicine so prevails, that he cures his wounds, though not perfectly as yet ; but he tells him, and that truly, he is in a state of health, though he goes halting, and that there is no fear of death. The advocate doth his part, and of twenty articles disproves nineteen ; but as to the twentieth article, though he said much against it, yet he could not invalidate the proof of it ; but thereupon he is condemned.

He cannot say now to him, as the physician, that there is no fear of death. And the reason is obvious.

OBJECT. 1. The command to repent, with respect to believers lying under unrepented of guilt, is prefixed to the promise of pardon, as is manifest in the church of Ephesus, Rev. ii. 4, 5; and the ground is general, Rev. iii. 19. "Whom I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore and repent;" where repentance is put in as a necessary midst for removing of God's rebuke and quarrel, even from those whom he loveth. John keeps the same method, writing to believers, 1 John i. 9. "If we confess our sins, he is just to forgive." This is confirmed by the experience of the godly. Witness David, Psal. xxxii. 3, 4, 5.—"I acknowledged my sin,—and thou forgavest," &c. *Ergo*. Answ. 1. That there is a necessary connection betwixt the pardon of sin and repentance, I grant: so that there is no pardoned sinner, but he is also a penitent; so that, sooner or later, virtually or expressly, whatever way sin be forgiven, it is also repented of. But will the objectors screw up this so high, as that no sin can be forgiven, unless it be expressly repented of? They cannot, surely, as long as that remains true, "Who can understand his errors?" Psal. xix. 12. And so we must admit of virtual repentance in the first scripture, and virtual confession in the two last. Which I say still is beside the question. And therefore, if they mind to prove any thing here by these scriptures cited, they will prove to much, viz. That express repentance is necessary to pardon; which is contrary to the scripture cited before. For if a sin be not known, it cannot be expressly repented of. And yet no doubt they must say, that a sin unknown may be pardoned. *E. g.* Jacob lives in polygamy, and that with two sisters; he could not expressly repent of it, not knowing it to be a sin, as is commonly said: yet this sin was no doubt pardoned, and Jacob saved. Then virtual repentance was sufficient, which Jacob never wanted, unless he lost the habits of grace; which I hope our adversaries will not say. As for the prefixing of the command to repent unto the promise of pardon, it can of itself have little weight, in regard the order of words is not always the order of the things themselves. So Mark i. 15. repentance is prefixed to faith; though it is evident, that, in order of nature, it follows the same, if it be understood of gospel-repentance. See 2 Cor. vii. 10, 11. But of this perhaps more afterwards. But, 2. I deny the consequence of this argument; which I conceive may be, and must be thus framed categorically. Repentance must go before pardon; but pardon is the removal of the obligation to eternal wrath: *Ergo*. Now, the minor, if understood of the elect entering into a state of justification, is true; but so it hits not the point in hand.

