

## THE SWORD OF THE WICKED.

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### NOTE.

THE title-page, a copy of which is given below [\*], will, as in the case of 'The Description of Christ,' in its relation to 'The Bruised Reed,' explain the position of 'The Sword of the Wicked' in the present publication. It will be observed that it consists of the *leading*, i.e., introductory sermons to that treatise, called 'The Soules Conflict.' As such, it falls to be associated therewith. The 'Sword of the Wicked' forms a small portion of one of the posthumously-published quartos of Sibbes, entitled 'Evangelicall Sacrifices' [1640]. It labours under the same disadvantage with the 'Description,' as compared with its companion treatise, the 'Soul's Conflict,' being even more unfinished; but abounds with pungent and vigorous writing.

G.

[\*] Title-page—

The  
SWORD  
of  
THE WICKED.  
In two Sermons.  
Being the leading Sermons to that Treatise  
called  
The Soules Conflict.  
By  
The late Learned and Reverend Divine,  
Rich. Sibbs :  
Doctor in Divinity, Mr of Katherine Hall  
in Cambridge, and sometimes Preacher  
to the Honourable Society of  
Grayes-Inne.  
Psal. 57. 4.  
Their Tongue is a sharpe Sword.  
London,  
Printed by E. P. for N. B. and R. H. 1639. 4to.

## THE SWORD OF THE WICKED.

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*As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me ; while they say unto me daily, Where is thy God ?—PSALM XLII. 10.*

THE Psalms are, as it were, the anatomy of a holy man ; they lay the inside of a true devout man outward, even to the view of others.

If the Scriptures be compared to a body, the Psalms may well be the heart, they are so full of sweet and holy affections and passions. In other portions of Scripture, God speaks to us ; in the Psalms, holy men (especially David, who was the penman of most of them), speak to God, wherein we have the passages of a broken, humble soul to God. Among the rest, in this Psalm David lays open variety of passions. His condition at this time was such, as that he was an exiled man, from his own house and his own friends, and which grieved him worst of all, from the tabernacle, the house of God. It was upon the occasion of Saul's persecution, or of Absalom's, his son ; but I take it rather of Saul's, that hunted him as a partridge in the wilderness. Hereupon you have a discovery, how this holy man of God stood affected with this case and condition of his. First he lays open his grief. His grief ariseth from his desire. He that loves most and desireth most, he always grieves most ; and all other affections have their scantling (*a*) from love, which is the firstborn affection of the soul. Therefore, before he lays out his grief, he sets out his desire to the house of God, the want whereof grieved him most of all. 'As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God,' ver. 1. As the chased hart panteth after water, so the soul thirsteth for God, for the living God, 'O when shall I come and appear before God ?' ver. 2.\*

Then after his desire, he lays forth his grief, 'My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God ?' ver. 3. Grievances never come alone, but as Job's messengers, they come one after another, even to God's children. When he is disposed to correct them, they are multiplied. Therefore, here is not only a grief of want, that he was debarred of those sweet comforts which he had before in the tabernacle, but here is likewise a grief from the reproach of his enemies, that took occasion from his disconsolate estate to upbraid him, 'Where is thy

\* This opening paragraph is very nearly identical with the commencement of the 'Soul's Conflict.'—G.



God?' 'My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?' He dissolves the cloud of his grief into the shower of tears, 'My tears have been my meat.' They were so plentiful that they did feed his soul as it were.

Then he sets down another ground of his grief, from the remembrance of his former happiness; as usually, that doth make the grief raw and more sensible, for *felix miser, maxime miser*, he that hath been happy in former time and now is miserable, is most miserable of all, because his former happiness makes him most sensible. Therefore, of all men in hell, the torment of great men is most, because they had most sense of comfort in this world; mighty men shall be mightily tormented, that is all the privilege they shall have in hell. Therefore, to aggravate his grief, O, saith he, when I remember what comfort I had formerly in the house of God, I pour out my soul. It was not enough that he poured out his tears, or words, but I pour out my soul, for in former times, 'I went with the multitude to the house of God,' ver. 4, and led a goodly train to the house of God, the picture of a good magistrate, and a good master of a family; he goes not alone to the house of God, but he leads his train, he is attended on by his servants. David went not alone into the house of God, but with the multitude, 'with the voice of them that kept holiday,' ver. 4. Well, he had grief enough, his heart was full of grief. Now in the next verse he takes up his soul, and expostulates with himself, 'Why art thou so sad, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance,' ver. 5. So you see here, he is not so flat in his grief that he gives over-long way to it, but he even falls a chiding of his soul, 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul? why art thou disquieted within me?' O! but yet grief will not be so stilled! affliction is not quelled at the first, nor grief stilled and stayed at the first. Therefore it gathers upon him again in the next verse, 'O my God, my soul is cast down within me, when I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar.' When I remember thee from these places, my soul is cast down again, and my afflictions are multiplied; though he had fallen out with his soul before, for his impatience. 'One deep calls to another,' deep calls upon deep, 'as the noise of the water-spouts,' ver. 7. He compares affliction to water-spouts, as it is in Scripture. 'All thy waves and billows have gone over me,' ver. 7. Even as one deep calls to another, so one affliction calls to another. Then when he had given a little way again to his grief, and complained to God, he takes up his soul another time; yet, saith he, 'The Lord will command his lovingkindness in the day time, and in the night his song shall be with me, and I will pray to the God of my life,' ver. 8. He presents to himself the goodness of God, to comfort his soul. And he presents to him in the next verse his own resolution, 'I will say to God (for the time to come) my rock, why hast thou forgotten me? and why go I mourning, for the oppression of the enemy,' ver. 9. So here he stays his soul once again; he presents to his soul the lovingkindness of God, with renewing his resolution to seek God: an effectual way to stay the soul, by considering God's love and mercy, and by renewing our resolutions and purposes to cleave to God, 'I will say to God my rock, why hast thou forgotten me?'

