

## A GENERAL EPISTLE TO ALL SUFFERING SAINTS.

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TO all afflicted and distressed Christians all the world over, especially to those that are in bonds for the testimony of Christ in Bristol ; and to those that are sufferers there, or in any other city, town, country, or kingdom whatsoever ; and to all that have been deep sufferers in their names, persons, estates, or liberties, upon the account of their faithfulness to God, to their light, to their consciences, to their principles, to their profession, and to Christ the king and head of his church ; and to all that have been long prisoners to their beds or chambers by reason of age, and the common infirmities that do attend it, or that are under any other afflictive dispensation : and more particularly to my ancient dear and honoured friend, Mrs Elizabeth Drinkwater, who has been many years the Lord's prisoner, and upon the matter, kept wholly from public ordinances, by reason of her bodily weaknesses and infirmities ; though in the want of a greater sanctuary, God has been ' a little sanctuary ' to her soul, Ezek. xi. 16,—Grace, Mercy, and Peace be multiplied.

DEAR AND HONOURED FRIENDS,—The ensuing treatise about the signal presence of God with his people, in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses and most deadly dangers, I present to the service of all your souls. There has not been any treatise on this subject, that hath ever fallen under mine eye ; which hath been one great reason to encourage me in this present undertaking. I know several holy and learned men have written singularly well upon the gracious presence of God with his people, in ordinances and in the worship of his house ; but I know that none have made it their business, their work, to handle this subject that I have been discoursing on : though a more excellent, noble, spiritual, seasonable, and necessary subject can rarely be treated on.

There are ten things that I am very well satisfied in, and to me they are things of great importance in this present day. And the first is this—viz.,

1. *That there is no engagement from God upon any of his people, to run themselves into sufferings wilfully, causelessly, groundlessly.* Christians must not be prodigal of their blood, for their blood is Christ's. Their estates, their names, their liberties, their all, is his ;

they are not their own, they are bought with a price, 1 Cor. vi. 20, and vii. 23; and therefore to him they must be accountable for their lives, liberties, &c., and therefore they had need be very wary how they part with them. We must not step out of our way to take up a cross. The three worthies were passive,<sup>1</sup> Dan. iii. 20, 21, 28. They did not rush into the fiery furnace, but yielded themselves to be cast into the fiery furnace; they did not stubbornly oppose nor struggle against their enemies, but patiently and quietly yielded their bodies to the flames: neither did the prophets or apostles step over God's hedge, to make way to their own sufferings or martyrdom. No man may, with the Donatists, destroy themselves, rather than they would conform to this or that religion. No man may have a hand in his own destruction, no man may cut his throat with his own hands to avoid a prison, a dungeon, a den, a fiery furnace. Cyprian tells the Christians in his time, that were ambitious of martyrdom, *Non est in tua potestate, sed in Dei dignatione, martyrium*. We may not run ourselves into prison without a *mittimus* from heaven. If righteousness lead me into prison, a righteous God will stand by me in prison, and in the issue, give me a gracious or a glorious deliverance out of prison. But if I wilfully, causelessly run myself into prison, it will be a righteous thing with God, to leave me to shift for myself in prison. If God should meet a man in prison, and say to him—as he did once to Elijah, 'What dost thou here, Elijah?'<sup>2</sup> 1 King xix. 9—'What dost thou here, O man? is this a fit place for truth's champion? if a man cannot readily answer, Lord, I have not run myself into a prison—but it is thyself, it is thy truth, it is thy interest, it is thy honour, it is my conscience, it is duty that has brought me hither—what confusion would attend him! Philustrius(?) and Theodoret speak of some that would compel men to kill them out of an affectation of martyrdom; but this was a mad ambition, but no true zeal. It was an error in Tertullian, to say that afflictions, that sufferings were to be sought. No man is to make his own cross, nor scourges to whip himself; nor to cast himself into a suffering state, so long as God hath left him a plain open way to escape suffering without sinning: not but that most men are more apt and prone to sin themselves out of smart sufferings, than unwarrantably to run themselves into sufferings; but it is good for every Christian to be upon his guard, and not run till God sends him, Acts ix. 23–25; John xx. 19, 26. As a Christian must not shun sufferings, so he must not seek them.

(2.) Secondly, *That afflictions, sufferings, persecutions, hath been the common lot and portion of the people of God in all the ages of the world.*<sup>3</sup> Witness the sufferings of the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, the primitive Christians, and the martyrs of a later date. Abel was persecuted by Cain, 1 John iii. 12; and Isaac by Ishmael, Gal. iv. 29; and Jacob by Esau. That seems to be a standing law, 'All that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution,' 2 Tim.

<sup>1</sup> What sad sufferings do many blind papists run themselves into, out of a superstitious opinion of merit or satisfaction; but under all their penances they cannot say, 'We bear in our bodies the marks of our Lord Jesus Christ,' Gal. vi. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Here he is secretly taxed for leaving his station out of too much fear of Jezebel.