But if understood of those that are already justified, or in a justified state, it is false; pardon to them being nothing else but either the sense of pardon, or the taking off of temporal strokes, or relaxation of temporary punishment or chastisements. Which interpretation the instances adduced do very fairly accept of. In the church of Ephesus there were some under a decay of their love. What were they liable to upon the account of it? Not to hell-fire; but to a famine of the word, a removing of the candlestick; that, being pinched with want, they may learn not to loathe the heavenly manna; which God threatens actually to accomplish unless they repent, and that according to the tenor of the covenant, Psal. lxxxix. 31, 32. And what else mean these words in the objection, "Whom I love?"—where repentance is put in as a necessary midst for removing of God's rebuke and quarrel. I cheerfully yield it. But assuredly there is a vast difference betwixt God's removing of his rebuke and quarrel, and his taking off the obligation to eternal wrath; unless it be that God cannot rebuke but as a judge. In that scripture it is plain the exhortation is to repentance; and the argument used to enforce it, is very plain to our purpose, viz. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten, unless they repent; but ye are they whom I love: therefore unless you repent, be sure I will rebuke and chasten you. As to that, 1 John i. 9. that he writes to believers, is plain, as we shall hear more afterwards; and it receives the same answer, viz. That they are to confess in order to the removal of temporary wrath. It is evident, that David's case, Psal. xxxii. is thus to be understood, of the removal of temporary strokes or chastisements. The words are, *NaSathaGnaVon Chattathi*.* The word *Nasa* properly signifies *levavit*, to take off, or ease people of burdens; and so David says, ver. 4. "Thy hand was heavy on me." The lifting off that heavy hand, which was but the hand of a father, is then the forgiving of sin, or lifting it off. *GnaVon* is rendered iniquity, according to the proper signification of the word; for it denotes the crookedness and vitiosity of the action: but it must be expounded of punishment, metonymically, as it is frequently used. So the old translation reads it, *Thou forgavest the punishment, &c.* Amesius reads it, *Sustulisti pœnam peccati mei*. And so it must needs be understood, whatever way it be translated: for God never takes away the crookedness or vitiosity of sin, for that were to make it no sin; but he takes away the punishment of it. Now, this we heard before was God's hand that was heavy on him; yet the hand of a father,

* Leigh's Crit.

not of a judge. Compare Psal. xxv. 18. "Look upon mine affliction, and my pain, and forgive all my sins. Then, says Mr. Rutherford,* sin here is pardoned only according to the present pain and grief of body and soul that was on David.

OBJECT. 2. Nathan tells David, upon his confession, and taking with guilt, that his sin was pardoned, or put away, 2 Sam. xii. 13. "The Lord also hath put away thy sin; and yet, ver. 9, 11, 12, 14. he threatens him with temporal strokes. Now, this putting away of sin, must be either as to the obligation to eternal or to temporal wrath. It cannot be the latter, because we see plainly he lies under the same: therefore the first must be said. Now, let it be marked, when it is said to be put away, even after his confession, and taking with the guilt; therefore he was actually liable to eternal wrath before his confession; and so believers lying under unrepented of sin, are actually liable to eternal punishment. ANSW. In the *first* place, It cannot be denied, but that these words are the words of Nathan, declaring by the Spirit what God had done for David; and so they are not a formal pardon, but an intimation of pardon. Now, there is a great difference betwixt these two. But if the conclusion be valid, it must be drawn from the formal forgiveness of sin after confession, which doth not at all appear here; and not from the intimation of it at that time: for a man may be freed *in foro Dei* from guilt, and yet not have it intimated to him, till some time after, and particularly till he be in the exercise of repentance; yet is he not therefore liable to eternal wrath before the Lord till that time. In the next place, It comes to be considered, in what sense David's sin is said to be put away. In respect simply of the actual obligation to eternal wrath, say the objectors. Giving, though not granting it to be so, it remains still, that here is the intimation of pardon only. And truly David's conscience being now awake, and accusing him of these gross abominations of murder and adultery, it was no wonder if he lost his sight of his interest in Christ and his justification. This being supposed, such an intimation of pardon was most seasonable, that he might have somewhat to keep him from desponding. And this intimation made by the ministry of Nathan, with some measure of the Spirit's light illustrating this, though but, as it were, with a dawning light, and some secret underpropping, was sufficient for this; though a greater influence of the Spirit was necessary in order to the full establishment of his heart in this truth which the Prophet told him. This then being supposed, we may thence judge his sin to have been pardoned before. So Luke vii. 48. Christ saith to the woman,

* Christ's Dying and Drawing, p. 34.