Aye, but here is a third assault of grief again, for there is a spring of corruption in us, and such a principle in us as will yield murmurings and discontent again and again; therefore in the verse I have read to you, he comes again to complain, 'As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies

reproach me; while they say unto me daily, Where is thy God?' ver. 10. He had complained once of this before, but it had a fresh working with his thoughts again, 'As with a sword in my bones,' &c. Hereupon, he is forced the third time to expostulate, and to fall out with his soul, 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted? hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God,' ver. 11. He comes to his former remedy, he had stilled his grief once before with the same meditation and upbraiding of his own soul, and chiding himself; but he comes to it here as a *probatum est*, as a tried remedy, he takes up his soul very short, 'Why art thou so cast down, O my soul? why art thou disquieted within me?' You see how David's passions here are interlaced with comforts, and his comforts with passions, till at last he gets the victory of his own heart. Beloved, neither sin, nor grief for sin, are stilled and quieted at the first. You have some short-spirited Christians, if all be not quiet at the first, all is lost with them; but it is not so with a true Christian soul, with the best soul living. It was not so with David: when he was in distemper, he checks himself; the distemper was not yet stilled, he checks himself again; then the distemper breaks out again, then he checks himself again; and all little enough to bring his soul to a holy, blessed, quiet temper, to that blessed tranquillity and rest that the soul should be in, before it can enjoy its own happiness, and enjoy sweet communion with God. As you see in physic, perhaps one purge will not carry away the peccant humour, then a second must be added; perhaps that will not do it, then there must be a third; so when the soul hath been once checked, perhaps it will not do, we must fall to it again, go to God again. And then it may be there will be breaking out of the grief and malady again; we must to it again, and never give over; that is the right temper of a Christian.

Before I come to the words, observe in general this, *that a living soul, the soul that is alive in grace, that hath the life of grace quickening it, is most sensible of all, in the want of spiritual means.* As here, the grief of griefs was (which he begins with), that he was banished from the tabernacle.

What shall we think therefore of those that excommunicate themselves from God's assembly, where there is the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, all the Trinity dispensing their bounty, and where the prayers of God's people meet together in one as it were, and bind God? What shall we think of them that prefer their private devotions, as they say, before God's assemblies? Surely they are not of David's mind; and it is a shrewd argument, that they never had the life of grace in them yet: for where life is, there will be hunger and thirst. *Acrius urgent quæ ad naturam.* It is a true aphorism, those things press upon nature hardest that touch upon the necessities of nature, rather than those that touch upon delight. We can want delights, but necessities of nature we cannot; therefore hunger and thirst, they are such passions as will not be quiet. Delicacies and novelties the soul of a hungry man can be content to want, but not spiritual food for the soul. We see how famine wrought upon the patriarchs, it made them go down into Egypt for food. I note it only by the way, that men may know how to judge of themselves, when they can very well be content, without a blessed supply of holy means. Holy David, when the means was but dark and obscure, when the canon was not enlarged, when all was in types and clouds, yet he felt that comfort in the tabernacle and in the ordinances of God, that he could not endure the want of them; but as the hart brayeth after the water-brooks, so his soul panted after God. But to come to the words themselves,



‘As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me, when they say unto me daily, where is thy God?’

Here are two things considerable in the words.

*The carriage and disposition and expression of others to David.*

And David’s affection towards it, how he was disposed towards it, how he did bear it.

For their disposition, they were enemies, *mine enemies*, &c.

The expression of it, *they reproach me*.

The specialty of that expression, how they reproached him, they said unto him, ‘*Where is thy God?*’ They do reproach him in his religion.

The aggravation of that specialty is, they say, openly to his face, they go not behind my back, they esteem so slightly of me, they say it to my face. And continually too, they are never weary, they say daily, Where is thy God? They are enemies, they reproach, they reproach in this, ‘Where is thy God?’ and they do it impudently, and daily.

