

S E R M O N S.

SERMON I.*

A VISION OF UNCHANGEABLE, FREE MERCY, IN SENDING
THE MEANS OF GRACE TO UNDESERVING SINNERS.

WHEREUNTO IS ANNEXED,

A COUNTRY ESSAY FOR THE PRACTICE OF CHURCH
GOVERNMENT THERE.

And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us.—Acts xvi. 9.

THE kingdom of Jesus Christ is frequently in the Scripture compared to growing things;^a small in the beginning and first appearance, but increasing by degrees unto glory and perfection. The shapeless stone^b cut out without hands, having neither form, nor desirable beauty given unto it, becomes a great mountain, filling the whole earth; Dan. ii. 35. The small vine brought out of Egypt, quickly covers the hills with her shadow, her boughs reach unto the sea, and her branches unto the rivers; Psal. lxxx. 8. The tender plant^c becomes as the cedars of God; and the grain of mustard-seed to be a tree for the fowls of the air to make their nests in the branches thereof. Mountains are made plains before it, every valley is filled, and the crooked paths made straight, that it may have a passage to its appointed period: and all this, not only not supported by outward advantages, but in direct opposition to the combined power^d of this whole creation, as fallen, and in subjection to the ‘god of this world,’ the head thereof. As Christ was ‘a tender plant,’^e seemingly easy to be broken, and ‘a root

* This sermon was preached before the honourable house of commons, April 29, 1646, being the day of public humiliation.

^a Ecclesia sicut luna defectus habet, et ortus frequentes; sed defectibus suis crevit, &c. hæc est vera luna, quæ de fratris sui luce perpetua, lumen sibi immortalitatis et gratiæ mutuatur. Amb. Hex. lib. 4. cap. 2. Psal. lxxviii. 13.

^b Isa. liv. 11. Zech. iv. 7.

^c Isa. lili. 3—5.

^d 1 John iii. 13. Rev. ii. 10. 2 Cor. iv. 4.

^e Isa. lili. 2.

out of a dry ground,' not easily flourishing, yet liveth for ever;^f so his people and kingdom, though as a 'lily among thorns,'^g as 'sheep among wolves,'^h as a 'turtledove among a multitude of devourers,'ⁱ yet stands unshaken, at least unshivered.

The main ground and foundation of all this is laid out, ver. 6—9. of this chapter, containing a rich discovery how all things here below, especially such as concern the gospel and church of Christ, are carried along through innumerable varieties, and a world of contingencies, according to the regular motions and goings forth of a free, eternal, unchangeable decree: as all inferior orbs, notwithstanding the eccentricities and irregularities of their own inhabitants, are orderly carried about by the first mover.

In ver. 6. the planters of the gospel are 'forbid to preach the word in Asia'^k (that part of it peculiarly so called), and ver. 7. assaying to go with the same message into Bithynia, they are crossed by the Spirit in their attempts; but in my text, are called to a place, on which their thoughts were not at all fixed: which calling, and which forbidding, were both subservient to his free determination, who 'worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will;' Ephes. i. 11.

And no doubt but in the dispensation of the gospel throughout the world, unto this day, there is the like conformity to be found to the pattern of God's eternal decrees; though to the messengers not made known aforehand by revelation, but discovered in the effects, by the mighty working of Providence.

Amongst other nations, this is the day of England's visitation, 'the day-spring from on high having visited this people,' and 'the sun of righteousness arising upon us, with healing in his wings,'^l a man of England hath prevailed for assistance, and the free grace of God hath wrought us help by the gospel.

Now in this day three things are to be done, to keep up our spirits unto this duty, of bringing down our souls by humiliation.

^f Heb. vii. 25.

^g Cant. ii. 2.

^h Matt. x. 16.

ⁱ Psal. lxxiv. 19.

^k Eo ipso tempore quo ad omnes gentes prædicatio evangelii mittebatur, quædam loca apostolis adire prohibebatur ab eo, qui vult omnes homines salvos fieri. Prosp. Ep. ad Rufin. Διὸς δ' ἐπιτέλειτο βουλὴ. Hom.

^l Mal. iv. 2.

First, To take us off the pride of our own performances, endeavours, or any adherent worth of our own. ‘Not for your sakes do I this, said the Lord; be it known unto you, be ye ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel’ [O house of England]; Ezek. xxxvi. 32.

Secondly, To root out that atheistical corruption, which depresses the thoughts of men, not permitting them in the highest products of Providence, to look above contingencies, and secondary causes; though God ‘hath wrought all our works for us;’ Isa. xxvi. 12. and ‘known unto him are all his works from the beginning of the world;’ Acts xv. 18.

Thirdly, To shew that the bulk of this people are as yet in the wilderness, far from their resting place, like sheep upon the mountains, as once Israel, Jer. l. 6. as yet wanting help by the gospel.

The two first of these will be cleared, by discovering how that all revolutions here below, especially every thing that concerns the dispensation of the gospel and kingdom of the Lord Jesus, are carried along, according to the eternally fixed purpose of God, free in itself, taking neither rise, growth, cause, nor occasion, from any thing amongst the sons of men.

The third, by laying open the helpless condition of gospel-wanting souls, with some particular application, to all which my text directly leads me.

The words in general are the relation of a message from heaven unto Paul, to direct him in the publishing of the gospel, as to the place, and persons wherein, and to whom he was to preach. And in them you have these four things:

1. The manner of it; it was by vision. ‘A vision appeared.’
2. The time of it. ‘In the night.’
3. The bringer of it. ‘A man of Macedonia.’
4. The matter of it. Help for the Macedonians, interpreted, ver. 10. to be by preaching of the gospel.

A little clearing of the words will make way for observations.

1. For the manner of the delivery of this message; it was by vision. Of all the ways that God used of old, to reveal himself unto any in an extraordinary manner, which were sundry and various, Heb. i. 1, there was no one so frequent as this of vision. Wherein this did properly consist, and

whereby it was distinguished from other ways of the discovery of the secrets of the Lord, I shall not now discuss. In general, visions are revelations of the mind of the Lord, concerning some hidden things, present or future, and not otherwise to be known. And they were of two sorts:

(1.) Revelations merely by word,^m or some other more internal species,ⁿ without any outward sensible appearance, which, for the most part, was the Lord's way of proceeding with the prophets; which transient light, or discovery of things before unknown, they called a vision.^o

(2.) Revelations accompanied with some sensible apparitions, and that either,

[1.] Of things, as usually among the prophets, rods and pots,^p wheels and trees,^q lamps, axes, vessels, rams, goats, and the like, were presented unto them.

[2.] Of persons, and those, according to the variety of them, of three sorts.

1st. Of the second person of the Trinity : and this either,

(1st.) In respect of some glorious beams of his Deity, as to Isaiah, chap. vi. 1. with John xii. 41. ; to Daniel, chap. x. ver. 5, 6. as afterward to John, Rev. i. 13—15. to which you may add the apparitions of the glory of God, not immediately designing the second person, as Ezek. i.

(2dly.) With reference to his humanity to be assumed, as to Abraham, Gen. xviii. 1, 2. to Joshua, chap. v. 13—15, &c.

2dly. Of angels, as unto Peter, Acts xii. 7. to the woman, Matt. xxviii. 2. to John, Rev. xxii. 8, &c.

3dly. Of men,^r as in my text.

Now the several advancements of all these ways in dignity and pre-eminence, according as they clearly make out intellectual verity, or according to the honour and exaltation of that whereof apparition is made, is too fruitless a speculation^s for this day's exercise.

Our vision is of the latter sort, accompanied with a sensible appearance, and is called *ὄραμα*. There be two words in the New Testament signifying vision, *ὄραμα*, and *ὄπτασία*, coming from different verbs, but both signifying to see. Some distinguish them, and say that *ὄπτασία* is a vision, *καθ'*

^m Isa. i. 1.

ⁿ Amos i. 1.

^o Nahum i. 1. Obad. i.

^p Jer. i. 11, 13.

^q Ezek. i. 5—7.

Zech. i. 8. iii. 9, 10, &c.

Dan. vii. 8, 9.

^r Zech. ii. 1.

^s Vid. Aquin. 2. 2. q. 171. art. 3, 4. Scot. in dist. tert.

ὄραρ, an appearance to a man awake; ὄραμα καθ' ὄραρ, an appearance to a man asleep, called sometimes a dream, Job xxxiii. 15. like that which was made to Joseph, Matt. ii. 19. But this distinction will not hold, our Saviour calling that vision, which his disciples had at his transfiguration, when doubtless they were waking, ὄραμα, Matt. xvii. 9. So that I conceive Paul had his vision waking; and the night is specified as the time thereof, not to intimate his being asleep, but rather his watchfulness, seeking counsel of God in the night, which way he should apply himself in the preaching of the gospel. And such I suppose was that of latter days, whereby God revealed to Zuinglius a strong confirmation of the doctrine of the Lord's supper, from Exod. xii. 11. against the factors for that monstrous figment of transubstantiation.

2. For the second, or time of this vision, I need say no more, than what before I intimated.

3. The bringer of the message, ἀνὴρ τις ἦν Μακεδὼν ἰστώς, he was a man of Macedonia in a vision: the Lord made an appearance unto him, as of a man of Macedonia, discovering even to his bodily eyes a man, and to his mind, that he was to be conceived as a man of Macedonia. This was, say some,^t an angel; the tutelar angel of the place, say the popish expositors,^v or the genius of the place, according to the phrase of the heathens, of whom they learned their demonology; perhaps him, or his antagonist, that not long before appeared to Brutus^u at Philippi. But these are pleasing dreams: us it may suffice, that it was the appearance of a man, the mind of Paul being enlightened to apprehend him as a man^w of Macedonia; and that with infallible assurance, such as usually accompanieth divine revelations in them to whom they are made, as Jer. xxiii. 28. for upon it Luke affirmeth, ver. 10. they assuredly concluded, that the Lord called them into Macedonia.

4. The message itself is a discovery of the want of the Macedonians, and the assistance they required, which the Lord was willing should be imparted unto them. Their want is not expressed, but included in the assistance de-

^t Mede. Apost. of later times.

^v A Lapide, Sanctius in locum, &c.

^u Plutarch. in vit. Bruti.

^w Calvin. in locum. Dicebat se discernere, (nescio quo sapore, quem verbis explicare non poterat) quid interesset inter Deum revelantem, &c. Aug. confes.

sired, and the person unto whom for it they were directed. Had it been to help them in their estates, they should scarcely have been sent to Paul, who, I believe, might for the most part say with Peter, ‘Silver and gold have I none.’^x Or had it been with a complaint, that they, who from a province of Greece, in a corner of Europe, had on a sudden been exalted into the empire of the eastern world, were now enslaved to the Roman power and oppression, they might better have gone to the Parthians, then the only state in the world formidable to the Romans. Paul, though a military man, yet fought not with Nero’s legions, the then visible devil of the upper world; but with legions of hell, of whom the earth was now to be cleared.^y It must be a soul-want, if he be intrusted with the supplying of it. And such this was, help from death, hell, Satan, from the jaws of that devouring lion. Of this the Lord makes them here to speak, what every one in that condition ought to speak, Help for the Lord’s sake; it was a call to preach the gospel.