<sup>3</sup> Mat. x. 22, and xvi. 24; Luke xxi. 12; John xv. 20; Heb. xi. The common cry of persecutors hath been *Christianos ad Leones*.

iii. 12. A man may have many faint wishes and cold desires after godliness; and yet escape persecution; yea, he may make some essays and attempts as if he would be godly, and yet escape persecution; but when a man is thoroughly resolved to be godly, and sets himself in good earnest upon pursuing after holiness, upon living a life of holiness, upon growing up in holiness, then he must expect to meet with afflictions and persecutions. The history of the ten persecutions, and that little Book of Martyrs, the eleventh of the Hebrews, and Mr Foxe his Acts and Monuments, with many other histories that are extant, do abundantly evidence that from age to age, and from one generation to another, they that have been 'born after the flesh have persecuted them that have been born after the Spirit,' Gal. iv. 29; and that 'the seed of the serpent hath been still a-multiplying of troubles upon the seed of the woman,' Gen. iii. 15. As there was no way to paradise but by a flaming sword, nor no way to Canaan but through a howling wilderness, so there is no way to heaven but by the gates of hell; there is no way to a glorious exaltation but through a sea of tribulation, of persecution, Acts xiv. 21, 22. The way to heaven is not strewed with roses, but full of thorns and briars, as those 'of whom this world is not worthy' have always experienced, Heb. xi. The serpentine brood takes a very great pleasure to be still a-representing the people of God as foolish, hypocritical, precise, proud, schismatical, seditious, factious, and as persons against order and government, against good laws and customs, as disturbers and troublers of the peace. Thus Ahab accounts Elijah 'the troubler of Israel,' 1 Kings xviii. 17; and Haman laid it to the charge of the Jews, that 'they were disobedient to the king's laws,' Esth. iii. 8; and the adversaries of the Jews told Artaxerxes the king that 'Jerusalem was a rebellious city, hurtful unto kings and princes,' Ezra iv. 15; and the unbelieving Jews at Thessalonica did as much for the apostles, they said they were the men 'that turned the world upside down,' Acts xvii. 6. So Luther was called 'the trumpet of rebellion;' and Tertullus calls Paul 'a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition,' Acts xxiv. 5; *Δουμὸν*, a pestilence, a botch. Foolish Tertullus mistook the antidote for the poison, the remedy for the disease. Now if so precious a man as Paul, than whom, saith Chrysostom, the earth never bare a better since it bore Christ, were accounted and called a pest, a botch, let us think<sup>1</sup> much if the choicest saints in our days are accounted and esteemed as so many pests and botches. This is the reward the ungrateful world gives the servants of Christ for their zeal and faithfulness in the cause of Christ; instead of encouraging them, they load them with ignominious and hateful terms of rebellion and turbulency, &c., labouring thereby to make them odious, and to enrage the people against them, as the persecutors of old used to wrap the Christians up in bears' skins, and lions' skins, &c., and then to bait them with dogs. It is a very great vanity to think of passing to heaven without suffering. The saints in all ages have found the way thither paved with troubles, and it would be a foolish, childish thing for any of us to think of finding it otherwise now. Constantine the Great, as piously as wittily, told Acesius the Novatian, that if he would not take up with persecution, and such like dealing, he must

<sup>1</sup> Query, 'not think'?—Ed.

provide him a ladder and climb alone to heaven.<sup>1</sup> We must go to heaven some other way than the saints have done of old, except we resolve of going thither through much tribulation, Acts xiv. 22.

3. Thirdly, *That no person or persons on earth may sinfully shift off sufferings, or avoid sufferings.* There being infinitely more evil in the least sin than there can be in the greatest sufferings that can befall us in this world, it is best, it is safest to choose suffering rather than sinning, as Moses did. So Daniel chose rather to be cast among lions than that his conscience should be a lion within him, Dan. vi.; and the three children, or champions rather, who were holily wilful, chose rather to burn in the fiery furnace than to bow to the image that the king had set up, Dan. iii. He that values peace with God, and peace with conscience, and the honour of God, and the credit of religion, the silencing of sinners, and the rejoicing of the saints, must choose to suffer rather than to sin.<sup>2</sup> When storms arise, and troubles and dangers approach, many begin to consult, not how they may glorify God by suffering, but how they may provide for their own safety by sinning. Plato knew much of God, but, as Josephus shews, durst not set it down for fear of the people; and Lactantius charges the same upon Tully: 'Thou darrest not,' saith he, 'undertake the patronage of the truth, for fear of the prison of Socrates;' and Augustine doth as much for Seneca; he spends a whole chapter in shewing how he held the truth in unrighteousness, telling us how he revered that which he reprov'd, did that which he condemned, and worshipp'd that which he found fault with.<sup>3</sup> Though these wise men saw the vanity of the heathenish deities, and the worship that was given to them, and looked upon them as utterly unworthy of respect from wise and sober men, nay, secretly scorned and derided them; yet would they not openly declare against them, and that for fear of the people who so much doted upon them. But Daniel's three young worthies were men of that heavenly gallantry, that they peremptorily resolv'd upon this, that though they should not be delivered by their God, yet they would not sin against their God, nor so much as demur, deliberate, or take time to consider whether they should suffer or sin; it was past dispute with them, brave and noble souls that they were. It is observable that when Paul speaks of his afflictions, his sufferings, he calls them 'light,' 2 Cor. iv. 17; but when he speaks of his sin, he speaks of it as a burden that press'd him down, and made him cry out, 'O wretched man that I am!' and to cry out again, 'we groan, being burdened,' Rom. vii. 23; 2 Cor. v. 2, 4. Moses his choice is famous, and celebrated all the world over; for it was not made when he was a child, but when he came to forty years of age, Heb. xi. 25-27; then he preferred suffering, not only before sinning, but before all the honours, riches, and pleasures of Egypt, accounting the worst of Christ, viz., reproaches, better than the best of the world. When Eleazar was promised to be saved from torments and death if he would but make show of yielding, he courageously answered, 'It becometh not our age in anywise to dissemble,' 2 Mac.