How doth David entertain this usage? how doth he carry himself all this while? He must needs be sensible of it, and therefore he expresseth it in most significant words. Oh, saith he, these things were as *a sword in my bones*. There be diverse readings of the words; but we will take them as they are laid down, being very well, *as with a sword in my bones* (or as it is in the margin, *(b) as killing in my bones*), mine enemies reproach me. It was as killing to him, it did go to his heart, it cut him to the quick. As a sword is to the body and bones, so are their words to my soul, I cannot endure it, it is death to me. It is a most emphatical manner of expressing the enemies’ disposition and carriage. Thus you have the words unfolded. I will but touch some particulars; those that I think most needful for us to take notice of, I will dwell more upon. *Mine enemies*, saith he, *reproach me*.

*Mine enemies*. There hath been contrary seeds from the beginning of the world, and will be while Satan is in the world. Till he be cast into the ‘burning lake,’ and be there in perpetual chains adjudged to torment, he will raise up men alway that shall be of his side. And as long as that grand enemy is, and as long as men are that will be subject to his government, as alway there will be, he will have a great faction in the world. And by reason that he hath a party in us, the flesh, he will have the greatest party in the world. The most go the broad way, so that *God’s children*, even David himself, *shall not want enemies*.

*Mine enemies*. It is strange that he should have enemies, that was so harmless a man, that when they were sick and distressed, he prayed for them, and put on sackcloth for them, as it is Ps. xli. This compassionate, sweet-natured man, yet notwithstanding you see he had enemies, and enemies that would discover themselves to reproach him, and that bitterly; in the bitterest manner, they reproach him in his religion. It is a large point, if I should give myself liberty in it. I do but touch it, that we may be armed by this observation, against the scandal of opposition, that if we meet with enemies in the world, we should not be much offended at it; grieve we may, but wonder we need not. Was there ever any that did more good than our Saviour Christ? ‘He went about doing good,’ Acts x. 38. He did never a miracle that was harmful (but only of the swine that were drowned in the sea, and that was their own fault), but he went about doing all the good he could; yet, notwithstanding, we see what malicious opposites he had. That that is true of the head must be true in the members. Therefore, we should rejoice in our conformity to Christ, if it be in a good cause, that we find enemies and opposition. *O imperator*,

*&c.*, saith he, O the emperor is become a Christian. It was a blessed time. Oh! but the devil is not made a Christian yet, and he will never be made good: for he is *in termino*, as we say, he is in his bounds, his nature is immoveable; he is in hell in regard of his estate, though he be loose to do mischief. Now, until the devil be good, God's children shall never want enemies; and he will never be good. Therefore, though there were good kings and good governors over all the world, yet good men shall never want enemies as long as the devil is alive, as long as he hath any thing to do in the world. Enemies therefore we must look for, and such enemies as will not conceal their malice neither: for that were something if they would suffer their malice to boil and concoct in their own hearts, but that will not be, but 'out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak.' Where there is a bad treasury, there will be a bad vent; \* therefore we see here, they reproach him, '*mine enemies*.'

*Reproach me.* It is the proper expression of malice, reproach; and it is that that the nature of man can least endure of all. The nature of man can endure an outward wrong, a loss or a cross, but a reproach, especially if it be a scornful reproach, the nature of man is most impatient of. For there is no man, but he thinks himself worthy of some respect. Now a reproachful scorn shews a disrespect, and when the nature of man sees itself disrespected, it grows to terms of impatience. There is not the meanest man living but he thinks himself worthy of some regard. Therefore I cannot blame David, even out of the principle of nature, to be affected here when they reproached him, and gave him vile terms, '*mine enemies reproach me*.' Their tongues were tipt from hell, and they did but utter that that was in their hearts. If the tongues of wicked men, as St James saith, be a world of mischief, what is the whole man? what is the heart, and tongue, and life, and all of wicked men?

Now this reproach of wicked men, it is a grievous persecution, as Ishmael persecuted Isaac in that manner, as it is, Gal. iv., taken out of the story in Genesis. I will not enter into the commonplace of reproach; it is taken by the by here.

Only by the way, let it be a support to us. If we be reproachfully used in the world, let us not be much cast down. It is no credit for a man to do that that the devil and his instruments do; nor it is no discredit for us to suffer that that David suffered. Let this satisfy thee, there is not the vilest man living but hath this weapon to serve the devil with, a reproachful tongue. He that sits upon the ale bench, that rakes in the channel, † the basest wretch in the world, hath a tongue to serve the devil with in reproaches. It is no credit for them to do that that the vilest person in the world can do; and it is no shame for thee to suffer that that the best man that ever lived did suffer. So much for that, *mine enemies reproach me*.

But what is the specialty of this reproach? To come to that more particularly. *They say unto me, Where is thy God?*

They touch him in his religion. They saw him persecuted by Saul, scorned by Saul's courtiers; they see him driven up and down, as a partridge in the wilderness; they saw him banished from the sanctuary, destitute of friends; they saw him in this disconsolate estate, and they judge by sense and appearance, that they thought he was a man that God regarded not at all: therefore say they, *Where is thy God?*

God's children are impatient, as far as they are men, of reproaches; but so far as they are Christian men, they are impatient of reproaches in reli-

\* That is, 'out-going.'—ED.