The words being opened, we must remember what was said before of their connexion with the verses foregoing; wherein the preachers of the gospel are expressly hindered, from above, from going to other places, and called hither. Whereof no reason is assigned, but only the will of him that did employ them; and that no other can be rendered, I am farther convinced, by considering the empty conjectures of attempters.

God foresaw that they would oppose the gospel, says our Beda. So, say I, might he of all nations in the world, had not he determined to send his effectual grace^z for the removal of that opposition; besides, he grants the means of grace to despisers, Matt. xi. 21. They were not prepared for the gospel, says Oecumenius. As well, say I, as the Corinthians, whose preparations you may see, 1 Cor. vi. 9—11. or any other nation, as we shall afterward declare: yet to this foolish conjecture adhere the Papists and Arminians.^a God

^x Acts iii. 6.

^y Plutarch de defect. oracu.

Ἐβραῖος κέλεται με παῖς μακάρεσσιν ἀνάσσειν,
Τὸν δὲ δόμον προλιπεῖν καὶ ὁδὸν πάλιν αὐτοῖς ἐκίσταει.

Respons. Apoll. apud Euseb. Niceph.

^z A nullo duro corde resistitur, quia cor ipsum emollit. Aug. Ezek. xxxvi. 26.

Deut. xxx. 6.

^a Lapide. Sanctius in loc. Rom. Script. Synd. ar. 1.

would have those places left for to be converted by John, says Sedulius; yet the church at Ephesus, the chief city of those parts, was planted by Paul, says Ignatius and Irenæus.^b He foresaw a famine to come upon those places, says Origen; from which he would deliver his own, and therefore, it seems, left them to the power of the devil. More such fancies^c might we recount, of men unwilling to submit to the will of God; but upon that, as the sole discriminating cause of these things, we rest, and draw these three observations:

I. The rule whereby all things are dispensed here below, especially in the making out of the means of grace, is the determinate will and counsel of God. Stay not in Asia, go not into Bithynia, but come to Macedonia, ‘even so, O Father, for so,’ &c.

II. The sending of the gospel to any nation, place, or persons, rather than others, as the means of life and salvation, is of the mere free grace, and good pleasure of God. ‘Stay not in Asia,’ &c.

III. No men in the world want help, like them that want the gospel. ‘Come and help us.’

I. Begin we with the first of these: The rule whereby, &c. All events and effects, especially concerning the propagation of the gospel, and the church of Christ, are in their greatest variety, regulated by the eternal purpose and counsel of God.^d

All things below in their events are but the wax,^e whereon the eternal seal of God’s purpose hath left its own impression; and they every way answer unto it. It is not my mind to extend this to the generality of things in the world, nor to shew how the creature can by no means deviate from that eternal rule of providence whereby it is guided; no more than an arrow can avoid the mark, after it hath received the impression of an unerring hand; or well-ordered wheels not turn, according to the motion given them by the master-spring; or the wheels in Ezekiel’s vision^f move irregularly

^b Ὑμέας μὲν οὖν ἐστὶ τοιοῦτοι, ὑπὸ τοιῶνδε παιδευτῶν σταχυαῖοις Παύλῳ τῷ Χριστοφόρῳ. Ignat. Epist. ad Ep. Iren. lib. 3. cap. 3.

^c Qui causam quæ sit voluntatis divinæ, aliquid majus eo quarit. Aug. Voluntas Dei nullo modo causam habet. Aquin. p. q. 12. a. 3.

^d Θεία πάντων ἀρχή, δι’ ἧς ἅπαντα καὶ ἐστὶ, καὶ διαμοῖται. Theophrast. apud Picum. De prov.

^e Providentia est ratio ordinis rerum ad finem. Th. p. q. 22. a. 1. 6.

^f Ezek. i.

to the spirit of life that was in them. Nor yet, secondly, how that, on the other side, doth no way prejudice the liberty of second causes,^g in their actions, agreeable to the natures they are indued withal. He who made and preserves the fire, and yet hinders not, but that it should burn, or act necessarily agreeable to its nature; by his making, preserving, and guiding of men, hindereth not, yea, effectually causeth, that they work freely, agreeable to their nature. Nor yet, thirdly, to clear up what a strait line runs through all the darkness, confusion, and disorder in the world,^h how absolutely, in respect of the first fountain, and last tendency of things, there is neither deformity, fault, nor deviation, every thing that is amiss consisting in the transgression of a moral rule, which is the sin of the creature,ⁱ the first cause being free; as he that causeth a lame man to go, is the cause of his going, but not of his going lame; or the sun exhaling a smell from the kennel, is the cause of the smell, but not of its noisomeness; for from a garden his beams raise a sweet savour. Nothing is amiss but what goeth off from its own rule; which he cannot do, who will do all his pleasure,^k and knows no other rule.

But omitting these things, I shall tie my discourse to that which I chiefly aimed at in my proposition, viz. to discover how the great variety which we see in the dispensation of the means of grace, proceedeth from, and is regulated by, some eternal purpose of God, unfolded in his word. To make out this, we must lay down three things.

1. The wonderful variety in dispensing of the outward means of salvation, in respect of them unto whom they were granted, used by the Lord since the fall: I say, since the fall, for the grace of preserving from sin, and continuing with God, had been general, universally extended to every creature; but for the grace of rising from sin, and coming again unto God, that is made exceeding various, by some distinguishing purpose.

g Non tantum res, sed rerum modos.

h Videtur ergo quod non sit aliqua deordinatio, deformitas, aut peccatum simpliciter in toto universo, sed tantummodo respectu interiorum causarum, ordinationem superioris causæ volentium, licet non valentium, perturbare. Brad. de caus. Dei. lib. 1. cap. 34.

i Ἡ ἀμαρτία ἐστὶν ἡ ἀνομία.

k Adeo summa justitiæ regula est Dei voluntas, ut quicquid vult, o ipso quod vult, justum habendum sit. Aug. Isa. xlvi. 10.

2. That this outward dispensation being presupposed, yet in effectual working upon particular persons, there is no less variety, for ‘ he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy.’

3. Discover the rules of this whole administration.

1. For the first, The promise was at first made unto Adam, and by him doubtless conveyed to his issue, and preached to the several generations, which his eyes beheld, proceeding from his own loins; but yet the wickedness of the old world,¹ all flesh corrupting their ways, we may easily collect, that the knowledge of it quickly departed from the most, sin banishing the love of God from their hearts, hindered the knowledge of God from continuing in their minds. After many revivings,^m by visions, revelations, and covenants, it was at length called in from the wide world, and wholly restrained to the house, family, and seed of Abraham,ⁿ with whom alone all the means of grace continued, for thrice fourteen generations; they alone were in Goshen, and all the world besides in thick darkness; the dew of heaven was on them as the fleece, when else all the earth was dry. ‘ God shewed his word unto Jacob, his statutes and judgments unto Israel, he hath not dealt so with any nation;’ Psal. cxli. 19, 20. The prerogative of the Jews was chiefly in this, that to them were committed the oracles of God, Rom. iii. ‘ To them pertained the adoption, and the glory, the covenants, and the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises;’ Rom. ix. 4. But when the fulness^o of time came, the Son of God being sent in the likeness of sinful flesh, drew all men unto him; and God, who had before winked at the time of their ignorance, then called them every where to repent, commanding the gospel to be preached to the universality of reasonable creatures, and the way of salvation to be proclaimed unto all; upon which, in few years, the sound of the gospel went out into all nations,^p and the sun of righteousness

¹ Gen. iii. 15. iv. 26.

^m Gen. vi. 5.

ⁿ Gen. v. 21. vi. 18.

^o Gen. xii. 1. xviii. 1, 2. Psal. lxxvi. 1, 2. John iv. 22. Gal. iv. 1. John xii. 32. Acts xvii. 30. Mark xvi. 15. Mal. iii. 1. Prov. viii. 31.

^p See Tertullian, lib. ad. Jud. Reckoning almost all the known nations of the world, and affirming that they all, that is, some in them, in his days, submitted to the sceptre of Christ. He lived in the end of the second century.

displayed his beams upon the habitable parts of the earth. But yet once more this light, by Satan and his agents, persecutors, and seducers, is almost extinguished, as was foretold, 2 Thes. ii. remaining but in few places, and burning dim where it was, the kingdom of the beast being full of darkness; Rev. xvi. 10. Yet God again raiseth up reformers, and by them kindles a light, we hope, never to be put out. But alas, what a spot of ground doth this shine on, in comparison of the former vast extents and bounds of the Christian world! Now is all this variety, think you, to be ascribed unto chance, as the philosopher thought the world was made by a casual concurrence of atoms? Or hath the idol free-will, with the new goddess contingency, ruled in these dispensations? Truly neither the one nor the other, no more than the fly raised the dust by sitting on the chariot wheel; but all these things have come to pass, according to a certain unerring rule, given them by God's determinate purpose and counsel.

2. Presupposing this variety in the outward means, how is it that thereupon one is taken, another left? The promise is made known to Cain and Abel; one the first murderer, the other the first martyr. Jacob and Esau had the same outward advantages, but the one becomes Israel, the other Edom, the one inherits the promises, the other sells his right for a mess of pottage. At the preaching of our Saviour, some believed, some blasphemed; some said he was 'a good man, others said, nay, but he deceived the people.' Have we not the word in its power this day, and do we not see the like various effects, some continuing in impenitency, others in sincerity closing with Jesus Christ? Now what shall we say to these things? What guides these wheels? Who thus steers his word for the good of souls? Why this also, as I said before, is from some peculiarly distinguishing purpose of the will of God.

3. To open the third thing proposed, I shall shew, (1.) That all this variety is according to God's determinate purpose, and answereth thereunto. (2.) The particular purposes from whence this variety proceedeth.

(1.) Ephes. i. 11. 'He worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will.' As a man may be said to

erect a fabric^a according to the counsel of his will, when he frameth it before in his mind, and maketh all things in event answer his preconceived platform. All things (especially τὰ πάντα, all those things of which the apostle there treateth, gospel-things) have their futurition, and manner of being, from his eternal purpose:^r whence also is the idea in the mind of God, of all things with their circumstances,^s that shall be: that is the first mover, continuing itself immoveable, giving to every thing a regular motion, according to the impression which from that it doth receive: 'For known unto him are all his works from the beginning of the world;' Acts xv. 18.

If any attendants of actions might free and exempt them from the regular dependance we insist upon, they must be either contingency, or sin; but yet for both these we have, besides general rules, clear, particular instances. What seems more contingent and casual, than the unadvised slaying of a man, with the fall of the head of an axe from the helve, as a man was cutting wood by the way side? Deut. xix. 5. Yet God assumes this as his own work, Exod. xxiii. 13. The same may be said of free agents, and their actions. And for the other, see Acts iv. 27, 28. in the crucifying of the Son of God's love, all things came to pass according as his counsel had before determined that it should be done. Now how in the one of these liberty is not abridged, the nature of things not changed in the other, sin is not countenanced,^v belongs not to this discourse. 'The counsel of the Lord then standeth for ever, and the thoughts of his heart are unto all generations;' Psal. xxxiii. 12. 'His counsel standeth, and he will do all his pleasure;' Isa. xlvi. 10. 'For he is the Lord, and he changeth not;' Mal. iii. 6. 'With him is neither variableness nor shadow of turning;' James i. 17. All things that are, come to pass in

^a Piscat. in loc.