“Thy sins are forgiven.” Of this woman it is said, that “she washed Christ’s feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head.” After this Christ tells her, that “her sins are forgiven.” But this is nothing else than an intimation of the pardon granted before her washing Christ’s feet with her tears, &c. as is evident from ver. 47. But of this more afterwards. Hemmingius* speaking of David in this case, tells us, there were in him horrible terrors, and extreme fears; for he did fear everlasting punishment: but hearing this voice of the Prophet by the commandment of God, “Thou shalt not die, the Lord hath put away thy sin,” he turneth again unto the Lord, and repenteth; he hateth his sin, he fleeth unto mercy by faith. Ye see in what order the learned man placeth David’s pardon and repentance; and how he supposeth him under fear of everlasting punishment. But, if I mistake not, acute Beza† will not grant so much: for, says he, “When David and Peter fell so beastly, yet there is no doubt but they lamented and sorrowed, till they felt the working of their generation and sanctification: but being in their temptation, they stayed themselves upon the anchor of the testimony which the Spirit of God brought into their conscience; which caused them not to doubt, (notwithstanding their fall), but that they were the children of God, and that their fault was forgiven them.” *Thirdly*, But why must it needs be understood of putting away his sin touching the obligation to eternal wrath, and not with respect to temporary and and fatherly displeasure and chastisements? Because, say they, he still lies under temporary wrath. Let us hear holy and learned Mr. Rutherford’s judgment in this case.‡ Having laid down this assertion, Sins of youth already pardoned as touching the obligation to eternal wrath, may so rise against the child of God, as he hath need to ask forgiveness of them, as touching the removing of present wrath, seuse of the want of God’s presence, of the influence of his love, the cloud of sadness and deadness, &c.; he adds, enlarging on the same,|| “We may well say, that God pardoneth sin, when he removeth temporary wrath. So 2. Sam. xii. 13. Nathan saith to David, “The Lord also hath put away thy sin.” Why? “Thou shalt not die.” This is meant of temporal death especially, as the context cleareth, ver. 10. “The sword shall not depart from thine house;” and ver. 14. “The child born unto thee shall surely die.” Then the Lord’s putting away of David’s sin, was in loosing him from the sword, in his own person, not in his house and children.”

* Com. on Jam. ii. digress. concerning repentance. † Confess. point. 4. art. 20.

‡ Christ’s dying and drawing, p. 34.

|| *ibid*, 35, 36.

And herein do I cheerfully acquiesce. We say then, that this putting away of David's sin respects temporary wrath, though David be yet threatened with it. Now, in that temporary wrath which believers lay themselves open to by their sins, there are several particular strokes; but none of them any way for the satisfying of justice, but for correcting the offender, the terror of others, &c. And therefore the executive pardon here is capable of degrees, and may be remitted or intended, as the Lord sees meet. So that the alleviating of the chastisement, or relaxation of the fatherly punishment due to David for his murder and adultery, is that which is holden forth in these words, The Lord also hath put away thy sin;" not excluding, but rather including the other. And thus David's case herein was as of a man who by the law is punishable by death, but is only actually punished with banishment. To this purpose the worthy author just now named, explains it, and I think has proven it. I add, that it further appears, if we consider and compare ver. 5. with the text. While the thing is kept *in thesi*, David himself pronounceth the sentence on the guilty person, not knowing as yet on whose head it would alight: "The man that hath done this, shall surely die." Now, when Nathan tells him flatly, that he was the man, he found, that by his own sentence he was condemned to death; and he knowing that sentence to be according to the law of God in the case of the murderer and adulterer, it may well be supposed, that he concluded, that if men would not execute the sentence, God himself would do it. Wherefore it answers aptly to the sentence passed against himself by him, and exalts the mercy of God towards him: "He shall die," said he. "Thou shalt not die," says Nathan. Consider also the antithesis, ver. 13, 14, "Thou shalt not die. Howbeit—the child shall die; not an eternal, but a temporal death. There was great reason for both. The text tells us expressly the reason why the child should die; even because David by that deed had given great occasion to the enemy to blaspheme. Wherefore the Lord (to speak so) behoved to vindicate the glory of his holy name, shewing that sin was displeasing to him in whomsoever it be found. The other is not without great reason likewise: for God had promised to him, 2 Sam. vii. 12. that his seed, viz. Solomon, who was not yet begotten, should sit in his throne, and build the Lord's house; therefore he must not die; it was inconsistent with the faithfulness of God. That the Lord's putting away of sin, should be thus expounded of the relaxation of temporal punishment, needs not seem strange: for so it is used elsewhere in the scriptures, Neh. ix. 17, 18, 19. "But thou art (or wast) a God ready to pardon." How? Thou "forsookest them not in the