<sup>1</sup> Socrat. Hist. Eccl., lib. i. cap. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Judas and Spira will rather sin than suffer; but who ever suffered more on this side hell than they suffered?

<sup>3</sup> De Civit., lib. vi. c. 10.

vi. 24; whereby many young persons might think that Eleazar, being fourscore and ten years old, were now gone to a strange religion. Thus also one of the seven brethren, in the name of the rest, 'We are ready to die, rather than transgress the laws of our fathers,' chap. vii. 2; meaning such laws as God of old had given to their fathers, to be observed by them, and by their posterity age after age. Polycarpus,<sup>1</sup> when the governor promised to let him go free if he would deny Christ, answered, I have served him fourscore and six years, and he never hurt me in anything; how shall I curse him who hath saved me? And the governor adding one while promises, another while threatenings, Polycarpus thus cuts off all, Why dost thou make delays? inflict what thou lists.<sup>2</sup> So Galeacius, [Carraciolus,] a gentleman of great estate, who suffered martyrdom at St Angelo in Italy, being much pressed by his friends to recant, and save his life, he replied, that death was much more sweet to him with the testimony of verity, than life with the least denial of truth. Hooper desired rather to be discharged of his bishopric, than yield to certain ceremonies. A man were better displease all his friends, all his relations, yea, all the world, than to displease his God, and displease his own conscience. So Cyprian,—Augustine relates the story,—when the emperor, as he was going to execution, told him that he would give him space to consider whether he were not better cast in a grain into the fire,<sup>3</sup> than be so miserably slain; to which he replied, *In re tam sancta deliberatio non habet locum*, There needs no deliberation in this case. The like we read in the history of France, in the year 1572, presently after that tragical and perfidious slaughter and massacre of so many thousands of protestants by treacherous bloody papists, Charles the Ninth, king of France, called the Prince of Conde, and proposed to him this choice, either to go to mass, or to die presently, or to suffer perpetual imprisonment; to which he returned this noble answer, That by God's help he would never choose the first; and for either of the two latter, he left it to the king's pleasure, and God's providence. Thus you see that the people of God have, when put to it, chose rather to suffer than to sin. But,

4. Fourthly, *That they shall be sure to suffer with a witness, that refuse to suffer, or are afraid to suffer, when Christ calls them to a suffering state.* No men can suffer so much for Christ, as they shall be sure to suffer from Christ, if through weakness or wickedness they either disdain or refuse to suffer for Christ: Mark viii. 35, 'For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.' There is no loss, but gain, in losing for Christ. It is a very dangerous thing for men to prefer the safety of their natural lives before the glory of Christ, the cause of Christ, the gospel of Christ, and the profession of his name. It is certain that the glory of Christ ought to be more dear and precious to us than our very lives. Christ, for our redemption and salvation, freely and readily lays down his life, 'I lay down my life for my sheep,' John x. 15; and shall we stand with him for ours, when our call is clear, to lay them down for his sake and

<sup>1</sup> Eccles. Hist., lib. iv. 15. [As before.—G.]

<sup>2</sup> 'Choosost.'—G.

<sup>3</sup> A 'grain' of incense into the heathen altar-fire, a frequent demand and test.—G.

the gospel's sake? He that shall attempt to save his life by crossing his light, by shifting of the truth, or by forsaking of Christ, shall lose it. It is a gainful loss to suffer for the truth; it is a lossful gain, by time-serving and base complying with the times, the lusts, the wills, the humours of the men of this age, in whom the spirit of Cain and Esau works so furiously, to provide for our present safety, security, plenty, peace, and ease, &c., either by denying the truth, or by betraying the truth, or by exchanging the truth, or by forsaking the truth: Mat. x. 39, 'He that findeth his life shall lose it.' This is a strange expression, a riddle to the world, a seeming contradiction, such as natural reason can never reconcile. 'He that findeth his life;' that is, redeemeth it with the forfeiture of his faith, with the shipwreck of his conscience, 1 Tim. i. 19, 20, makes a loser's bargain; he makes more haste than good speed, whilst in running from death as far as he can, he runs to it as fast as he can. See it in some great instances. When Henry the Fourth of France had conquered his enemies, he turned papist, and gave this reason of it, that he might settle himself in peace and safety. Ravallac, who slew him as he was riding abroad in his coach to refresh himself, confessed that the reason why he stabbed him was because he was of two religions; and thus, by his sinful endeavours to save his life, he lost it.<sup>1</sup> There was one Philbert Hamlin in France, having converted a priest to the profession of the truth, was, together with the priest, apprehended, and cast into prison at Bourdeaux; but after a while, the priest, being terrified with the prison and fear of death, renounced Christ, and was set at liberty. Whereupon Philbert said unto him, O unhappy and more than miserable man! is it possible that, to save your life for a few days, you should so deny the truth? Know, therefore, though you have avoided the corporal fire, yet your life shall not be prolonged; for you shall die before me, and you shall not have the honour to die for the cause of Christ; but you shall be an example to apostates; and accordingly, as he went out of the prison, two gentlemen, that had a former quarrel with him, met him, and slew him; and thus, also, he lost his life by endeavouring sinfully to save it.<sup>2</sup> The Angrognians that yielded to the papists, and complied with them, that they might sleep quietly in a whole skin, were more sadly and cruelly handled by the papists than those that continued stout, courageous, and resolute for the truth.<sup>3</sup> Under the fourth persecution there were some Christians who, for fear of torments and death, denied their faith, and sacrificed to idols, yet did not their bloody persecutors spare them; and it was observed that, being full of guilt, they went to their deaths with dejected and ill-favoured countenances, so that the very Gentiles took notice of it, and reproached them as base apostates, and as such who were worthy to suffer as evil-doers. West, that was chaplain to Bishop Ridley, refusing to die in Christ's cause with his master, said mass against his conscience, and soon after pined away with sorrow and grief. A smith in King Edward the Sixth's days, called Richard Denton, was a forward professor of religion, and, by his Christian instruction, the happy

<sup>1</sup> French History. [As before.—G.]