^r Πάντα δὲ λέγω, τὰ ὅσα ἐφ' ἡμῶν, τὰ γὰρ ἐφ' ἡμῶν, οὐ τῆς προνοίας, ἀλλὰ τοῦ ἡμετέρου αὐτεξουσίου. Damascin. satis impie.

^s Matt. x. 29. Job xiv. 5. Prov. xvi. 33. Prov. xvi. 1. 30. xix. 21. Nihil fit nisi omnipotens fieri velit, vel ipse faciendo, vel sinendo ut fiat. Aug.

^v Gen. iv. 5—7. 1 Kings xxii. 19—21. 2 Kings v. 18, 19. Psal. lxxvi. 10. Eccles. vii. 26. Isa. vi. 9—11, &c.

^v Deus non operatur in malis, quod ei displicet; sed operatur per eos quod ei placet, recipiuntur vero non pro eo, quod Deus bene natus est ipsorum operibus malis, sed pro eo, quod ipsi male abusi sunt Dei operibus bonis. Fulgent. ad Monim.

that unchangeable method, in which he hath laid them down from all eternity.

(2.) Let us look peculiarly upon the purposes according to which the dispensations of the gospel, both in sending and withholding it, do proceed.

[1.] For the not sending of the means of grace unto any people, whereby they hear not the joyful sound of the gospel, but have in all ages followed dumb idols, as many do unto this day.

In this chapter of which we treat, the gospel is forbidden to be preached in Asia and Bithynia; which restraint, the Lord by his providence, as yet continues to many parts of the world. Now the purpose from whence this proceedeth, and whereby it is regulated, you have Rom. ix. 22. 'What if God willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long suffering the vessels of his wrath fitted to destruction:' compared with Matt. xi. 25, 26. 'Thou hast hid these things from the prudent and wise, even so, O Father, for so it seemed good before thee;' and with Acts xiv. 16. He suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.* Now God's not sending the truth, hath the same design and aim with his sending the efficacy of error, viz. 'That they all may be damned,' who have it not: 'there being no other name under heaven, whereby they may be saved,' but only that which is not revealed unto them; God in the meantime, being no more the cause^x of their sins, for which they incur damnation, than the sun is the cause of cold and darkness, which follow the absence thereof: or he is the cause of a man's imprisonment for debt, who will not pay his debt for him, though he be no way obliged so to do. So then the not sending of the gospel to any people, is an act regulated by that eternal purpose of God, whereby he determineth to advance the glory of his justice, by permitting some men to sin, to continue in their sin, and for sin to send them to their own place: as a king's not sending a pardon to condemned malefactors, is an issue of his purpose, that they shall die

* 2 Thess. ii. Acts. iv.

^x Liberatur pars hominum, parte pereunte. Sed cur horum misertus sit Deus, illorum non misertus, quæ scientia comprehendere potest? Latet discretionis ratio, sed non latet ipsa discretio. Prosp. de Vocat. Gen.

for their faults. When you see the gospel strangely, and through wonderful varieties, and unexpected providences, carried away from a people, know that the spirit which moves in those wheels, is that purpose of God which we have recounted.

[2.] To some people, to some nations, the gospel is sent: God calls them to repentance and acknowledgment of the truth, as in my text, Macedonia: and England, the day wherein we breathe. Now there is in this a twofold aim: 1. Peculiar, towards some in their conversion. 2. General, towards all for conviction. And therefore it is acted according to a twofold purpose, which carries it along, and is fulfilled thereby.

1st. His purpose of saving^a some in and by Jesus Christ, effectually to bring them unto himself, for the praise of his glorious grace. Upon whomsoever the seal of the Lord is stamped, that God knows them, and owns them as his, to them he will cause his gospel to be revealed. Acts xviii. 10. Paul is commanded to abide at Corinth, and to preach there, because God had much people in that city: though the devil had them in present possession,^b yet they were God's in his eternal counsel. And such as these they were, for whose sake the man of Macedonia is sent on his message. Have you never seen the gospel hover about a nation, now and then about to settle, and anon scared and upon wing again; yet working through difficulties, making plains of mountains, and filling valleys, overthrowing armies, putting aliens to flight, and at length taking firm root like the cedars of God? Truly if you have not, you are strangers to the place wherein you live. Now what is all this, but the working of the purpose of God to attain its proposed end of gathering his saints to himself? In effectual working of grace also for conversion and salvation, whence do you think it takes its rule and determination, in respect of particular objects, that it should be directed to John, not Judas; Simon Peter, not Simon Magus? Why only from this discriminating^c counsel of God from eternity, to bring

^a Rom. viii. 28, 29. Ephes. i. 4. 2 Tim. ii. 19.

^b Ephes. ii. 1. 11.

^c Non ob aliud dicit, non vos me elegistis, sed ego vos elegi, nisi quia non elegerunt eum, ut eligeret eos; sed ut eligerent eum, elegit eos. Non quia præsavit eos credituros, sed quia facturus ipse fuerit credentes. Electi sunt itaque

the one, and not the other to himself by Christ. 'The Lord added to the church such as should be saved;' Acts ii. 47. The purpose of saving is the rule of adding to the church of believers. And Acts xiii. 48. 'As many believed as were ordained to eternal life.' There fore-ordaining to life eternal, gives them right to faith and belief. The purpose of God's election, is the rule of dispensing saving grace.

2dly. His purpose of leaving some inexcusable^d in their sins for the farther manifestation of his glorious justice, is the rule of dispensing the word unto them. Did you never see the gospel sent, or continued to an unthankful people,^e bringing forth no fruits meet for it? Wherefore it is so sent, see Isa. vi. 9, 10. which prophecy you have fulfilled, John xii. 41, 42. in men described, Jude 4. and 1 Pet. ii. 8. But here we must strike sail, the waves swell, and it is no easy task to sail in this gulf. The righteousness of God is a great mountain, easy to be seen; but his judgments like the great deep: who can search into the bottom thereof? Psal. xxxvi. 6. And so I have I hope discovered how all things here below, concerning the promulgation of the gospel, are, in their greatest variety, straightly regulated by the eternal purposes and counsel of God.

The uses of it follow.

Use 1. To discover whence it is, that the work of reforming the worship of God, and settling the almost departing gospel, hath so powerfully been carried along in this nation; that a beautiful fabric is seen to arise in the midst of all oppositions, with the confusion of axes and hammers sounding about it, though the builders have been forced oftentimes, not only with one hand, but with both to hold the weapons^f of war; that although the wheels of our chariots have been knocked off, and they driven heavily, yet the regular motions of the superior wheels of providence have carried on the design, towards the resting-place aimed at; that the ship hath been directed to the port, though the

ante mundi constitutionem, eâ prædestinatione, quâ Deus ipse sua futura facta prævidit: electi sunt autem de mundo eâ vocatione, quâ Deus id, quod prædestinavit, implevit. August. de bon. persever. cap. 16, 17.

^d Matt. xi. 21. Acts xiii. 46.

^e Luke ii. 34. 1 Pet. i. 7. Ezck. ii. 5. Matt. xxiv. 15. Rom. ix. 23.

^f Nehem. iv. 17.

storm had quite puzzled the pilots and mariners: even from hence, that all this great variety was but to work out one certain, fore-appointed end, proceeding in the tracts and paths, which were traced out for it from eternity; which though they have seemed to us a maze or labyrinth, such a world of contingencies, and various chances hath the work passed through; yet, indeed, all the passages thereof have been regular and straight, answering the platform laid down for the whole in the counsel of God. Daniel, chap. ix. makes his supplication for the restoration of Jerusalem, ver. 23. an angel is sent to tell him, that ‘at the beginning of his supplication the commandment came forth,’ viz. that it should be accomplished; it was before determined, and is now set on work: but yet what mountains^g of opposition, what hinderances lay in the way? Cyrus must come to the crown, by the death or slaughter of Darius;^h his heart be moved to send some to the work: in a short time Cyrus is cut off; now difficulties arise from the following kings: what their flattering counsellors, what the malignant nations about them conspired, the books of Nehemiah and Ezra sufficiently declare. Whence, ver. 25. the angel tells Daniel, that from ‘the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem unto Messiah the prince, shall be seven weeks, and sixty-two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall in troublesome times;’ that is, it shall be seven weeks to the finishing of Jerusalem, and thence to Messiah the prince, sixty-two weeks: seven weeks, that is, forty-nine years; for so much it was, from the decree of Cyrus,ⁱ to the finishing of the wall by Nehemiah: of which time the temple, as the Jews affirmed, was all but three years in

^g Zech. iv. 7.

^h Scal. de Emend. Temp.

ⁱ I follow in this the vulgar or common account, otherwise there is no part of Scripture chronology so contended about as these weeks of Daniel: most concluding, that they are terminated in the death of Christ, happening about the midst of the last week. But about their original, or rise, there is no small debate, of the four decrees made by the Persian kings about the building of Jerusalem, viz. 1st. By Cyrus, 2 Chron. iii. 6. 2dly. By Darius, Ezek. vi. 3. 3dly. By Artaxerxes, Ezek. vii. Of the same to Nehemiah, chap. ii. following the account of their reign set down in profane stories, the last only holds exactly. Tertullian ad Iud. begins it from Darius, when this vision appeared to Daniel, whom it seems he conceived to be Darius Hystaspes, that followed the Magi, and not Medus, that was before Cyrus: and so with a singular kind of chronology makes up his account. Vid. Euseb. Demon. Evan. lib. 8. cap. Fune. Com. in Chron. Beroald. Chron. lib. 3. cap. 7, 8. Montacu. Apparatus.

building ; John ii. 20. During which space, how often did the hearts of the people of God faint in their troubles, as though they should never have seen an end ? And therefore, ever and anon they were ready to give over, as Hag. i. 2. But yet we see the decree was fixed, and all those varieties did but orderly work in an exact method for the glorious accomplishment of it.