wilderness." Yet who knows not what strokes those people met with in the wilderness? But herein was pardoning mercy; the Lord forsook them not, he did not cast off his care of them, as a people peculiar to himself. We may see this yet more plainly Num. xiv. where let it be considered, what the Lord threatens that people with. It is death in the wilderness; "I will smite them with the pestilence," &c. ver. 12. "If thou shalt kill all this people, as one man," says Moses, ver. 15. "Moses in his prayer asks forgiveness for them;" "Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people," ver. 19; he prevails, "And the Lord said, I have pardoned according to thy word." But mark what follows: "Because they have tempted me these ten times, surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers." Now, what is their pardon they get, but the relaxation we speak of? They are freed from death, but are kept out of the land of Canaan, for their sin so pardoned. And David himself tells us of this way of the Lord's dealing with him, Psal. cxviii. 18. "The Lord hath chastened me sore, but he hath not given me over unto death." The same way is that to be understood, Psal. xcix. 8. "Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions." Compare Psal. cxvi. 43, 44. "They were brought low for their iniquity; nevertheless he regarded their affliction," &c.

OBJECT. 3. If believers lying under unrepented of sin be not liable actually to eternal wrath, what need is there of Christ's intercession? Yet John, 1 Epist. ii. 1. when he is directing believers what course to take for the pardon of their sin, he tells them of "an Advocate with the father" whom they are to employ; but what needs he an advocate, who is not liable to the lash of the law? To this I answer, 1. The object of Christ's intercession is confined within too narrow limits, if it be supposed only to be employed for the obtaining of the pardon of sin. Christ prayed for Peter, that his "faith might not fail." See John xiv. *per totum*. He intercedes always for his people, in whatever case they be; and I think it will not be denied, but that the benefits we enjoy, most of them come by Christ's intercession. 2. The pardon of sin, as it denotes the taking away of an actual obligation to temporary wrath, either in a total removal of the same, or a relaxation thereof, is not such a small thing as to be so overlooked. God's deserting of the soul, shooting his arrows against them, are not easy to the godly; and that they have Christ to employ for the removal of these, is no small ground of comfort. 2. There is great fallacy in that which is said, that a man not liable to eternal wrath needs not an advocate. If it be meant of liableness thereto in *actu primo*, it is true. But who

denies that they are so liable? If they mean it of liability thereto in *actu secundo*, it is false; for advocates use not to be employed for reversing a sentence of death, but to hinder it from passing. And upon this ground I say, that this doctrine is very far from invalidating the necessity of Christ's intercession; yea, it is indeed founded on the intercession of Christ: Rom. viii. 34. "Who is he that condemneth? it is Christ that died;—who also maketh intercession for us." And, if I mistake not, this scripture used against us, affords us a solid argument against the doctrine of our adversaries in this point. Which ye may take thus: Those who have always an Advocate at the right hand of the Father, who hath undertaken their defence, and never fails to gain his point, their cause cannot go wrong in heaven; but whenever an accusation comes in against them, he will undertake their cause, so that it cannot come to a sentence against them; which is the only thing that can make them actually liable to wrath: but if believers sin, they have such an Advocate: Ergo. And it is worthy of our consideration, that our Advocate is called "Jesus Christ the righteous," "But he is not (says Zanchius*) a just advocate who defends an unjust cause: but Christ defends our cause, because he is our Advocate, and he is a just Advocate. John therefore teaches, that our cause which Christ defends, is just." So he. Now, where lies the justice of the cause?—in our repentance? No; in that Christ became liable for us, and hath paid the debt, and satisfied justice; and we are now one with him. And if our cause be just, how can it go to a sentence against us, though it never be executed? A just judge will no more pass a sentence against one that has a just cause, than he will execute it. And truly it seems, that those who will have such a sentence to pass against a believer in the court of heaven, though they believe it will never be executed, do not deeply consider Christ's sitting continually at the Father's right hand, and exhibiting the merits of his death and sufferings: for if this be, how can any accusation that comes in against them proceed so far? For, as one says† well, he interrupts the accusation, and strikes in for us, Heb. vii. 25. because he hath not only died for us, and risen for us, but he follows the business to the utmost. If he does not thus effectually stop sentence passing against us, it must either be because he cannot, or because he will not. The first is more than absurd; if the latter be said, it is like it will be alleged that it is because we do not employ him, and so the oil must come from earth to anoint the wheels of his compassion towards those persons, for whom he poured out his blood while they were yet enemies. And if his in-