<sup>2</sup> Non potest, qui pati timet, ejus esse qui passus est.—*Tertul.*

<sup>3</sup> [Foxe] Acts and Mon., fol. 885.

instrument of the conversion of a young man to the faith. Afterwards, in the reign of Queen Mary, this young man was cast in prison for his religion; who, remembering his old friend and spiritual father, the smith, to whom he always carried a reverent respect for the good he had received by him, sent to know whether he was imprisoned also, and finding that he was not, desired to speak with him; and when he came he asked his advice, whether he thought it best for him to remain in prison, and whether he would encourage him to burn at a stake for his religion. To whom the smith answered, that his cause was good, and that he might with comfort suffer for it; but for my part, said the smith, I cannot burn. But shortly after, he that could not burn for religion, by God's just judgment was burned for his apostasy; for his shop and house being set on fire, and he over-busy to save his goods, was burnt in the flames.<sup>1</sup> They that will not burn for Christ when he calls them to it, shall burn whether they will or no. He that will not suffer for Christ, shall be sure to suffer worse things from Christ than ever he could have suffered for Christ. And therefore Dr Taylor, the martyr, hit the nail when he said, If I shrink from God's truth, said he, I am sure of another manner of death than Judge Hales had, who being drawn, for fear of death, to do things against his light and conscience, did afterwards drown himself.<sup>2</sup> Cyprian, in his sermon, *De Lapsis*, makes mention of divers who, forsaking the profession of their faith, were given over by God to be possessed by evil spirits, and so died fearfully and miserably, making good that word that is more worth than a world, John xii. 25, 'He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.'<sup>3</sup> A man that is sparing of his life when Christ calls for it, doth take the ready way to lose it; and he that doth hazard it for him at his call, is sure to live eternally. Christ approves of no followers who are not resolved on the loss of what is dearest to them, yea, even of life, for his sake; therefore doth he mention our life to be hated, which is not to be understood absolutely, as if it were a sin to love life, as it is the gift of God, or that they should be weary of it, but comparatively, that they should not love it more than Christ, his word, his worship, his ways. He that resolves to save his temporal life upon any terms, he takes the shortest cut to lose both temporal and eternal life also. 'He that loveth his life shall lose it.' He that prefers the honour and service of Christ above his own life, he takes the surest way to preserve both body and soul into eternal life; for 'he that hates his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.' Though life be sweet, and every creature makes much of it, from the highest angel to the lowest worm, yet woe, woe to him that is set upon saving of it when Christ calls upon him to lay it down for his sake, or the gospel's sake. No fool to him that thinks to avoid a less danger by running himself into a greater danger, who thinks to save his body by losing his soul, and to save his temporal life by losing eternal life. There is no loser to him

<sup>1</sup> [Foxe] Acts and Mon., vol. iii. p. 960.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 1382.

<sup>3</sup> Φιλέω is here used of excessive and preposterous love. He that so loveth his life, that, out of a desire to save it, he denieth me and my gospel: so this Greek word is used, Mat. x. 37.

who, by sinful attempts to save his life, shall lose a better life than ever he can save. But,

5. Fifthly, Consider, *That of old there had been a very great willingness, readiness, forwardness, and resoluteness in the people of God, cheerfully to suffer for Christ, his truth, his gospel, his worship, his ways, his ordinances, his interest, his honour.* Consult the scriptures in the margin, and many others of the like import, which all knowing Christians can turn to at pleasure.<sup>1</sup> To these I shall add a few examples amongst a multitude of those blessed souls, who willingly, readily, cheerfully, resolutely hazarded all for Christ while they were on earth, and are now a-receiving their reward with him in heaven. Oh, how my heart leapeth for joy, said Mr Philpot, the martyr, that I am so near the apprehension of eternal life! I with my fellows were carried to the coal-house, where we do rouse together in the straw as cheerfully, we thank God, as others do in their beds of down.<sup>2</sup> Mr Glover, the martyr, wept for joy of his imprisonment: and Mr Bradford put off his cap and thanked the Lord when his keeper's wife brought him word that he was to be burnt the next day: and Mr Taylor fetched a pleasant delightful frisk when he was come near to the place where he was to suffer. Mr Rogers, the first that was burnt in Queen Mary's days, did sing in the flames: Vincentius, laughing at his torments, said that death and tortures were to Christians *jocularia et ludicra*, matters of sport and pastime; and he joyed and gloried when he went upon hot burning coals, as if he had trod upon roses. Fire, sword, death, prison, famine, are all pleasures, they are all delightful to me, saith Basil; and in his oration for Barlaam that famous martyr, saith that he delighted in the close prison as in a pleasant green meadow; and he took pleasure in the several inventions of tortures, as in several sweet flowers. William Tims, martyr, in a letter to a friend of his a little before his death, writeth thus, 'Now I take my leave of you till we meet in heaven, and hie you after. I have tarried a great while for you; and seeing you are so long in making ready, I will tarry no longer for you! you shall find me merrily singing, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabbath, at my journey's end,' &c. And when they kindled the fire at the feet of James Bainham, Methinks, said he, you strew roses before me.<sup>3</sup> When the prefect urged Basil to comply with the emperor, and threatened him with death if he denied, he gave him this resolute and stout answer, 'Thou threatenest me with death,' saith he, 'and I would that it would fall out so well on my side, that I might lay down this carcase of mine in the quarrel of Christ, and in defence of the truth, who is my head and captain:' and when the prefect pressed him to remember himself, and obey the emperor; he, rejecting all, told him, What I am to-day the same thou shalt find me to-morrow.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dan. iii. 16, 17; Rom. viii. 36; Ps. xlv. ; Phil. ii. 17; Acts xx. 22-44, and xxi. 13, &c.; Dan. vi.; 1 Pet. iv. 16; Acts v. 41, and vii. 55, 56; 2 Cor. i. 3-5.