England's troubles have not yet endured above half the odd years of those reformers' task ; yet, good God ! how short breathed are men ! What fainting is there ! What repining, what grudging against the ways of the Lord ! But, let me tell you, that as the water in the stream will not go higher than the head of the fountain, no more will the work in hand be carried one step higher, or beyond the aim of its fountain, the counsel of God, from whence it hath its rise. And yet as a river will break through all oppositions, and swell to the height of mountains, to go to the sea from whence it came ; so will the stream of the gospel, when it comes out from God, break down all mountains of opposition, and not be hindered from resting in its appointed place. It were an easy thing to recall your minds to some trembling periods of time, when there was trembling in our armies, and trembling in our councils ; trembling to be ashamed, to be repented of ; trembling in the city, and in the country ; and men were almost at their wits' end for the sorrows and fears of those days ; and yet we see how the unchangeable purpose of God hath wrought strongly through all these straits, from one end to another, that nothing might fall to the ground of what he had determined. If a man in those days had gone about to persuade us, that all our pressures were good omens, that they all wrought together for our good, we could have been ready to cry with the woman, who when she had recounted her griefs to the physician, and he still replied, they were good signs, οἱ μοὶ ἀγαθῶν ἀπόλλυμι, ' good signs have undone me,' these good signs will be our ruin : yet behold, we hope, the contrary. Our day hath been like that mentioned, Zech. xiv. 6, 7. a day whose light is neither clear nor dark, a day known only to the Lord, seeming to us to be neither day nor night. But God knew all this while that it was a day ; he saw how it all wrought for the appointed end ; and in the evening, in

the close, it will be light, so light as to be to us discernable. In the mean time, we are like unskilful men, going to the house of some curious artist, so long as he is about his work, despise it as confused; but when it is finished, admire it as excellent: whilst the passages of providence are on us, all is confusion, but when the fabric is reared, glorious.

Use 2. Learn to look upon the wisdom of God in carrying all things through this wonderful variety, exactly to answer his own eternal purpose; suffering so many mountains to lie in the way of reforming his churches, and settling the gospel, that his Spirit may have the glory, and his people the comfort in their removal. It is a high and noble contemplation, to consider the purposes of God, so far as by the event revealed, and to see what impressions his wisdom and power do leave upon things accomplished here below, to read in them a temporary history of his eternal counsels. Some men may deem it strange, that his determinate will, which gives rule to these things, and could in a word have reached its own appointment, should carry his people so many journeys in the wilderness, and keep us thus long in so low estate: I say, not to speak of his own glory, which hath sparkled forth of this flinty opposition, there be divers things, things of light, for our good, which he hath brought forth out of all that darkness, wherewith we have been overclouded. Take a few instances.

(1.) If there had been no difficulties, there had been no deliverances. And did we never find our hearts so enlarged towards God upon such advantages, as to say, Well, this day's temper of spirit, was cheaply purchased by yesterday's anguish and fear? that was but a being sick at sea.

(2.) Had there been no tempests and storms, we had not made out for shelter. Did you never run to a tree for shelter in a storm, and find fruit which you expected not? Did you never go to God for safeguard in these times,^k driven by outward storms, and there find unexpected fruit, the 'peaceable fruit of righteousness,'^l that made you say, Happy tempest, which cast me into such a harbour? It was a storm^m that occasioned the discovery of the golden mines of

^k Prov. xviii. 10.

Heb. vii. 11.

^m Pet. Mart. de Relig. Jud. decad. 1. lib. 1.

India; hath not a storm driven some to the discovery of the richer mines of the love of God in Christ?

(3.) Had not Esau come against him with four hundred men, Jacob had not been called Israel; he had not been put to it to try his strength with God, and so to prevail. Who would not purchase with the greatest distress that heavenly comfort, which is in the return of prayers? The strength of God's Jacobs in this kingdom had not been known, if the Esaus had not come against them. Some say, this war hath made a discovery of England's strength, what it is able to do. I think so also, not what armies it can raise against men, but with what armies of prayers and tears it is able to deal with God. Had not the brethren strove in the womb, Rebekah had not asked, 'Why am I thus?' Nor received that answer, 'The elder shall serve the younger.' Had not two sorts of people struggled in the womb of this kingdom, we had not sought, nor received, such gracious answers. Thus do all the various motions of the lower wheels serve for our good, and exactly answer the impression they receive from the master spring, the eternal purpose of God. Of this hitherto.

II. The sending of the gospel to any one nation rather than another, as the means of life and salvation, is of the mere free grace and good pleasure of God.

Now before I come to make out the absolute independency and freedom of this distinguishing mercy, I shall premise three things.

1. That the not sending of the gospel to any person or people, is of God's mere good pleasure,ⁿ and not of any peculiar distinguishing demerit in that person or people. No man or nation doth 'majorem ponere obicem,' lay more or greater obstacles against the gospel than another. There is nothing imaginable to lay a block in the passage thereof, but only sin. Now these sins are, or may be, of two sorts; either first, against the gospel itself, which may possibly hinder the receiving of the gospel, but not the sending of it, which it presupposeth: secondly, against the covenant they are under, and the light they are guided by, before the beams

ⁿ Qui liberatur, gratiam diligit, qui non liberatur, debitum agnoscat. Aug. de bon. persev. cap. 8. Ex nequissimis in ipso vitæ exitu gratia invenit quos adoptet, cum multi, qui minus nocentes videantur, doni hujus alieni sunt. Pros. de voc. Gen. lib. 1. cap. 17.

of the gospel shine upon them. Now in these generally all are equal,^o all having sinned and come short of the glory of God: and in particular sins against the law and light of nature, no nations have gone farther than they which were soonest enlightened with the word, as afterward will appear: so that the sole cause of this, is the good pleasure of God, as our Saviour affirmeth, Matt. xi. 25, 26.

2. That sins against the covenant of works, which men are under, before the gospel^p comes unto them, cannot have any general demerit, that the means of life and salvation by free grace should not be imparted to them. It is true, all nations have deserved to be turned into hell, and a people that have had the truth, and detained it in ungodliness, deserve to be deprived of it: the first, by virtue of the sanction of the first broken covenant; the other, by sinning against that, which they had of the second. But that men in a fallen condition, and not able to rise, should hereby deserve not to be helped up, needeth some distinction to clear it.

There is then a twofold demerit and indignity: one merely negative, or a not deserving to have good done unto us; the other positive, deserving that good should not be done unto us. The first of these is found in all the world, in respect of the dispensation of the gospel. If the Lord should bestow it only on those who do not deserve it, he must for ever keep it closed up in the eternal treasure of his own bosom: the second is found directly in none, in respect of that peculiar way which is discovered in the gospel, because they had not sinned against it; which, rightly considered, gives no small lustre to the freedom of grace.

3. That there is a right in the gospel, and a fitness in that gracious dispensation to be made known to all people in the world; that no singular portion of the earth should be any longer a holy land, or any mountain of the world lift up its head above its fellows. And this right hath a double foundation.

(1.) The infinite value and worth of the blood of Christ, giving fulness^q and fitness to the promises founded thereon, to be propounded to all mankind: ‘ For through his blood,

^o 1 Cor. i. 25, 26.

^p Acts xiv. 16, 17, xvii. 30, 31.

^q Rom. viii. 32. Joel ii. 28. John xvii. 22. Rom. i. 5. xvi. 26.

remission of sins is preached to whosoever believes on him;’ Acts x. 43. ‘to every creature;’ Matt. xvi. 15. God would have a price of that infinite value for sin laid down, as might justly give advantage, to proclaim a pardon infinitely to all that will come in and accept of it, there being in it no defect at all (though intentionally only a ransom for some), but that by it, ‘the world might know that he had done whatsoever the Father commanded him;’ John xiv. 31.

(2.) In that economy and dispensation of the grace of the new covenant, breaking forth in these latter days, whereby all external distinction of places and persons,^r people and nations being removed, Jesus Christ taketh all^s nations to be his inheritance, dispensing to all men the grace of the gospel, bringing salvation, as seemeth best to him; Tit. ii. 11, 12. For being lifted up, he drew all unto him, having redeemed us with his blood, ‘out of every kindred and tongue, people and nation;’ Apoc. v. 9. And on these two grounds it is that the gospel hath in itself a right and fitness to be preached to all, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

These things being premised, I come to the proof of the assertion.

Deut. vii. 7, 8. Moses is very careful in sundry places to get this to take an impression upon their spirits, that it was mere free grace that exalted them into that condition and dignity wherein they stood, by their approach unto God, in the enjoyment of his ordinances; in this most clearly rendering the cause of God’s love in choosing them, mentioned ver. 7. to be only his love, ver. 8. his love towards them is the cause of his love; his free love eternally determining, his free love actually conferring, those distinguishing mercies upon them: it was not for their righteousness, ‘for they were a stiffnecked people;’ Deut. vi. 6.

Matt. xi. 25, 26. Our Saviour laying both these things together, the hiding of the mysteries of salvation from some, and revealing them to others, renders the same reason and supreme cause of both, of which no account can be rendered, only the good pleasure of God: ‘I thank thee, Father.’ And if any will proceed higher, and say, Where is

^r Rom. ix. 13.

^s Ephes. iii. 14, 15. Mat. xxviii. 19.

the justice of this, that men equally obnoxious, should be thus unequally accepted? We say with Paul, 'That he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. And who art thou, O man, that disputeth against God?' 'Si tu es homo, et ego homo, audiamus dicentem, O homo, Tu quis?' To send a pardon to some that are condemned, suffering the rest to suffer, hath no injustice. If this will not satisfy, let us say with the same Apostle, ὁ βάθος, Rom. xi. 33. 'O the depth,' &c.

Yea, so far is it from truth, that God should dispense, and grant his word and means of grace by any other rule, or upon any other motive, than his own will and good pleasure,* that we find in Scripture the direct contrary to what we would suppose; even mercy shewed to the more unworthy, and the more worthy passed by; reckoning worthiness and unworthiness by less or greater sin, with less or more endeavours. Christ preaches to Chorazin and Bethsaida which would not repent, and at the same time denies the word to Tyre and Sidon, which would have gotten on sackcloth and ashes, when the other continued delicate despisers; Matt. xi. 21. Ezekiel is sent to them that would not hear him, passing by them that would have hearkened, chap. iii. 5. which is most clear, Rom. ix. 30, 31. 'The Gentiles which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; but Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, have not attained to it.' If, in the dispensation of the gospel, the Lord had had any respect to the desert of people, Corinth, that famous place of sinning, had not so soon enjoyed it, the people whereof, for worship, were led away with dumb idols, 2 Cor. xii. 2. and for their lives, you have them drawn to the life, 1 Cor. vi. 9—11. 'Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves with mankind, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners,' καὶ ταῦτα τινες ἦτε, which is to be repeated, ἀπὸ τοῦ κοινοῦ, 'some of you were fornicators, some idolaters, but ye are sanctified.' Seem not these

* August.

* Si hoc voluntatum meritis voluerimus ascribere, ut malos neglexisse gratia bonos elegisse videatur, resistet vobis innumerabilium causa populorum, quibus per tot secula, cœlestis doctrine annuntiatio non corruscavit, nec meliores fuisse eorum posteros possumus dicere, quibus scriptum est, Gentium populus qui sedebat in tenebris, lucem vidit magnam. Prosp. de voc. Gen. lib. 1. cap. 15.

to the eye of flesh goodly qualifications for the gospel of Jesus Christ? Had these men been dealt withal according as they had disposed themselves, not fitter fuel for hell could the justice of God require: but yet ye see, to these the gospel comes, with the first 'a light shines to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.'