* Com. in loc.

† Cotton in loc.

tercession in this case depends upon our motion, why not in other cases also? And so we shall never exercise faith nor repentance more: but these are undeniably the fruits of his intercession, as well as freedom from condemnation; for we cannot employ him but by faith. If any shall say, that if Christ's intercession do stop the sentence of eternal wrath's passing, why does it not hinder the believer's actual liableness to temporary strokes? I answer, The reason is obvious; because temporary strokes to believers are merely correctory, and, according to God's dispensation, cannot be wanted, Is. xxvii. 6; but eternal wrath is not so. And I think it is no solecism to say, that as the taking off of temporal strokes in due time, so the laying them on in due season, is a fruit of Christ's intercession.

OBJECT. ult. This doctrine opens a gap to licentiousness and carnal security, and therefore cannot be of God. ANSW. I take notice, that the Apostle hath the same objected to him against this doctrine, Rom. vi. 15. and therefore I say, with him, God forbid, &c. But, 1. In such sins as so waste the conscience that they blind men as to their state, there is no place for this objection; for then the man looks on himself *de facto* as liable to eternal wrath; but *de jure* he cannot so look on himself. And why should this seem strange? for "will a man speak wickedly for God?" 2. Is not the same objection to be retorted on the adversaries who side not with Arminians, &c.? does not their doctrine upon the same ground lie open to this calumny? for, according to them, the punishment shall never be executed. If a man had the privilege that he should never be actually liable to capital punishment, then you will say, that man may do what he pleaseth without control, I say, on the other hand, if a man be so privileged, as that although ten thousand sentences of death pass upon him, yet they shall never be executed, upon the same ground he may do what he pleaseth: for, at most, there is but *magis* and *minus* betwixt them, *quæ non variant speciem*; and so they shall both be licentious doctrines, though the one more than the other. 3. I suppose it can scarcely be denied, but that temporal strokes, or the fear of them, may be curbs to our licentious humours *suo quodam modo*; though, without restraining grace, the fear of ten thousand hells will not be sufficient to hold in a man from the pursuit of his lusts. But why may not fear of death help to keep the church from murmuring at cross dispensations in life, Lam. iii. 39. and the fear of a whale's belly the second time make Jonah to go to Nineveh? That which truly seems to be the ground of this objection, is, the not considering what is the extent and power of God's fatherly displeasure to which believers are made