<sup>2</sup> Acts and Mon., fol. 867. Modestus, lieutenant to Julian the emperor, told him that when the Christians suffered they did but deride them; and the torments, said he, with which Christians are tormented are more terrible to the tormentors than they are to the tormented.

<sup>3</sup> Foxe and Clarke, as before, under the preceding names.—G.

<sup>4</sup> Socrat. Eccl. Hist., lib. iv. c. 26, Gr.



When Chrysostom was greatly threatened by the cruel empress and others, he made this answer, 'If they keep me poor, I know Christ had not a house to put his head in: if they silence me, and put me out of the synagogue; so was that poor man that confessed Christ, and the apostles enjoined not to speak in the name of Jesus: if they cast me into prison, so was Jeremiah, St Peter, and St Paul, and many more: if I am forced to flee my country, I have that beloved John, and that Atlas-like Athanasius, for precedents of the like nature: or whatsoever else should be done unto me, I have the holy martyrs for my fellow-sufferers; and I will never count my life dear unto me, so I may finish my course with joy; but I will, by God's help be every ready, with all my heart, to suffer anything for the name of Jesus Christ, and for the least jot of his truth,' John ix. 22, 24; Acts v. 40, &c., and xii.; Eph. vi. 20; Rev. i.

Neither were they only a few choice persons who willingly, readily, cheerfully, and resolutely endured martyrdom in Christ's cause; but such multitudes, year after year, month after month, week after week, and day after day, as that one of the ancients testifieth that there was never a day in the year, except the first of January, whereunto the number of five hundred martyrs at least might not be ascribed.<sup>1</sup> So many, one after another, in one day suffered, as the executioner blunted his sword, and, with the pains he took, fainted.<sup>2</sup> That which many of them endured, though to flesh and blood it seemed intolerable, yet with much patience, excellent cheerfulness, and divine courage, they endured it. They were not like bears hauled to the stake; but while persecutors were sitting on their judgment-seats, and condemning some Christians, others leaped in and professed themselves Christians, and suffered the uttermost that could be inflicted, with joyfulness and a kind of pleasantness, singing psalms as long as their breath lasted.<sup>3</sup>

Bucer, in an epistle to Calvin, tells him that there were some that would willingly redeem to the commonwealth the ancient liberty of worshipping Christ with their very lives. True grace makes a Christian of a very heroic nature. Holy zeal will make a Christian very ready to endure anything, or to suffer anything for Christ, his worship, his ways, his truth.

It is a high vanity for any man to think of getting to heaven without suffering. In all the ages of the world the saints have found the way to happiness paved with troubles, and we must not think of finding it strewn with rosebuds.

When Paul and Silas were in prison, their hearts were so full of joy that they could not hold; but at midnight, when others were sleeping, they must fall a-singing out the praises of the Most High, Acts xvi. 25. They found more pleasure than pain, more joy than sorrow, more comfort than torment in their bonds.<sup>4</sup> The consolations of the Spirit rose so high in their souls that their prison was turned into a palace, yea, into a paradise. Paul was a man that took a great

<sup>1</sup> Jerome, *ad Heliod.*

<sup>2</sup> Euseb. *Ecl. Hist.*, lib. viii. c. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Euseb., *loc citat.*

<sup>4</sup> Paul rattles his chain which he did bear for the gospel's sake, and was as proud of it as a woman of her ornaments, saith Chrysostom.

deal of pleasure in his sufferings for Christ : 2 Cor. xii. 10, 'Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake.' He did not only bear his sufferings patiently, but cheerfully also ; he often sings it sweetly out, 'I Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ,' Col. iv. 3, 10 ; Rom. xvi. 7 ; Eph. vi. 20 ; 2 Tim. i. 16, &c. ; not I Paul an apostle, nor I Paul rapt up into the third heaven, nor I Paul that have more gifts, parts, and learning, than others ; but 'I Paul a prisoner,' to shew how much he rejoiced in his bonds and sufferings for Christ. Chrysostom did not hold Paul so happy for his rapture into paradise as he did for his imprisonment for Christ.