If God send or grant the gospel, which is the means of grace, upon any other ground, but his mere good pleasure, then it must be an act of remunerative justice.^w Now there is no such justice in God towards the creature, but what is founded upon some preceding covenant, or with promise of God to the creature, which is the only foundation of all relation between God and man; but only those that attend creation and sovereignty. Now what promise do you find made to, or covenant with, a people as yet without the gospel: I mean conditional promises, inferring any good to be bestowed on any required performance on their part? Free, absolute promises there are innumerable, that light should shine to them that were in darkness; and those be called God's people which were not his people; but such as depend on any condition on their part to be fulfilled, we find none. God bargains^x not with the creature about the gospel, knowing how unable he is to be merchant for such pearls. If a man had all that goodness which may be found in man, without Jesus Christ, they would not in the least measure procure a discovery of him.

I deny not but God may, and perhaps sometimes doth, reveal himself to some in a peculiar and extraordinary manner. Whereunto tends that story in Aquinas,^y of a corpse taken up in the days of Constantine and Irene, with a plate of gold, and this inscription on it, 'Christus nascetur ex virgine, ego credo in illum. O sol sub Irenæ et Constantini temporibus iterum me videbis.' But that this should be regular unto men living, *μετὰ λόγου*, in Justin Martyr's phrase,^z or using their naturals aright (which is impossible

^w Si de debito quæratnr respectu creaturæ, in Deum cadere non potest, nisi ex aliqua suppositione ipsi Dio voluntaria, quæ non potest esse nisi promisso aut pacto aliqua, ex quibus fidelitatis aut justitiæ debitum oriri solet. Suarez. de libert. div. vol. disp. 1. sect 2. num. 5.

^x Deus nulla obligatione tenetur, antequam ipse fidem suam astringat, ergo ante promissionem nulla justitia distributiva in Deo reperitur. Vasq. in q. 21. a. 1. disp. 86.

^y Aquin. 2, 2. q. 2. art. 7.

^z Καὶ οἱ μετὰ λόγου βιάσσαντες χριστιανοὶ εἰσὶ. Justin. Apol. 2.

they should, the right use of naturals depending on supernaturals) is wide from the word.

If there be any outward motive of granting the gospel unto any, it is some acceptable performances of theirs, holding up to the rule and will of God. Now this will and rule having no saving revelation but by the gospel, which should thus be procured by acts agreeable unto it, makes up a flat contradiction; supposing the revelation of the gospel, before it be revealed. Doubtless according to all rules of justice to us made known, it is an easier thing to deserve heaven by obedience now under the covenant of works, than being under that covenant, to do any thing that might cause a new way of salvation, such as the gospel is, to be revealed.

With some observations I descend to application.

[1.] There is the same reason of continuing the gospel unto a people, as of sending it; especially if oppositions rise high, apt and able in themselves for its removal. Never nation as yet enjoyed the word, that deserved the continuance of the word. God hath always^a something against a people to make the continuing of his grace to be of grace, the not removing of his love to be merely of love, and the preaching of the gospel to be a mercy of the gospel, free and undeserved. Though there be work, and labour, and patience for Christ's sake at Ephesus, yet there is somewhat against Ephesus, Rev. ii. 4, 5. for which he might justly remove his candlestick; and if he doth it not, it is of the same mercy that first set it there. As God lays out goodness and grace in the entrance, so patience, long-suffering, and forbearance in the continuance. He bears with our manners, whilst we grieve his Spirit. Look upon the face of this kingdom, and view the body of the people, think of the profaneness, villany, trampling upon the blood of Jesus, ignorance, contempt of God and his ways, despising his ordinances, reviling his servants, branding and defaming the power of godliness, persecuting and tearing one another, and yet hear the joyful sound of the word in every corner; and you will quickly conclude, that you see a great fight of God's love against our sins, and not of our goodness for his love.

^a Hos. vi. 3, 9.

[2.] There is the same reason of the reformation and the doctrine of the gospel corrupted with error, and of the worship of God collapsed with superstition, as of the first implantation of the gospel. God in his just judgment of late ages, had sent upon the western world the efficacy of error, that they should believe lies, because they received not the love of the truth, as he foretold, 2 Thess. ii. Now whence is it, that we see some of the nations thereof as yet suffered to walk in their own ways, others called to repentance, some wildernesses turned into green pastures for the flock of God, and some places made barren wildernesses for the wickedness of them that dwell therein? How comes it that this island glories in a reformation, and Spain sits still in darkness? Is it because we were better than they? Or less engaged in antichristian delusions? Doubtless no. No nation in the world drank deeper of that cup of abomination. It was a proverbial speech amongst all: 'England was our good ass' (a beast of burden) for (antichrist whom they called) the pope. Nothing but the good pleasure of God and Christ freely coming to refine us, Mal. iii. 1—4. caused this distinction.

[3.] Though men can do nothing towards the procuring of the gospel, yet men may do much for the expulsion of the gospel. If the husbandmen prove idle or self-seekers, the vineyard will be let to others; and if the people love darkness more than light, the candlestick will be removed: let England beware. Now this men may do, either upon the first entrance of the gospel, or after some continuance of it. The gospel spreading itself over the earth, finds entertainment, like that of men's seeking plantations amongst barbarous nations; sometimes kept out with hideous outcries at the shore, sometimes suffered to enter with admiration, and a little after violently assaulted.

1st. In the first way, how do we find the Jews, putting far from them the word of life, and rejecting the counsel of God at its first entrance, calling for night at the rising of the sun? Hence, Acts xiii. 41. Paul concludes his sermon to them, with, 'Hear, ye despisers. wonder and perish:' and ver. 46. it was necessary the word should be preached to them, but seeing they judged themselves unworthy, they were forsaken; and ver. 51. 'they shake off the dust

of their feet against them : a common symbol in those days of the highest indignation and deepest curse. The like stubbornness we find in them, Acts xxviii. whereupon the apostle wholly turned himself to the Gentiles, ver. 28. How many nations of Europe, at the beginning of the reformation, rejected the gospel of God, and procured Christ, with the Gadarenes, to depart as soon as he was entered, will be found at the last day, written with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus, that suffered amongst them ?

2dly. After some continuance. So the church of Laodicea, having for awhile enjoyed the word, fell into such a tepid condition, so little moved with that fire that Christ came to send upon the earth, Rev. iii. 15, 16. that the Lord was even sick and weary with bearing them. The church of Rome, famous at the first, yet quickly, by the advantage of outward supportments, and glorious fancies, became head of that fatal rebellion against Jesus Christ,^b which spread itself over most of the churches in the world ; God hereupon sending upon them the ‘ efficacy of error to believe a lie, that they all might be damned that believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness ;’ 2 Thess. ii. suffering them to detain the empty names of church and gospel, which because they usurp only for their advantage here, to appear glorious, the Lord will use for the advancing of his justice hereafter, to shew them inexcusable. O Lord, how was England of late by thy mercy delivered from this snare ! A captain being chosen for the return of this people into Egypt, O, how hath thy grace fought against our backsliding ! And let none seek to extenuate this mercy, by catalogues of errors still amongst us, there is more danger of apostacy against Christ, and rebellion against the truth, in one babylonish error, owned by men pretending to power and jurisdiction over others, than in five hundred scattered amongst inconsiderable disunited individuals. I would to God we could all speak and think the same things, that we were all of one mind, even in the most minute differences that are now amongst us. But yet the truth is, the kingdom of Jesus Christ never

^b Νῦν δὲ ἐστὶν ἀποστασία, ἀπέστησαν γὰρ οἱ ἀνθρώποι τῆς ὁρθῆς πίστεως. Cyrillus Hieros. γατηχυσία.

shakes amongst a people, until men pretending to act with a combined mixed power of heaven and earth, unto which all sheaves must bow, or be threshed, do, by virtue of this trust, set up and impose things, or opinions deviating from the rule; as it was in the papacy, errors owned by mixed associations. Civil and ecclesiastical are for the most part incurable, be they never so absurd and foolish; of which the Lutheran ubiquities and consubstantiation are a tremendous example. These things being presupposed,

Use 1. Let no flesh glory in themselves, but let every mouth be stopped; for we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God. Who hath made the possessors of the gospel to differ from others? Or 'what have they, that they have not received?' 1 Cor. iv. 7. Why are 'these things hidden from the great and wise of the world, and revealed to babes and children, but because, O Father, so it pleased thee?' Matt. xi. 26. 'He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth;' Rom. ix. Ah, Lord, if the glory and pomp of the world might prevail with thee to send thy gospel, it would supply the room of the cursed Alchoran, and spread itself in the palaces of that strong lion of the east, who sets his throne upon the necks of kings. But alas, Jesus Christ is not there! If wisdom, learning, pretended gravity, counterfeit holiness, real policy, were of any value in thine eyes to procure the word of life, it would be as free and glorious at Rome as ever: but alas, antichrist hath his throne there, Jesus Christ is not there! If will-worship and humilities, neglect of the body, macerations, superstitions, beads, and vainly repeated prayers, had any efficacy before the Lord, the gospel perhaps might be in the cells of some recluses and monks: but alas, Jesus Christ is not there! If moral virtues to an amazement, exact civil honesty and justice, that soul of human society, could have prevailed aught, the heathen worthies in the days of old had had the promises: but alas, Jesus Christ was far away! Now if all these be passed by, to whom is the report of the Lord made known? to 'whom is his arm revealed?' Why, to a handful of poor sinners amongst the nations formerly counted fierce and barbarous.^c And

^c Britannorum inaccessa Romanis loca, Christo vero subdita. Tertul.

what shall we say to these things? 'Ο βάθος, O the depth, &c.

Use 2. Let England consider with fear and trembling the dispensation that it is now under: I say, with fear and trembling, for this day is the Lord's day, wherein he will purge us, or burn us, according as we shall be found silver or dross: it is our day, wherein we must mend our end. Let us look to the rock from whence we were hewed, and the hole of the pit from whence we were digged. Was not our father an Amorite, and our mother an Hittite? Are we not the posterity of idolatrous progenitors?^d of those who worshipped them who by nature were no gods? How often also hath this land forfeited the gospel? God having taken it twice away, who is not forward to seize upon the forfeiture. In the very morning of the gospel, the sun of righteousness shone upon this land; and they say the first potentate on the earth that owned it, was in Britain;^e but as it was here soon professed, so it was here soon abused. That part of this island which is called England being the first place I read of, which was totally bereaved of the gospel, the sword of the then pagan Saxons fattening the land with the blood of the Christian inhabitants,^f and in the close wholly subverting the worship of God. Long it was not e'er this cloud was blown over, and those men who had been instruments to root out others, submitted their own necks to the yoke of the Lord, and under exceeding variety in civil affairs, enjoyed the word of grace; until, by insensible degrees, like summer unto winter, or light unto darkness, it gives place to antichristian superstition, and left the land in little less than a paganish darkness, drinking deep of the cup of abominations, mingled for it by the Roman harlot. And is there mercy yet in God to recover a twice lost over backsliding people? Might not the Lord have said unto us, What shall I do unto thee, O island? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? But his heart is turned within him, his repentings are kindled together: the dry bones shall live, and the fleece shall be wet, though all the earth be dry. God will

^d Britanniam in Christianam consentire religionem. Origen. Hom. 4. in Ezek.

^e Niceph. lib. 2. cap. 40. Epist. Eleuth. ad Lucium, an. 169. apud Bar.