† That is, 'the kennel' or sewer.—ED.



gion : *Where is now thy God ?* They were not such desperate atheists as to think there was no God, to call in question whether there were a God or no, though indeed they were little better ; but they rather reproach and upbraid him with his singularity, *Where is thy God ?* You are one of God's darlings ; you are one that thought nobody served God but you ; you are one that will go alone—*your God*.

So this is an ordinary reproach, an ordinary part for wicked men, to cast at the best people, especially when they are in misery. What is become of your profession now ? What is become of your forwardness and strictness now ? What is become of your much reading and hearing now ; and your doing such things now ? What is become of your God that you bragged so of, and thought yourselves so happy in, as if he had been nobody's God but yours ? We may learn hence the disposition of wicked men. It is a character of a poisonous, cursed disposition to upbraid a man with his religion.

But what is the scope ? The scope is worse than the words, *Where is thy God ?* The scope is to shake his faith, and his confidence in God ; and this is that that touched him so nearly while they upbraided him, *Where is thy God ?* Indeed, they had some probability and show of truth ; for now God seemed opposite to him, when he was banished from his house, from that blessed communion with him that he had. Their purpose was therefore to shake his faith and affiance in God ; and herein they shewed themselves right, the children of the devil, whose scope is to shake the faith and affiance of God's people, in all his temptations, and by his instruments. For the devil knows well enough, that as long as God and the soul join together, it is in vain to trouble any man ; therefore he labours to put jealousies, to accuse God to man, and man to God. He knows there is nothing in the world can stand against God. As long as we make God our confidence, all his enterprises are in vain. His scope is therefore to shake our affiance in God : *Where is thy God ?* So he dealt with the Head of the church, our blessed Saviour himself, when he came to tempt him. 'If thou be the Son of God, command these stones to be made bread,' Matt. iv. 3. He comes with an *if* ; he laboured to shake him in his sonship. The devil, since he was divided from God himself eternally, is become a spirit of division ; he labours to divide the Son from the Father ; he labours to divide even God the Father from his own Son : *If thou be the Son of God*. So he labours to sever Christians from their head, Christ ; subjects from their princes, and princes from their subjects ; friends from friends, and one from another ;—he is a spirit of division : *Where is thy God ?* There was his scope, to breed division, if he could, between his heart and God, that he might call God into jealousy, as if he had not regarded him : thou hast taken a great deal of pains in serving thy God ; thou seest how he regards thee now : *Where is thy God ?*

We should labour to make this use of it, to counter-work Satan ; to strengthen that most of all, that the devil labours to shake most of all. Shall the devil labour to shake our faith and affiance in God above all other things, and shall we not labour to strengthen that ? Above all things, let us look to our head, as the serpent winds about and keeps his head. Keep faith, and keep all. If faith be safe, all is safe ; let us strengthen that, and strengthen all ; weaken that, and we weaken all. What cares Satan for other sins that we fall into ? He aims at our assurance, that we may doubt of God's love, whom we have been so bold as to sin against. That is it he aims at, to make weak faith in the particular acts of sin we commit. He knows that sin naturally breeds doubts, as flesh breeds worms.



Where sin is, if it be in never such a little degree, he knows it will breed doubts and perplexities, and where they are, he hath that he would have. He labours to hinder that sweet communion that should be between the soul and God: *Where is now thy God?* You see wicked men are the children of the devil right in this.

Again, they instance here in matter of religion against him. You see how ready wicked and devilish-minded men are, to tread over the hedge where it is lowest, as the proverb is, to add affliction to affliction, especially in that that may touch a man nearest. They could not touch him nearer than in this, *Where is thy God?* They knew it well enough, where is now your religion? This, they thought, would anger him to the heart. Here is a devilish disposition. You have a terrible psalm for it, Ps. cix., of those that add affliction to the afflicted; *they are cursed persons*. This is the disposition of wicked men, they have no mercy. Malice, we say, is unsatiable. One would think that our Saviour Christ, when he was upon the cross, racked there in all his parts, a man exposed to so much misery and scorn as he was, that they should have had pity upon him; but upon the cross they reproached him, Aha, he saved others, himself he cannot save; let him come from the cross, and we will believe in him. What a bitter sarcasm was this, that came from hell itself! Nay, when he was dead, one would have thought their malice should have been buried with his body. Malice is ordinarily among men living, not the dead; but when he was dead, *This impostor said, &c.*, Matt. xxvi. 61. They laboured to bury his good name, that nothing tending to his honour might remain of him. Indeed, it is the nature of malice to wish the not being of the thing it maliceth, no, not the name. *Let his name perish from the earth*, Ps. xli. 5. It was extremity of malice to work upon this disadvantage, when they see him thus afflicted, to vex him with that he was most affected with, *Where is thy God?*

Therefore, let those that feel and feed that devilish disposition in themselves to insult over God's people, especially in matters of religion to vex them, and when there is a wound already, to make the affliction greater, to add affliction to affliction, let them judge of what disposition they are.