Oh, the sweet looks, the sweet words, the sweet hints, the sweet in-comes, the sweet joggings, the sweet embraces, the sweet influences, the sweet discoveries, the sweet love-letters, the sweet love-tokens, and the sweet comforts that Christians experience in their sufferings for Christ ! In all their troubles and persecutions they may truly say, We have sweetmeats to eat, and waters of life to drink, and heavenly honeycombs to suck that the world knows not of ; and, indeed, when should the torch be lighted but in a dark night ; and when should the fire be made but when the weather is cold ; and when should the cordial be given but when the patient is weak ; and when should the God of comfort, the God of all kinds of comfort, and the God of all degrees of comfort, comfort his people, but under their troubles and persecutions ; for then comfort is most proper, necessary, seasonable, and suitable, and then God will be sure to pour in the oil of joy into their hearts ? 2 Cor. i. 3-5. But,

6. Sixthly, Consider, *That there is a great truth in that old maxim, Non pœna, sed causa facit martyrem ; It is not the punishment, but the cause, that makes a martyr.* Let every man look that his cause be good. It is not the blood, but the cause, that makes a martyr. It is no ways meet that I should engage to suffer in every cause. Every cause will no more bear a man out in suffering than every shoulder will bear every burden, or than every little river will bear every ship that is of the greatest burden. One man suffers as a murderer, another suffers as a thief, another suffers as an evil-doer, and another suffers as a busybody in other men's matters ; but all such sufferers are rather malefactors than Christ's martyrs. 'Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer, or as a busybody in other men's matters,' 1 Pet. iv. 15. It is but one word in the original, ἀλλοτριοπύσκοπος, as bishops in another's diocese, as pryvers into other men's matters, as pragmatistical persons that meddle with other men's concerns, without cause or call. It is not suffering for evil-doing, but suffering for well-doing that carries the crown, 2 Tim. ii. 12. It is not just, but unjust suffering that hath the recompense of reward annexed to it, 1 Pet. iii. 14, and iv. 14. It is not sufferers for the evil of sin, nor sufferers of the evil of sin ; but sufferers of the evil of punishment, for the avoiding of the evil of sin, whose cause is good. When I consider the cause of my condemnation, said Mr Bradford, I cannot but lament that I do no more rejoice than I do ; for it is for God's verity and truth.<sup>1</sup> So that the condemnation is not a con-

<sup>1</sup> Mr Bradford, to all that profess the gospel in Lancashire.

demnation of Bradford simply, but rather a condemnation of Christ and of his truth. Bradford is nothing but an instrument in which Christ and his doctrine is condemned. Christ and the thieves were in the same condemnation; Samson and the Philistines in the same destruction by the downfall of the house. *Similis poena, dissimilis causa*, saith Augustine. Martyrdom is a crown, as old age, if it be found in a way of righteousness. Though life be a poor little thing to lay down for that Christ that has done such great things for us, and that has suffered such grievous things, and that has prepared such glorious things for us; yet, it is too precious to lay down in any cause but what is honourable, just, and good, Isa. liii.; John xiv. Luther professed to Spalatine that he rejoiced with all his heart, that God called him to suffer for so good a cause, acknowledging himself unworthy of such a favour.<sup>1</sup> It is the goodness of a man's cause that makes him divinely merry with the martyrs, and to sing in a prison with Paul and Silas, Col. ii. 24. When a man's cause is good he may call his sufferings the sufferings of Christ, and his scars and marks, *στίγματα*, brands and marks of the Lord Jesus, Gal. vi. 17. The Jews have been hated and persecuted for many ages; first by the Romans, and since by all other nations, but not for any just or righteous cause, but for their impiety, obstinacy, and contempt of Christ and his gospel, and for killing the prophets, and stoning them that were sent amongst them, Mat. xxii. 2-8, and xxiii. 30, 34, 37, 38. But gracious persons are endued, not only with reason, but also with spiritual understanding and divine wisdom, which makes them well weigh what they do, and what they suffer. Sincere Christians advisedly endure what they endure for the faith's sake, 'So fight I, not as one that beateth the air,' 1 Cor. ix. 26; that is, not as a madman that fighteth with a shadow, not weighing what he doth, but as a man of understanding, that doth very well know that I have good cause to do what I do. Persecutors commonly judge suffering saints to be no better than sots, idiots, frantics, mad, &c., not knowing the goodness of the cause for which they suffer, nor the noble ends which they aim at in suffering, nor the blessed fruits that attend their sufferings.

But when may a man safely and groundedly conclude that his cause is good, or that he suffers for well-doing, or for a good cause, and as a Christian? Now to this question I shall give these following answers:—

[1.] First, *When a man suffers for doing that which Christ commands*, then he suffers for well-doing, then he suffers as a Christian, and then his cause is good, 1 Pet. iv. 15, 16. You know there is nothing in all the Scripture that God stands more upon than purity of religion, than purity of worship, than purity of ordinances, in opposition to all mixtures and corruptions whatsoever, James i. 27; Phil. iii. 3; John iv. 23, 24. O sirs! the great God stands upon nothing more in all the world than upon purity in his worship. There is nothing that does so provoke and exasperate God against a people as mixtures in his worship and service, Mat. xxi. 12, 13; John ii. 15-17. And no wonder, for mixtures in his worship are expressly cross to his

<sup>1</sup> Ep. ad Spalat., fol. 287.