^f Anno 469, the Saxons entered.

again water his garden, once more purge his vineyard, once more of his own accord he will take England upon liking, though he had twice deservedly turned it out of his service. So that, 'coming as a refiner's fire, and as fuller's soap, to purify the sons of Levi, to purge them as gold and silver, to offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness,' to reform his churches, England, as soon as any, hath the benefit and comfort thereof. Nay, the reformation of England shall be more glorious than of any nation in the world, being carried on neither by might nor power, but only by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts. But is this the utmost period of England's sinning, and God's shewing mercy, in continuing and restoring of the gospel? No, truly: we again in our days have made forfeiture of the purity of his worship, by an almost universal treacherous apostacy, from which the free grace and good pleasure of God hath made a great progress again towards a recovery.

There are two sorts of men that I find exceedingly ready to extenuate and lessen the superstition and popish tyranny of the former days, into which we were falling.

(1.) Such as were industriously instrumental in it, whose suffrages had been loud, for the choice of a captain to return into Egypt; men tainted with the errors, and loaded with the preferments of the times; with all those who blindly adhere to that faction of men, who as yet covertly drive on that design: to such as these, all was nothing, and to them it is no mercy to be delivered. And the truth is, it is a favour to the lamb, and not the wolf, to have him taken out of his mouth: but these men have interest by those things which have no ears, against which there is no contending.

(2.) Such as are disturbed in their optics, or have gotten false glasses,^g representing all things unto them in dubious colours: which way soever they look, they can see nothing but errors, errors of all sizes, sorts, sects, and sexes, errors and heresies from the beginning to the end; which have deceived some men, not of the worst, and made them think that all before was nothing, in compa-

^g Nunc igitur si nominis odium est, quis nominum reatus? quæ accusatio vocabulorum? nisi aut barbarum sonat aliqua vox nominis, aut maledicum aut impudicum.' Tertul. Apol. ad Gen. cap. 3.

rison of the present confusion. A great sign they felt it not, or were not troubled at it : as if men should come into a field, and seeing some red weeds and cockle among the corn, should instantly affirm, there is no corn there, but all weeds, and that it were much better the hedges were down, and the whole field laid open to the boars of the forest : but the harvest will one day shew the truth of these things. But that these apprehensions may not too much prevail, to the vilifying and extenuating of God's mercy, in restoring to us the purity and liberty of the gospel, give me leave in a few words to set out the danger of that apostacy, from which the good pleasure of God hath given us a deliverance. I shall instance only in a few things. Observe then that

[1.] The darling errors of late years were all of them stones of the old Babel, closing and coupling with that tremendous fabric, which the man of sin had erected to dethrone Jesus Christ ; came out of the belly of that Trojan horse, that fatal engine, which was framed to betray the city of God. They were popish errors, such as whereof that apostacy did consist, which only is to be looked upon as the great adverse state of the kingdom of the Lord Christ. For a man to be disorderly in a civil state, yea, oftentimes through turbulency to break the peace, is nothing to an underhand combination with some formidable enemy, for the utter subversion of it. Heedless and headless errors may breed disturbance enough, in scattered individuals, unto the people of God ; but such as tend to a peace and association, '*cum ecclesia malignantium*,' tending to a total subversion of the sacred state, are far more dangerous. Now such were the innovations of the late hierarchists. In worship, their paintings,^b crossings, crucifixes, bowings, cringings, altars, tapers, wafers, organs, anthems, litany, rails, images, copes, vestments, what were they but Roman varnish, an Italian dress for our devotion, to draw on conformity with that enemy of the Lord Jesus ? In doctrine, the divinity of episcopacy, auricular confession, freewill, predestination on faith, yea, works foreseen, '*limbus patrum*,' justification by works, falling from grace, authority of a church, which

^b See *Canterburian self conviction*. See *Ld. Dec. Coll. &c.*

none knew what it was, canonical obedience, holiness of churches, and the like innumerable, what were they but helps to Sancta Clara, to make all our articles of religion speak good Roman Catholic? How did their old father of Rome refresh his spirit, to see such chariots as those provided to bring England again unto him? This closing with popery was the sting in the errors of those days, which cause pining, if not death in the episcopal pot.

[2.] They were such as raked up the ashes of the ancient worthies, whose spirits God stirred up to reform his church, and rendered them contemptible before all, especially those of England, the most whereof died in giving their witness against the blind figment of the real presence,ⁱ and that abominable blasphemy of the cursed mass. In especial, how did England, heretofore termed ass, turn ape to the pope, having set up a stage, and furnished it with all things necessary for an unbloody sacrifice,^k ready to set up the abomination of a desolation, and close with the god Maozim, who hath all their peculiar devotion at Rome?

[3.] They were in the management of men which had divers dangerous and pernicious qualifications: as

1st. A false repute of learning; I say, a false repute for the greater part, especially of the greatest; and yet, taking advantage of vulgar esteem, they bare out as though they had engrossed a monopoly of it; though I presume the world was never deceived by more empty pretenders, especially in respect of any solid knowledge in divinity or antiquity; but yet their great preferments had got them a great repute of great deservings, enough to blind the eyes of poor mortals adoring them at a distance, and to persuade them, that all was not only law, but gospel too, which they broached; and this rendered the infection dangerous.

2dly. A great hatred of godliness in the power thereof, or any thing beyond a form, in whomsoever it was found; yea, how many^l odious appellations were invented for bare profession, to render it contemptible? Especially in the

ⁱ Coal from the altar.

^k Altare Christianum. Antidotum Lincoln. Case of Greg.

^l Sapientior sis Socrate; doctior Augustino, &c. Calvinianus si modo dicare clam vel propalam, mox Tartaris, Moscis, Afris Turcisque sævientibus et jacebis execrator, &c.

exercise of their jurisdiction, thundering their censures against all appearance of zeal, and closing with all profane impieties; for were a man a drunkard, a swearer, a sabbath-breaker, an unclean person, so he were no puritan, and had money, 'patet atri janua ditis,' the episcopal heaven was open for them all. Now this was a dangerous and destructive qualification, which I believe is not professedly found in any party amongst us.

3dly. Which was worst of all, they had centred in their bosoms an unfathomable depth of power, civil and ecclesiastical, to stamp their apostolical errors with authority, giving them not only the countenance of greatness, but the strength of power, violently urging obedience; and to me the sword of error never cuts dangerously, but when it is managed with such a hand. This I am sure, that errors in such are not recoverable, without the utmost danger of the civil state.

Let now, I beseech you, these and the like things be considered, especially the strong combination that was throughout the^m papal world for the seducing of this poor nation (that I say nothing, how this vial was poured out upon the very throneⁿ), and then let us all be ashamed and confounded in ourselves, that we should so undervalue and slight the free mercy of God in breaking such a snare, and setting the gospel at liberty in England. My intent was, having before asserted this restoration of Jerusalem to the good pleasure of God, to have stirred you up to thankfulness unto him, and self-humiliation in consideration of our great undeserving of such mercy; but alas! as far as I can see, it will scarce pass for a mercy; and unless every man's persuasion may be a Joseph's sheaf, the goodness of God shall scarce be acknowledged. But yet let all the world know, and let the house of England know this day, that we lie unthankfully under as full a dispensation of mercy and grace, as ever nation in the world enjoyed, and that without a lively acknowledgment thereof, with our own unworthiness of it, we shall one day know what it is (being taught with briers and thorns) to undervalue the glorious gospel of the Lord Jesus. Good Lord! what would helpless Ma-

^m Rome's Masterpiece.

ⁿ Royal Favourite.

cedonians give for one enjoyment? O that Wales! O that Ireland! O that France! Where shall I stop? I would offend none, but give me leave to say, O that every, I had almost said, O that any part of the world had such helps and means of grace, as these parts of England have, which will scarce acknowledge any mercy in it! The Lord break the pride of our spirits, before it break the staff of our bread, and the help of our salvation. O that the bread of heaven, and the blood of Christ might be accounted good nourishment, though every one hath not the sauce he desireth. I am persuaded that if every Absalom in the land, that would be a judge for the ending of our differences, were enthroned (he spoke the people's good, though he intended his own power), the case would not be much better than it is. Well, the Lord make England, make this honourable audience, make us all to know these three things:

(1st.) That we have received such a blessing in setting at liberty the truths of the gospel, as is the crown of all other mercies, yea, without which they were not valuable, yea, were to be despised; for success without the gospel is nothing but a prosperous conspiracy against Jesus Christ.

(2dly.) That this mercy is of mercy, this love of free love, and the grace that appeareth of the eternal hidden free grace of God. He hath shewed his love unto us because he loved us, and for no other reason in the world; this people being guilty of blood and murder of soul and body, adultery, and idolatry, and oppression, with a long catalogue of sins and iniquities.

(3dly.) That the height of rebellion against God, is the despising of spiritual gospel-mercies. Should Mordecai have trodden the robes under his feet that were brought him from the king, would it not have been severely revenged? Doth the King of heaven lay open the treasures of his wisdom, knowledge, and goodness for us, and we despise them? What shall I say? I had almost said, hell punishes no greater sin; the Lord lay it not to our charge. O that we might be solemnly humbled for it this day, before it be too late!

Use 3. To discover unto us the freedom of that effectual grace which is dispensed towards the elect, under and with the preaching of the word: for if the sending of the out-

ward means be of free^o undeserved love, surely the working of the Spirit under that dispensation, for the saving of souls, is no less free: for, ‘who hath made us differ from others, and what have we that we have not received?’ O that God should say unto us in our blood, live; that he should breathe upon us when we were as dry bones, dead in trespasses and sins! Let us remember, I beseech you, the frame of our hearts, and the temper of our spirits, in the days wherein we knew not God and his goodness, but went on in a swift^p course of rebellion. Can none of you look back upon any particular days or nights, and say, Ah Lord, that thou shouldest be so patient, and so full of forbearance, as not to send me to hell at such an instant! But, oh Lord, that thou shouldest go farther, and blot out mine iniquities for thine own sake, ‘when I made thee serve with my sins!’ Lord, what shall I say it is? It is the free grace of my God. What expression transcendeth that, I know not.

Use 4. Of caution. England received the gospel of mere mercy, let it take heed lest it lose it by justice; the placer of the candlestick can remove it. The truth is, it will not be removed, unless it be abused; and woe to them from whom mercies are taken for being abused, from whom the gospel is removed for being despised. It had been better for the husbandmen never to have had the vineyard, than to be slain for their ill using of it: there is nothing left to do them good, who are forsaken for forsaking the gospel.

The glory of God was of late by many degrees departing from the temple in our land. That was gone to the threshold, yea to the mount: if now at the return thereof, it find again cause to depart, it will not go by steps, but all at once. This island, or at least the greatest part thereof, as I formerly intimated, hath twice lost the gospel; once, when the Saxons wrested it from the Britains, when, if we may believe their own doleful moaning^q historian, they were given over to all wickedness, oppression, and villany of life, which doubtless was accompanied with contempt of

^o Non libertate gratiam, sed gratia libertatem consequimur. Aug.

^p Ezek xxxvi. 26. Acts xvi. 11. Phil. i. 29. ii. 13.