*They say unto me.* You see here another circumstance, *they say unto me*. They are so impudent that they are not afraid to reproach him to his face; *they say unto him*, as if they would stand to their reproach. This is one circumstance of aggravation. Indeed malice is very impudent, when it is come to the extremity. I only observe it, that if we meet with such insolency of malice, not to be discouraged; it hath been thus before, and thus it will be to the end of the world.

And, then, they are not wearied, their malice is unwearied; they say to me,

*Daily.* Day by day their malice is fed with a spring, with a malicious heart. A malicious heart and a slanderous tongue always go well together. The devil, that was the first grand slanderer, hath communion with a malicious heart, and he fomenteth malice, and cherisheth that malicious, poisonous disposition; and a malicious disposition never wants malicious words. As one saith of anger and fury, it ministereth weapons (*c*), so we may say of malice and hatred, it ministereth words always. A malicious heart will never want words: they say to me, *daily*. These are but circumstances, but yet they are somewhat considerable, for they tend to the aggravation of the disconsolate estate of this holy man, that he should meet with such wretched men, that had no pity at all on him, but say to him daily,

*Where is now thy God?* You see then from hence that God is a God,

as the prophet saith, oftentimes hiding himself, Isa. xlv. 15, that God veils himself oftentimes to his children. Not only from the eyes of wicked men, that they think godly men deserted of God, but sometimes from the very sense and feeling of God's children themselves. They are in such desolutions that they are fain to complain that God hath hid himself, and is as a stranger to them. This is the state of God's children in this world. Though God love them dearly, 'as the apple of his eye, and as the signet on his hand,' Zech. ii. 8, and Jer. xxii. 24, yet notwithstanding his carriage to them is oftentimes so strange, that those that look upon their estate in this world think they are men, as it were, forlorn and destitute of God. And this estate must needs be, because of necessity there must be a conformity between us and our Saviour. It was so with our Saviour, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' Matt. xxvii. 46. God was never nearer him in all his life than then, and yet he cries out, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' And as he spake, so the rest thought of him, as if he had been a man forsaken; and so here they say to this holy man, *Where is thy God?*

Therefore let us lay up this likewise for the strengthening of our faith in the like case, that we be not overmuch discouraged. If God hide himself, if others think our estates miserable, and ourselves think ourselves so, it is no strange matter. It was thus with David. He was so neglected of God that they thought God had clean forsaken him. *Where is thy God?*

Our life is now hid with Christ, as the apostle saith, Col. iii. 3. We have a blessed and glorious life, but it is hid in our Head. Even as in winter time the trees have a life, but it is hid in the root, so a Christian hath a blessed condition at all times, but his glory and happiness is hid in his Head, and there is a cloud between him and his happiness.

Therefore let us support ourselves with this in all times, was God gone from David indeed when they said, 'Where is thy God?' Oh no; God was as near David now as ever he was, nay, rather nearer. God was never nearer Moses than when he was sprawling upon the water in that ark they had made for him, Ex. ii. 3. He was never nearer Daniel than when he was in the lion's den, Dan. vi. 19. God came between the lion's teeth and Daniel. And, as I said, he was never nearer our Saviour than when he was on the cross. And he was never nearer to David than when they said, 'Where is thy God?' When trouble is near, God is never far off. That is an argument to make God near, *Lord, be not far off, for trouble is near.* And extremity and danger and trouble, it is God's best opportunity to be with his children, however he do not help for the present oftentimes. *'Where is thy God?'*

David might rather have said to them, Where are your eyes? where is your sight? for God is not only in heaven, but in me. Though David was shut from the sanctuary, yet David's soul was a sanctuary for God; for God is not tied to a sanctuary made with hands. God hath two sanctuaries, he hath two heavens: the heaven of heavens and a broken spirit. God dwelt in David as in his temple. God was with David and in him; and he was never more with him, nor never more in him, than in his greatest afflictions. They wanted eyes, he wanted not God. Though sometimes God hide himself, not only from the world, but from his own children, yet he is there; howsoever their sorrow is such that it dims their sight (as we see in Hagar), so that they cannot see him for the present, Gen. xxi. 19. He sometimes looks in their face, as we see Mary. She could not see Christ distinctly, but thought him to be the gardener. There is a kind of