actually liable by their sins. The pondering of this aright would silence such objectors. Temporal strokes, the effects of God's fatherly displeasure, are not confined to strokes upon our bodies, or crosses in our outward estate; though indeed sicknesses of several sorts, poverty, losses, &c. yea and death, are not very light things, but such, as the prospect of them may make a stout heart to stagger. But these strokes reach the soul likewise; and strokes upon the soul are very heavy. They may all come under the general name of desertion; which spreads itself into innumerable branches, such as, want of communion with God, a wounded spirit, yea the arrows of the Almighty driven into the soul, and their poison drinking up the spirit, &c. I add, the Lord's suffering men to fall into one sin, and that sometimes a very gross sin or sins, for a correction of them because of former miscarriages; as David's security was punished with his being suffered to fall into murder and adultery; Peter's self-confidence, with denying his master. All these the godly make themselves actually liable to by unrepented of sin. And it is well worth our noticing, that here is something in the obligation to temporary wrath, that is more to be feared than hell, if so be that sin be the greatest evil; which I hope no serious soul will deny. I thus think, and thus will ever preach. It is more bitter to sin against Christ, than to suffer the torments of hell, said Chrysostom.* Anselm said, that if on the one side were presented unto him the evil of sin, and on the other side, the torments of hell, he would rather choose to fall into hell, than to fall into sin. Now, I refer it to the judgment of any godly, if, these and the like things considered, the doctrine we maintain be chargeable justly with opening a gap to licentiousness? I shall not dispute here, whether or not the temporary wrath which is inflicted on the godly, be the same essentially with that which is poured out upon the damned. But sure I am David calls those strokes that had been upon him, "the pains of hell," Psal cxvi. 3. Job speaks very terribly of them, Job vi. 4. "For the arrows of the Almighty are within me," &c. Heman gives the same name to what was upon him that the Psalmist gives to what comes on reprobates, Psal. lxxxviii. 16. compared with Psal. lviii. 9. The word in both places is *Charon*; † only the godly man Heman hath it in the plural number. Lastly, We say this doctrine gives true gospel liberty; which perhaps the contrary doth not; and it is our duty to "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free;" which if we will hear Zacharias in his song, Luke i. 74. is, "that we, being delivered from all our ene-

* Citante Bolton, Dead saint speaking, p. 10.

† From *Charah*, *exarsit*.

mies, might serve him without fear. And if we would know what enemies we are delivered from, the apostle tells us, the law is one of them, as it curseth and condemneth the sinner, Gal. iii. 13. And as we answer Arminians, Papists, and other enemies of Christian assurance, when they object, That it is a pillar of security; so I positively affirm, that this doctrine is so far from being justly chargeable therewith, that it is a most strong inducement to gospel-obedience, and a strick walk with God; I mean, to a gospel spirit. So that I fear not to say with Dr Preston,* he that hath the strongest faith, he that believeth in the greatest degree the promise of pardon and remission of sins, hath the holiest heart and the holiest life. And I think it is worthy of our observation, that Paul never groaned more deeply under the body of death, than in the midst of the discourse of a believer's being dead to the law, and freed from condemnation: Rom. vii. 24. compared with chap. vii. 1, &c. and viii. 1. The scripture is very plain in teaching us, that it was Christ's design in bringing his people from under the law, that they might be employed in new obedience, Rom vii. 4, 6. And surely it doth not fail. Nothing hath greater influence on gospel obedience than love; love is a strong cord to draw souls to a holy walk, 2 Cor. v. 14. "For the love of Christ [whether ye understand it subjectively or objectively, it is all one to the purpose] constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead;"† *i. e.* legally dead, as is clear from the antithesis. Yet it cannot be meant of the actual execution of the sentence upon us; therefore only of this actual liableness to death. And indeed this is the very force of the Apostle's argument, how can that love but constrain us, seeing by him we have been freed from the obligation to eternal wrath, in which respect we were dead? dead juridically, says Mr. Pool.‡ We were all as dead condemned persons, because he died in our stead. But more of this afterwards. I shall conclude with that saying of Mr. Merriton|| in his sermon of Christ's humiliation, "Sin is done away by this blood [of Christ], as it binds over to wrath and punishment. Sin may remain, but it shall not condemn, if the channel of Christ's blood runs through thy soul, thou hast shut the gulf as to condemnation."

* New cov. p. 144.

† *Alludit ad vatam furorem.* Beza.

‡ Morning exercise 1659 p. 347.

|| p. 302.