commands, and pollutions in worship do sadly reflect upon the name of God, the honour of God, the truth of God; and therefore his heart rises against them. Defilements in worship do sorely reflect upon the wisdom of Christ and the faithfulness of Christ, as if he were not faithful enough, nor wise enough, nor prudent, nor understanding enough, to order, direct, and guide his people in the matters of his worship; but must be beholden to the wisdom, prudence, and care of man, of vain man, of sinful man, of vile and unworthy man, to complete, perfect, and make up something that was wanting in his worship and service, &c., Heb. iii. 4-6. Now if a man suffers for owning pure worship and ordinances, for standing for pure worship and ordinances, and for being found in the practice of pure worship and ordinances, his cause is good, and he suffers as a Christian. But,

[2.] Secondly, *When a man suffers for refusing, or for not doing, that which Christ condemns in his word*, then his cause is good, and he suffers as a Christian for well-doing. Now in matters of divine worship, God condemns all mixtures, all inventions and devices of men. The very spirit, life, and soul of the second commandment lies in these words, 'Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image.' God abhors that men should mix their water with his wine, their dross with his gold, their chaff with his wheat, &c. When men will venture to be so hardy and bold with God as to defile his worship with their mixtures, then God is fully resolved to be a swift and terrible witness against them, as you may clearly see by comparing those notable places of Scripture together in the margin.<sup>1</sup> There is no sin that does so greatly incense and provoke God to jealousy and wrath against a people, as mixtures in his worship. God can bear with defilements anywhere rather than in worship and service. God did bear much and bear long with the Jews; but when they had defiled and corrupted his worship, then God gave them a bill of divorce, and scattered them as dung among the nations. Now when a man suffers for refusing to worship God with a mixed worship, or with an invented or devised worship, which Christ in his word doth everywhere condemn, then his cause is good, and he suffers as a Christian. But,

[3.] Thirdly, *They that stoutly and resolutely assert that the blessed Scriptures are a sufficient rule to order, guide, and direct them in all matters of worship*, they have a good cause, Luke x. 25, 26; and they that suffer upon this account suffer as Christians for well-doing. Such vain men greatly detract from the sufficiency of the Scripture, who mingle their own or other men's inventions with divine institutions; and who set their posts by God's posts, and their thresholds by God's thresholds, Ezek. xl. 9. The precepts and traditions of men, with their inventions and additions to the worship of God, are styled posts and thresholds, because the authors of them do lean and stand so much upon them, and set them in the way to hinder others from the enjoyment of temple-privileges, unless they will own and comply with them in their way and mode of worship; but upon all such posts and thresholds, that are of men's setting up in the worship of God, you may run and read folly, weakness, rottenness, and madness. It is only God's

<sup>1</sup> Lev. x. 1, 2; Ezek. v. 11, 12, and xxiii. 38, 39; Jer. vii. 29, 30; Ezek. viii. 17, 18; Rev. ii. 22, 23; Deut. iv. 2, and xii. 32, &c.

posts, God's thresholds, God's institutions, God's appointments, that have wisdom and holiness, beauty and glory, written upon them.<sup>1</sup> For men to set up their posts by God's posts, and to give their posts equal honour and authority with God's posts, this is a defiling of the worship of God, and a profaning of the name of God, which he will certainly avenge; for he will admit no rival or proprietary in the things of his worship. O sirs! the blessed Scriptures are sufficient to direct us fully in everything that belongs to the worship and service of God, so as that we need not depend upon the wisdom, prudence, care, and authority of any man under heaven to direct us in matters of worship: 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17, 'All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.' The Scriptures are sufficient to inform the ignorant, to confute the erroneous, to reform the vicious, and to guide and direct, support and comfort, those that are gracious.<sup>2</sup> Here a lamb may wade, and an elephant may swim; here is milk for babes, and meat for strong men; here is comfort for the afflicted, and succour for the tempted, and ease for the troubled, and light for the clouded, and enlargement for the straitened, &c. Oh, how full of light, how full of life, how full of love, how full of sweetness, how full of goodness, how full of righteousness and holiness, &c., is every chapter, and every verse in every chapter, yea, and every line in every verse! The Rabbins say that a mountain of matter hangs upon every word of Scripture, yea, upon every tittle of Scripture. When the people of God have been in any outward or inward distresses or troubles, God never sends them to the shop of men's traditions and inventions, but he still sends them to the blessed Scriptures: Isa. viii. 20, 'To the law, and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light' (רֹשֶׁת, no morning) 'in them:' chap. xxxiv. 16, 'Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read; no one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate; for my mouth it hath commanded, and my Spirit it hath gathered them.'<sup>3</sup> And in the New Testament, Christ sends his hearers to the Scriptures: John v. 39, 'Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me.' The Greek word, *ἐρευνᾶτε*, that is here rendered 'search,' signifies a strict, narrow, curious, diligent search. We must search the Scriptures as we would search for gold, or for some precious stones, which we would fain find; we must search the Scriptures as hunters seek and search out their game. The Scripture is so perfect a rule that the most specious observances, the most glorious performances, the most exact worship, is no way acceptable unto God if not directed in his word. They may have *λόγον σοφίας ἐν ἐθειλοθηρησκείᾳ*, 'a show of wisdom in will-worship,' to the pleasing of men, not to the honour

<sup>1</sup> It is very remarkable that of old they were to be cut off that made anything like the institutions and appointments of God, Exod. xxx. 32, 33, 37, 38; and if some were so served, would not the world be in more love, peace, and quietness than now it is?

<sup>2</sup> *Adoro plenitudinem Scripturarum*, I adore the fulness of the Scriptures.—*Tertullian*.