concealment a while in heavenly wisdom, yet, notwithstanding, God is with his children always, and they know it by faith, though not by feeling always. As we know what Jacob said, 'God was in this place, and I was not aware,' Gen. xxviii. 16, when he slept upon the stone, and had that heavenly vision; so it is with God's people in their trouble. God is with his church and children, and wicked men are not aware of it. Christ is in them, and they are not aware of it. Christ was in the saints when Saul persecuted them, and Paul was not aware of it, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? Who art thou, Lord?' saith he. Alas! he dreamed not of Christ. However wicked men of the world think, yet God is near his own children, in the most disconsolate condition that can be. It is, when they say, '*Where is thy God?*' as if a man should ask what is become of the moon between the old and the new, when the dark side is towards us, when we see no moon at all for a time, till the new come? The moon is near, and more enlightened with the sun then than at other times, and is nearer to him. So in afflictions. However the dark side of God's children be toward the world, that they cannot see them, yet their light side is towards God. God shines upon them, and enlightens them more then at that time with solid comfort, that keeps them from sinking, than at other times. Therefore it was an ignorant question of them to ask, *Where is thy God?* It shewed they were ignorant of the passages of God's dealing with his children, as indeed none are greater atheists than your scoffers. *Where is thy God?* as if God had been only a God of observation, to be observed outwardly in all his passages towards his children, whereas, as I said, he is a God hiding himself oftentimes; and he shews himself in contrary conditions most of all, most comfortably. His work is by contraries. But these carnal men were ignorant of the mysteries of religion, and the mysteries of divine providence towards God's children. Therefore their question savours of their disposition, *Where is now thy God?* Thus briefly I have gone over their disposition and carriage towards the holy man David, that they were enemies of hostile nature and disposition, and they reproached him, and daily, and that in his religion, *Where is thy God?*

I beseech you let us look to it in time, that it may not be truly said to us, by way of upbraiding, *Where is now thy God?* God may be strange to us indeed; let us so carry ourselves as that God may own us in the worst times. If they had said this truly, how grievous had it been to David! but it was more malice than truth. For David found experience of God. He might rather have upbraided them, *Where is your God?* and there is no wicked man, but a man may in his greatest extremity upbraid him, and that in truth, *Where is your God?* your riches, honour, and estate? where is all this that you supported yourself with, and bore yourself so big on, that you despised all others? what has become of all now? A man cannot stand in a thing that stands not itself. A man cannot build on that that hath no good foundation. Now all men that are not truly religious, they have some idol or other that will deceive them. Therefore a man may truly say to them, that which they falsely and maliciously say to God's people, *Where is your God?*

So much for their disposition and carriage. Now how stands David affected with this? that is the second part.

*As with a sword in my bones.* It was as a sword to his bones. Now that that toucheth the bones is the most exquisite grief. That that we call the grief of the teeth, you see what an exquisite grief it is in that little member. When the bones are cut or touched, it is a most exquisite

grief. *As with a sword in my bones, my enemies reproach me.* What was the matter that this reproach, *Where is thy God?* touched him so to the quick? What was the cause? The causes were diverse.

First of all concerning God: for when they said to him, 'Where is thy God?'

*First*, It tended to the reproach of God, as if God were so fickle a friend as to desert his best friends in the time of misery. This touched upon God by way of disparagement, therefore it must needs touch David, who was God's friend.

Then, again, it touched God in another thing, in his manner of providence, as if he had been a God of the hills and not of the valleys; as if he had been a God for one time and not for another. Where is now thy God? What is become of him?

Again, in the third place, it touched upon him in this, as if he had favoured them, being cursed, formal hypocrites, more than David; as if he had favoured their formal, hypocritical, base, dead courses, that were most abominable to God. For these persecutors were Saul's courtiers, and other enemies. Wicked men, they thought to justify their own ways by this reproach, You see we are as good as you. God respects us; we fall not into such miseries; we have recourse to Saul, though he have cast out you and others, &c. So it tended to God's reproach in that, as if God had justified their course, as if they had been dearer to him that were most abominable.

And this is to make an idol of God, to make God justify those courses that he most abhors, as it is in Ps. l., 'Thou thoughtest I was like unto thee.' Because God lets a wicked man alone, thou thoughtest that I was a companion for thee, and would take thee by the hand; whereas God will not do so.

In these three respects, especially, God was wronged when they said, 'Where is thy God?' as if he had not been a true and faithful friend to his children; and, besides, as if he had not a providence over his children in the worst condition; as if he had allowed and liked of the base carriage, and condition, and profession of these wretched men as well as of David's. 'Where is now thy God?' You see God respects us as well as you. But there was no such matter; he respected David more than a thousand of them.

Again, this touched upon religion itself, this reproach, 'Where is now thy God?' where is your goodly profession? as if it were in vain to serve God, a horrible reproach to religion. It is not in vain altogether to serve the devil; he bestows somewhat upon his servants. This was a base thought, to think that God would do no good to them that serve him. That is the fountain of all good, that doeth good to his enemies, that suffers his sun to shine upon his enemies, Mat. v. 45. For him to desert his friends, for a man to be truly religious and get nothing by it, this tended to the reproach of religion; and through David's sides they strike at God and religion, as if it were in vain to serve God, as they said in Malachi's time, Mal. iii. 14. And, indeed, this is in the hearts of men now-a-days. If they see a man that makes care and conscience of his ways, under a cloud, or that he doth not so prosper in the world as others do, they begin to have weak conceits of the profession of religion, as if that were the cause, as if there was nothing gotten by serving of God. But we may be loose professors, and go in a libertine course, and please God as well as others. This is a great grief to God's children. They know well



enough it is not in vain to serve God. God is not a barren wilderness, Jer. ii. 31, to those that serve him; they are not barren ground that are careful in his service. So you see upon what ground he was thus affected, because God and religion were touched in it.