^q Gildas de Excid. Britanniae. Omnia quae Deo placebant, et displicebant, aequali lance pendebantur, non igitur admirandum est degeneres tales patriam illam amittere, quam praedicto modo maculabant. Hist. M. S. apud Foxum.

the word ; though for faith and persuasion we do not find that they were corrupted, and do find that they were tenacious enough of antique discipline, as appeared in their following oppositions to the Roman tyranny, as in Beda. Secondly, It was lost in regard of the purity and power thereof, by blind superstition and antichristian impiety, accompanied also with abominable lewdness, oppression, and all manner of sin, in the face of the sun ; so that first profaneness working a despising of the gospel, then superstition ushering in profaneness, have in this land shewed their power for the extirpation of the gospel. Oh, that we could remember the days of old, that we could ‘ consider the goodness and severity of God, on them which fell severity, but towards us goodness, if we continue in that goodness, for otherwise even we also shall be cut off ! ’ Yet here we may observe, that though both these times there was a forsaking in the midst of the land, ‘ yet there was in it a tenth for to return as a teil-tree, and as an oak whose substance is in them when they cast their leaves, so was the holy seed and the substance thereof ; ’ Isa. vi. 13. As in the dereliction of the Jews, so of this nation, there was a remnant that quickly took root, and brought forth fruit, both in the one devastation, and the other : though the watcher, and the holy one from heaven, had called to cut down the tree of this nation, and to scatter its branches from flourishing before him ; yet the stump and root was to be left in the earth with a band of iron, that it might spring again. Thus twice did the Lord come seeking fruit of this vine, doing little more than pruning and dressing it, although it brought forth wild grapes ; but if he come the third time and find no fruit, the sentence will be, ‘ Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground ? Now to prevent this I shall not follow all those gospel supplanting sins we find in holy writ, only I desire to cautionate you and us all in three things.

(1.) Take heed of pretending or holding out the gospel for a covert or shadow for other things. God will not have his gospel made a stalking-horse for carnal designs : put not in that glorious name, where the thing itself is not clearly intended ; if in any thing it be, let it have no compeer ; if not, let it not be named ; if that you aim at be just,

it needs no varnish ; if it be not, it is the worse for it. Gilded pills lose not their bitterness, and painted faces are thought to have no native beauty ; all things in the world should serve the gospel, and if that be made to serve other things, God will quickly vindicate it into liberty.

From the beginning of these troubles, Right Honourable, you have held forth religion and the gospel, as whose preservation and restoration was principally in the aims ; and I presume malice itself is not able to discover any insincerity in this, the fruits we behold proclaim to all the conformity of your words and hearts. Now the God of heaven grant that the same mind be in you still, in every particular member of this honourable assembly, in the whole nation, especially in the magistracy and ministry of it ; that we be not like the boatmen, look one way and row another ; cry gospel, and mean the other thing ; Lord, Lord, and advance our own ends ; that the Lord may not stir up the staff of his anger, and the rod of his indignation against us as a hypocritical people.

(2.) Take heed of resting upon and trusting to the privilege, however excellent and glorious, of the outward enjoyment of the gospel. When the Jews cried, ‘ The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord,’ the time was at hand that they should be destroyed. Look only upon the grace that did bestow, and the mercy that doth continue it ; God will have none of his blessings rob him of his glory, and if we rest at the cistern, he will stop at the fountain.

(3.) Let us all take heed of barrenness under it ; ‘ For the earth that drinks in the rain that cometh upon it, and beareth thorns and briers, is rejected, and nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned ;’ Heb. vi. 7, 8. Now what fruits doth it require ? Even those reckoned Gal. v. 22, 23. ‘ The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.’ O, that we had not cause to grieve for a scarcity of these fruits, and the abundant plenty of those works of the flesh recounted ver. 19—21. O that that wisdom, which is an eminent fruit of the gospel, might flourish amongst us ! It is first ‘ pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated,’ that we might have less writing, and more praying ; less envy, and more charity ; that all evil surmisings, which are works of the flesh, might have no toleration in our hearts, but be

banished for nonconformity to the golden rule of love and peace; James iii. 17. But ἀπέχω. Come we now to the last proposition.

III. No men in the world want help, like them that want the gospel. Or, of all distresses, want of the gospel cries the loudest for relief.

Rachel wanted children, and she cries, 'Give me children,' or I die:' but that was her impatience; she might have lived, and have had no children; yea, see the justice of God, she dies so soon as ever she hath children. Hagar^r wants water for Ishmael, and she will go far from him, that she may not see him die; a heavy distress; and yet if he had died, it had been but an early paying of that debt, which in a few years was to be satisfied. But they that want the gospel may truly cry, Give us the gospel or we die, and that not temporally with Ishmael, for want of water, but eternally in flames of fire.

A man may want liberty, and yet be happy, as Joseph was; a man may want peace, and yet be happy, as David was; a man may want children, and yet be blessed, as Job was; a man may want plenty, and yet be full of comfort, as Micaiah was; but he that wants the gospel, wants every thing that should do him good. A throne without the gospel is but the devil's dungeon. Wealth without the gospel is fuel for hell. Advancement without the gospel is but a going high to have the greater fall.

Abraham^t wanting a child complains, 'What will the Lord do for me, seeing I go childless, and this Eliezer of Damascus must be my heir?' Much more may a man without the means of grace complain, what shall be done unto me, seeing I go gospelless; and all that I have is but a short inheritance for this lump of clay, my body?

When Elisha^u was minded to do something for the Shunamite who had so kindly entertained him, he asks her, whether he should speak for her to the king, or the captain of the host. She replies, she dwelt in the midst of her own people, she needeth not those things; but when he finds her to want a child, and tells her of that, she is almost transported. Ah, how many poor souls are there,

^r Gen. xxx. 1. xxxv. 18.

^t Gen. xv. 2.

^u Gen. xxi. 16.

^u 2 Kings iv. 13, 14.

who need not our word to the king or the captain of the host; but yet being gospelless, if you could tell them of that, would be even ravished with joy?

Think of Adam^w after his fall, before the promise, hiding himself from God, and you have a perfect portraiture of a poor creature without the gospel. Now this appeareth,

1. From the description we have of the people that are in this state^x and condition without the gospel; they are a people that sit in darkness, yea in the region and shadow of death; Matt. iv. 16, 17. they are even darkness itself, John i. 7. within the dominion and dreadful darkness of death. Darkness was one of Egypt's plagues, but yet that was a darkness of the body, a darkness wherein men lived; but this is a darkness of the soul, a darkness of death, for these men though they live, yet are they dead. They are fully described, Ephes. ii. 12. 'without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.' Christless men, and godless men, and hopeless men: and what greater distress in the world? Yea, they are called dogs, and unclean beasts, the wrath of God is upon them, they are the people of his curse and indignation. In the extreme north one day and one night divide the year; but with a people without the gospel it is all night, the sun of righteousness shines not upon them; it is night whilst they are here, and they go to eternal night hereafter. What the men of China say concerning themselves and others, that they have two eyes, the men of Europe one, and all the world besides is blind, may be inverted too; the Jews had one eye, sufficient to guide them, they who enjoy the gospel have two eyes, but the men of China, with the rest of the nations that want it, are stark blind, and reserved for the chains of everlasting darkness.

2. By laying forth what the men that want the gospel do want with it.

(1.) They want Jesus Christ, for he is revealed only by the gospel. Austin refused to delight in Cicero's Hortensius, because there was not in it the name^y of Jesus Christ.

^w Gen. iii. 8.

^x Matt. vi. 23. Luke i. 79. Acts xxvi. 18. Rom. ii. 19. Ephes. v. 8. Col. i. 13. 1 Pet. i. 9.

^y Nomen Jesu non erat ibi.

Jesus Christ is all and in all, and where he is wanting, there can be no good. Hunger cannot truly be satisfied without manna, the bread of life, which is Jesus Christ;^z and what shall a hungry man do that hath no bread? Thirst cannot be quenched without that water or living spring, which is Jesus Christ; and what shall a thirsty soul do without water? A captive as we are all, cannot be delivered without redemption,^a which is Jesus Christ: and what shall the prisoner do without his ransom? Fools as we are all, cannot be instructed without wisdom, which is Jesus Christ, without him we perish in our folly. All building without him is on the sand, which will surely fall. All working without him is in the fire, where it will be consumed. All riches without him have wings, and will away. ‘*Mallet ruere cum Christo, quam regnare cum Cæsare,*’ said Luther. A dungeon with Christ, is a throne; and a throne without Christ, a hell. Nothing so ill, but Christ^b will compensate. The greatest evil in the world is sin, and the greatest sin was the first; and yet Gregory feared not to cry, ‘*O felix culpa, quæ talem meruit redemptorem:*’ ‘O happy fault which found such a Redeemer!’ All mercies without Christ are bitter, and every cup is sweet that is seasoned but with a drop of his blood; he truly is ‘*amor et deliciæ humani generis,*’ the love and delight of the sons of men, without whom they must perish eternally: ‘for there is no other name given unto them, whereby they may be saved;’ Acts iv. 12. He is the way;^c men without him are Cains, wanderers, vagabonds: he is the truth; men without him are liars, like the devil, who was so of old: he is the life;^d without him men are dead, dead in trespasses and sins: he is the light; without him men are in darkness, and go they know not whither: he is the vine; those that are not grafted in him, are withered branches, prepared for the fire: he is the rock; men not built on him, are carried away with a flood: he is alpha and omega, the first and the last, the author and the ender, the founder and the finisher of our salvation; he that hath not him, hath neither begin-

^z John vi. 50. Rev. ii. 17. John iv. 14. Cant. iv. 12.

^a John vii. 37, 38. 1 Cor. i. 30.

^b *Pauca igitur de Christo.* Tertul.

^c John xiv. 6.

^d John i. 3--5. Ephes. iv. 18. John xv. 5. Matt. vii. 26, 27. Matt. xvi. 18.

ning of good, nor shall have end of misery. O blessed Jesus, how much better were it not to be, than to be without thee! Never to be born, than not to die in thee! A thousand hells come short of this, eternally to want Jesus Christ, as men do that want the gospel.

(2.) They want all holy communion with God, wherein the only happiness of the soul doth consist. He is the life, light, joy, and blessedness of the soul; without him, the soul in the body is but a dead soul, in a living sepulchre. It is true, there be many that say, ‘Who will shew us any good?’^e but unless the Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon us, we perish for evermore. ‘Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our heart is unquiet until it come to thee.’ You who have tasted how gracious the Lord is, who have had any converse and communion with him, in the issues and goings forth of his grace, those delights of his soul with the children of men, would you live, would not life itself, with a confluence of all earthly endearments, be a very hell without him? Is it not the daily language of your hearts, ‘Whom have we in heaven but thee? and on earth there is nothing in comparison of thee?’ The soul of man is of a vast, boundless comprehension; so that if all created good were centred into one enjoyment, and that bestowed upon one soul, because it must needs be finite and limited, as created, it would give no solid contentment to his affections, nor satisfaction to his desires. In the presence and fruition of God alone there is joy for evermore; at his right hand are rivers of pleasure, the well-springs of life and blessedness. Now, if to be without communion with God in this life, wherein the soul hath so many avocations from the contemplation of its own misery (for earthly things are nothing else) is so unsupportable a calamity; ah, what shall that poor soul do that must want him for eternity, as all they must do who want the gospel!