Take away a godly man's religion, and his God whom he serves in religion, you take away his life; touch him in that, you touch him in his best freehold. Therefore, when these malicious enemies say, *Where is thy God?* they could not more touch David than so. Profane men of the world come and tell them of religion and such things. Alas! they turn it off with scorn, for they would have the world know that they are not very religious; they never speak of God and of religion but in scorn, or by way of discourse. But a man that is religious to purpose, and makes it his trade, makes it that whereby he hopes to be saved, he takes to heart any thing that is spoken against religion, their words are *as a sword in his bones*, while they say unto him, *Where is thy God?* It is better to be dis-tempered than not to be moved, when God and religion are touched. The Holy Ghost that appeared in the shape of a dove, Matt. iii. 16, appeared at another time in fiery tongues, Acts ii. 3, to shew that the meek spirit of God is zealous other whiles in his children. This was another reason he was thus affected.

And, *thirdly*, in this reproach of theirs, thus violent, 'Where is now thy God?' here was a damping of the spirits of all good men in those times, that should hear of this reproach. Words affect strangely; they have a strange force with men, especially in weak fancies, that are not grounded in their judgment and faith. The spies made a shrewd oration, and brought an ill report on the land: Oh! it is a land that devours the inhabitants, Num. xiii. 32. It was a speech discomfortable, and it wrought so, that it made them all murmur and be discouraged. It is not to be thought what mischief comes from speech cunningly handled. This malicious speech, 'Where is thy God?' and what is become of all thy devotion at the tabernacle, that thou didst frequent so, and drewest others, a great train with thee, what is become of all now? When weak men, that had the beginnings of goodness in them, should see a man reproached for this, questionless it would damp the beginnings of goodness. O would not this go to the heart of David, to see insolent men to quench good things in good men with reproaches! Well, we see what reason the holy man David had to be so sensible of this reproach, for they said unto him daily, 'Where is thy God?'

Now, therefore, to make some use of it to ourselves, let us enter into our own souls, and examine with what spirits and feeling we hear God reproached, and religion reproached, and hindered, and disgraced any kind of way. If we be not sensible of this, and sensible to the quick, we may suspect we are not of David's spirit, that was a man after God's own heart, 1 Samuel xiii. 14; Acts xiii. 22. It was a cutting of his bones, when they came to disparage his religion, and profession, and to touch him in that. Shall a man see men forsake religion, and go backward, and desert the cause of God, and see it oppressed, and not be affected with all this? Certainly he hath a dead soul. That which hath no grief, when there is cause of grief, certainly it is to be accounted but as dead flesh. That heart is but dead flesh that is not touched with the sense of religion.

And to come a little nearer to our times, when we can hear of the estate of the church abroad, the poor church in the Palatinate, in Bohemia, (*d*) and those places, you see how like a canker, superstition is grown up amongst

them ; when we hear of these things and are not affected, and do not send up a sigh to God, it is a sign we have hollow and dead hearts. No question but if we were there among those malignant spirits that are there, their speeches are daily such, as these wicked men's were to David, What is become of your reformation ? What is become of your new religion ? Where is that now, I pray ? You that do upbraid us with idolatry, what is become of your religion ? No question but they have these sarcasms and bitter speeches daily ; and those that have the Spirit of God, they are grieved to the heart. If we have the Spirit of God and of Christ in our breasts, and anything of the spirit of David and of holy men, we will grieve at this.

The apostle St Paul, when Elymas laboured to stop, when one was to be converted, he breaks out, ' Thou child of the devil, and enemy of all good, why dost thou not cease to pervert the right ways of God ? ' Acts xiii. 10. A man that is not fired in this case, hath nothing at all in him. When we see wicked men go about to pervert religion, and overturn all, and we are not stirred at it, it is an ill sign.

Let us, therefore, take a trial of ourselves, how we stand affected in case of religion. He that hath no zeal in him hath no love. By an antiperistasis, an opposition of the contrary increaseth the contrary ; if a man have any goodness, if it be environed with opposition, it will intend (e) the goodness and increase it. Lot shewed his goodness in Sodom the more, because of the wickedness of the Sodomites. When a man is in vile company, and hears religion disgraced, and good persons scoffed at, and will not have a word to justify good causes and good persons, he hath no life at all of religion ; for if he had, he would then have more religion than ordinary, the contrary would then intend, and increase the contrary. There was a blessed mixture of many affections in this grief of the holy man David, when he said, ' their words were as a sword in his bones.' There was great grief, not only for himself, as a man being sensible of reproaches, for men are men ; and not out of corrupt nature, but out of the principles of nature, they are sensible of reproaches. Here was grief in respect of God, and in respect of himself ; and here was the love of God and the love of religion in this grief. Here was zeal in this, and a sweet mixture of blessed affections ; a sweet temper in this, when he saith, ' their words were as a sword in my bones.'