(3.) They want all the ordinances of God, the joy of our hearts,^f and comfort of our souls. Oh, the sweetness of a sabbath! The heavenly raptures of prayer! Oh, the glorious communion of saints, which such men are deprived of! If they knew the value of the hidden pearl, and these things

^e Psal. iv. 6.

^f Psal. xlii. 1, 2. xxxiv. 1—4, &c.

were to be purchased, what would such poor souls not part with for them?

(4.) They will at last want heaven and salvation; they shall never come to the presence of God in glory, never inhabit a glorious mansion; they shall never behold Jesus Christ, but when they shall call for^g rocks and mountains to fall upon them, to hide them from his presence; they shall want light in utter darkness, want life under the second death, want^h refreshment in the midst of flames, want healing under gnawing of conscience, want grace continuing to blaspheme, want glory in full misery; and which is the sum of all this, they shall want an end of all this, for 'their worm dieth not, neither is their fire quenched.'

3. Because being in all this want, they know not that they want any thing, and so never make out for any supply. Laodicea knew much, but yet because she knew not her wants,ⁱ she had almost as good have known nothing. Gospelless men know not that they are blind, and seek not for eye-salve; they know not that they are dead, and seek not for life. Whatever they call for, not knowing their wants, is but like a man's crying for more weight to press him to death; and therefore, when the Lord comes to any with the gospel, he is 'found of them that sought him not, and made manifest to them that asked not after him;' Rom. x. 20. This is a seal upon their misery, without God's free mercy, like the stone laid upon the mouth of the cave by Joshua, to keep in the five kings, until they might be brought out to be hanged.^k All that men do in the world is but seeking to supply their wants; either their natural wants, that nature may be supplied; or their sinful wants, that their lusts may be satisfied; or their spiritual wants, that their souls may be saved. For the two first, men without the gospel lay out all their strength, but of the last there is amongst them a deep^l silence. Now this is all one as for men to cry out that their finger bleeds, whilst a sword is run through their hearts, and they perceive it not; to desire a wart to be cured, whilst they have a plague-sore upon them. And hence per-

^g Rev. vi. 16.

^h Matt. xxii. 13. Luke xvi. 24. Mark ix. 43, 44. Isa. lxvi. 24.

ⁱ Rev. iii. 17.

^k Josh. x. 18.

^l Ego propero ad inferos, nec est ut aliquid pro me agas. Advocatus quidam moriens, apud. Bel. de arte mor. lib. 2. cap. 10.

haps it is, that they are said to go to^m hell 'like sheep;' Psal. xlix. 14. very quietly, without dread, as a bird hasting to the snare, and not knowing that it is for his life; Prov. vii. 23. and there lie down in utter disappointment and sorrow for evermore.

4. Because all mercies are bitter judgments to men that want the gospel; all fuel for hell; aggravations of condemnation; all cold drink to a man in a fever, pleasant at the entrance, but increasing its torments in the close; like the book in the Revelation, sweet in the mouth, but bitter in the belly. When God shall come to require his bread and wine, his flax and oil, peace and prosperity, liberty and victories of gospelless men, they will curse the day that ever they enjoyed them. So unspiritual are many men's minds, and so unsavoury their judgments, that they reckon men's happiness by their possessions, and suppose the catalogue of their titles to be a roll of their felicities, calling the proud happy, and advancing in our conceits 'them that work wickedness,' Mal. iii. 15. but God will one day come in with another reckoning, and make them know, that all things without Christ, are but as cyphers without a figure, of no value. In all their banquets where Christ is not a guest, 'their vine is of the vine of Sodom, and of the field of Gomorrah, their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter;' Deut. xxxii. 32, 33. their palaces, where Christ is not, are but habitations of Zim, and Ochim, dragons, and unclean beasts; their prosperity is putting them into full pasture, that they may be fatted for the day of slaughter, the day of consumption decreed for all the bulls of Bashan; the gospel bringing Christ, is the salt that makes all other things savoury.

Use 1. To shew us the great privilege and pre-eminence, which, by the free grace of God, many parts of this island do enjoy. To us that sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, a great light is risen, to guide us into the ways of peace. Let others recount the glories, benefits, profits, outward blessings of this nation; let us look only upon that which alone is valuable in itself, and makes other things so to be, the gospel of Christ. It is reported of the heralds of our neighbour monarchs, that when one of them had re-

peated the numerous titles of his master of Spain, the other often repeated France, France, France; intimating that the dominion which came under that one denomination, would counterpoise the long catalogue of kingdoms and dukedoms, wherewith the other flourished. Were we to contend with the grand seignior of the east about our enjoyments, we might easily bear down his windy, pompous train of titles with this one, which ‘*millies repetitum placebit*,’ the gospel, the gospel. Upon all the other things you may put the inscription in Daniel, ‘*mene, mene, tekel*,’ they are ‘weighed in the balance, and found wanting;’ but proclaim before those that enjoy the gospel, as Haman before Mordecai, ‘Lo, thus shall it be done to them whom the Lord will honour.’ The fox in the fable had a thousand wiles to save himself from the hunters; but the cat knew ‘*unum magnum*,’ ‘one great thing’ that would surely do it. Earthly supports and contentments are but a thousand failing wiles, which will all vanish in the time of need; the gospel, and Christ in the gospel, is that ‘*unum magnum*,’ that ‘*unum necessarium*,’ which alone will stand us in any stead. In this, this island is as the mountain of the Lord, exalted above the mountains of the earth; it is true, many other nations partake with us in the same blessing: not to advance our own enjoyments in some particulars wherein perhaps we might justly do it; but take all these nations with us, and what a molehill are we to the whole earth, overspread with Paganism, Mahometanism, Antichristianism, with innumerable foolish heresies? And what is England, that it should be amongst the choice branches of the vineyard, the top-boughs of the cedars of God?

Use 2. Shews that such great mercies, if not esteemed, if not improved, if abused, will end in great judgments. Woe be to that nation, that city, that person, that shall be called to an account for despising the gospel; Amos ii. 2. ‘You only have I known of all the families of the earth.’ What then? Surely some great blessing is coming to that people, whom God thus knows, so owns, as to make himself known unto them. No; but, ‘therefore will I visit upon you all your iniquities.’ However others may have some ease or mitigation in their punishments, do you expect the utmost of my wrath. Luther said, he thought hell was paved with

the bald skulls of friars; I know nothing of that; yet of this sure I am, that none shall have their portion so low in the nethermost hell, none shall drink so deep of the cup of God's indignation, as they, who have refused Christ in the gospel. Men will curse the day to all eternity, wherein the blessed name of Jesus Christ was made known unto them, if they continue to despise it. He that abuseth the choicest of mercies, shall have judgment without mercy. What can help them who reject the council of God for their good? If now England has received more culture from God, than other nations; there is more fruit expected from England, than other nations. A barren tree in the Lord's vineyard must be cut down for cumbering the ground; the sheep of God must every 'one bear twins, and none be barren amongst them;' Cant. iv. 2. If after all God's care and husbandry his vineyard brings forth wild grapes, he will take away the hedge, break down the wall, and lay it waste. For the present the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of England, and if it be as earth, which when 'the rain falls upon it, brings forth nothing but thorns and briers, it is nigh unto cursings, and the end thereof is to be burned;' Heb. vi. 7. Men utterly and for ever neglect that ground, which they have tried their skill about, and laid out much cost upon it, if it bring not forth answerable fruits. Now here give me leave to say, and the Lord avert the evil deserved by it, that England (I mean these cities, and those other places, which since the beginning of our troubles, have enjoyed the gospel, in a more free and plentiful manner than heretofore) hath shewed itself not much to value it.

(1.) In the time of straits, though the sound of the gospel passed through all our streets, our villages enjoying them who preached peace, and brought glad tidings of good things, so that neither we, nor our fathers, nor our father's fathers, ever saw the like before us; though manna fell round about our tents every day; yet as though all were lost, and we had nothing, manna was loathed as light bread, the presence of Christ made not recompense for the loss of our swine; men had rather be again in Egypt, than hazard a pilgrimage in the wilderness. If there be any here, that ever entertained thoughts to give up the worship of God to superstition, his churches to tyranny, and the doctrine of the gospel to epis-

copal corruptions, in the pressing of any troubles, let them now give God the glory, and be ashamed of their own hearts, lest it be bitterness in the end.

(2.) In the time of prosperity, by our fierce contentions about mint and cummin, whilst the weightier things of the gospel have been undervalued, languishing about unprofitable questions, &c. but I shall not touch this wound lest it bleed.

Use 3. For exhortation, that every one of us, in whose hand there is any thing, would set in for the help of those parts of this island that as yet sit in darkness, yea, in the shadow of death, and have none to hold out the bread of life to their fainting souls. Doth not Wales cry, and the North cry, yea, and the West cry, Come and help us? We are yet in a worse bondage, than any by your means we have been delivered from; if you leave us thus, all your protection will but yield us a more free and jovial passage to the chambers of death. Ah, little do the inhabitants of Goshen know, whilst they are contending about the bounds of their pasture, what darkness there is in other places of the land; how their poor starved souls would be glad of the crumbs that fall from our tables. O that God would stir up the hearts

(1.) Of ministers, to cast off all by-respects, and to flee to those places, where, in all probability, the harvest would be great, and the labourers are few or none at all. I have read of a heretic that swam over a great river in a frost to scatter his errors; the old Jewish, and now popish pharisees, compass sea and land to make proselytes; the merchants trade not into more countries, than the factors of Rome do, to gain souls to his holiness. East and west, far and wide, do these locusts spread themselves, not without hazard of their lives, as well as the loss of their souls, to scatter their superstitions; only the preachers of the everlasting gospel seem to have lost their zeal. O that there were the same mind in us that was in Jesus Christ, who counted it his meat and drink, to do his Father's will, in gaining souls!

(2.) Of the magistrates, I mean of this honourable assembly, to turn themselves every lawful way, for the help of poor Macedonians. The truth is, in this I could speak more than I intend; for perhaps my zeal and some men's judgments would scarce make good harmony. This only I shall

say, that if Jesus Christ might be preached, though with some defects in some circumstances, I should rejoice therein. O that you would labour to let all the parts of the kingdom taste of the sweetness of your successes, in carrying to them the gospel of the Lord Jesus; that the doctrine of the gospel might make way for the discipline of the gospel, without which it will be a very skeleton. When manna fell in the wilderness from the hand of the Lord, every one had an equal share; I would there were not now too great an inequality in the scattering of manna, when secondarily in the hand of men; whereby some have all, and others none; some sheep daily picking the choice flowers of every pasture, others wandering upon the barren mountains, without guide or food. I make no doubt but the best ways for the furtherance of this are known full well unto you, and therefore have as little need to be petitioned in this, as other things. What then remains? but that for this, and all other necessary blessings, we all set our hearts and hands to petition the throne of grace.