Let us make a use of trial, bring ourselves to this pattern, and think, if we do come short of this, then we come short of that that should be in us. But especially let us consider with what hearts we entertain those doleful and sad reports of foreign churches, and with what consideration and view we look upon the present estate of the church, whether we be glad or no. There are many false spirits that either are not affected at all, or else they are inwardly glad of it ; they are of the same disposition that those cursed Edomites were of, ' Down with it, down with it, even unto the ground,' Ps. cxxxvii. 7. I hope that there are but few such amongst us here, therefore I will not press that. But if we be dead-hearted, and are not affected with the cause of the church, let us suspect ourselves, and think all is not well. The fire from heaven is not kindled in our hearts. Our hearts are not yet the altar where God hath kindled that heavenly fire, if we can hear religion disgraced, and good causes go backward, and not be affected. ' Curse ye Meroz.' Why ? Because ' they went not out to help the Lord,' Jud. v. 23. If those be cursed that do not help, as they can, by their prayers, then surely they are cursed that are dead-hearted, that are not affected at all, that join with the persecutors, that cry, ' Down with it even to the ground,'



and say, 'Aha, so we would have it.' If those be cursed that help not forward the cause of the church, at least by their prayers, and strive and contend for 'the faith once given,' Jude 3, what shall we think of those that are not affected at all? nay, which is worst of all, that hinder good causes, that are scorers of religion and good causes, what shall we think of those wretched spirits? How opposite are they to the spirit of David!

To add one thing more, we may learn hence the extent of the commandments, how to enlarge the commandments. Our Saviour, Christ, when he came to preach the gospel, he began with the enlargement of the commandments, shewing the spiritual meaning and extent of the law, 'He that calleth his brother Raca, or fool, is in danger of hell fire,' and 'He that looks on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her in his heart,' Mat. v. 22, 28. You see here the prophet David, when he speaks of their reproach, he speaks of it as if they had a murderous intention; and in the event and issue it is a kind of murder. *As with a sword in my bones, my enemies reproach me, &c.* This sword were but words. He is a murderer in God's esteem, and so it will prove if he repent not, that wounds another man with his tongue. For what doth the Holy Ghost here in David? Doth he not set out words by swords? Is it not oft in the Psalms, 'Their words are as swords, the poison of asps is under their lips?' Rom. iii. 13. There is an excellent place you have for this in Prov. xii. 18, 'There is that speaks like the piercing of a sword, but the tongue of the wise is health.' A good man hath a healing tongue, he hath a medicinal, salving tongue; but a wicked man, his words are as swords, and, as he saith here, their speaking is as the piercing of a sword. Therefore, hence let us learn not to think ourselves free from murder when we have killed nobody, or free from adultery when we are free from the gross act. This is but a pharisaical gloss upon the commandments; but if we will understand the commandments of God as they are to be understood, we must enlarge them as the Scripture enlargeth them. He that prejudiceth the life and comfort of any man, he is a murderer of him in God's esteem; and he that labours to cut another man to the heart with sharp, piercing words, in God's esteem he is a murderer. Those that, though among men, they cannot say black is their eye, and pride themselves, as if they were very religious men; yet, notwithstanding, they are men that are not wanting of their tongues, men that care not to speak bitterly and sharply of others. If they did consider of this, it would take them down, and make them think a little meaner of themselves, when, indeed, in God's construction, they are little better than murderers. 'As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me, while they say to me daily, Where is thy God?' So much for these words.

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#### NOTES.

(a) P. 105.—'Scantling' = a proportion, or simply, portion. This is a somewhat peculiar use of a not very common word. It occurs in Shakspeare once in the same sense with that here:

' . . . . . Trust to me, Ulysses,  
Our imputation shall be oddly pois'd  
In this wild action: for the success,  
Although particular, shall give a *scantling*  
Of good or bad unto the general.'—*Troilus and Cressida*, i. 3.

See also Locke, Human Understanding, b. ii., c. 21.

(b) P. 108.—‘As killing in my bones.’ The strong impression ‘killing,’ or even as it might be rendered, murder, is a literal equivalent of the original (רָצַח), which is intended to express excruciating pain. Compare Ezekiel xxi. 22, rendered ‘slayeth’ in auth. version.

(c) P. 111.—‘As one saith of anger.’ The reference is to Virgil, *Æn.*, lib. i., v. 150:

‘ . . . . . *Furor arma ministrat ;*  
Tum pietate gravem ac meritis, si forte virum quem  
Conspexere,’ &c.

(d) P. 115.—‘The poor church in the Palatinate.’ Our memoir shows the deep interest Sibbes, in common with the ‘Puritans,’ took in the persecuted Protestants of Bohemia.

(e) P. 116.—‘Intend’ = stretch, and so augment. Richardson illustrates the word from Barrow.

G.