<sup>3</sup> No histories are comparable to the histories of the Scripture—(1.) for antiquity; (2.) rarity; (3.) variety; (4.) brevity; (5.) perspicuity; (6.) harmony; (7.) verity; all which should greatly encourage Christians to a serious perusal of them.

of God, Col. ii. 23. God gave Moses a pattern for the making of the tabernacle, Exod. xxv. 9, and David for the temple, Heb. viii. 5, and all things were to be ordered and regulated according to this pattern. God hath set us a perfect rule of worship in his word, and no service pleaseth him but what is according to this rule. As our Saviour told the woman of Samaria concerning the Samaritan worship at Mount Gerizim, and the Jewish worship at Jerusalem, that the Samaritans worshipped they knew not what, John iv. 20–22; the Jews knew what they worshipped, for salvation was of the Jews. Why so? Because the Jews had God's special direction and appointment of God's word for their worship and service, which the Samaritans had not. All our worship must be regulated by God's will, not our own: *Non ex arbitrio Deo servendum, sed ex imperio*; Not according to our own fancy, but God's command and prescription. I say of all human-invented will-worship of God, as Tertullian of the heathen worship, *Ex religione superstitio compingitur, et eo irreligiosior, quanto Ethnicus paratior*; Men in this are no better than laboriously superstitious, taking pains to be irreligious. And so the apostle, 2 Pet. i. 19–21, sends his hearers to the Scriptures, as to a surer word than that of the revelation, all which speaks out the sufficiency of the Scripture, to direct us in all matters of divine worship, and in whatever else may help on the internal and eternal welfare of our precious and immortal souls.

That which bred the popish religion, superstition, idolatry, and pompous worship, was men's departing from the word, and not cleaving to the word as a sufficient rule to direct them in all matters of worship; and what woeful mischiefs and miseries have been brought upon the people of the Lord in this land and elsewhere by men that make not the word the rule of their worship, but cry up an outward pompous worship, I have no mind to enumerate at this time. But how will these vain men, that accuse the holy Scriptures of insufficiency, blush, be ashamed, and confounded, when in the great day the Lord shall plead the excellency and vindicate the sufficiency and authority of his blessed book, in opposition to all the mixtures of men's traditions with divine institutions! Now they that suffer for asserting the holy Scriptures to be a sufficient rule to order, guide, and direct them in all matters of worship, they have a good cause, and they suffer as Christians for well-doing. But,

[4.] *They that are assertors of the true God, in opposition to the idols of the nations, have a good cause; and they that suffer upon this account suffer as Christians for well-doing.* Upon this foot the Christians under the heathen emperors in the primitive times suffered great things; and are there none that suffer this day upon this account by the Romish powers? But,

[5.] *Fifthly, They who assert that God will not bear with mixtures in his worship and service, but revenge himself upon the corrupters of his worship, they have a good cause; and they that suffer upon that account suffer as Christians for well-doing.* All mixtures debase the worship and service of God, and makes the worship a vain worship, Isa. xxix. 13, 14; Mat. xv. 3, 6, 8, 9. As the mixing of water with wine is the debasing of the wine, and the mixing of tin with silver, or brass with gold, is debasing of the silver and gold, so for men to mix

and mingle their traditions and inventions with God's institutions is to debase the worship and service of God, and to detract from the excellency and glory of it. You know that the kings and princes of the world have most severely punished such who by their base mixtures have imbasèd their coin; and assuredly there is a day a-coming when the King of kings will most severely punish all such who have imbasèd his worship and service, by mixing human inventions and Romish traditions with his holy institutions: Rev. xxii. 18, 'For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book.'<sup>1</sup> And no wonder; for what horrible pride, presumption, stoutness, and baseness is it in foolish man to be so bold with the great God, as to dare to mix anything of his own with his worship and service, which, according to divine institution, is so perfect and complete. God will never bear it to see men lay their dirt upon his gold, and to put their rags upon his royal robes. Ah, Christians, it is best to stand up for holy ordinances and pure worship, in opposition to all mixtures whatsoever. Oh, do not touch a polluted worship, do not plead and contend for a polluted worship, but let Baal plead for Baal, 1 Kings xviii. 21; and though all the world should wonder<sup>2</sup> after the beast, yet do not you wonder<sup>2</sup> after the beast, Rev. xiii. 3, 4, 6, 17; and though every forehead should have the mark of the beast upon it, yet do you abhor his mark, and whatever else it be that does but smell and savour of the beast, Rev. xiv. 9, 11. It is a very dangerous thing for any mortals to be adding to God's worship and word; there is a horrible curse that hangs over the heads of all such that add or detract from the blessed Scriptures. If falsifiers of coin are liable unto the civil curse of the law, how much more shall the anathema of eternal damnation be inflicted upon the corrupters of God's word and worship. 'To them that add thereto, God will add all the plagues of this book'—to wit, the seven last plagues—'and cast them into the lake of fire and brimstone, with the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet,' Rev. xix. Now they that suffer for asserting that God will not bear with mixtures in his worship and service, but revenge himself upon the corrupters of his worship and service, they have a good cause, and they suffer as Christians for well-doing. But,

[6.] Sixthly, *They who are hated, scorned, despised, reproached, opposed, persecuted, imprisoned, ruined for their non-compliance with the times, and with the wills and lusts of men, and with the worship of the world and the ways of the world,* they have a good cause, and they suffer as Christians for well-doing, 1 Pet. iv. 4, 5; Jude 15; Rev. iii. 4; 1 Cor. vii. 23; Gal. i. 10. And is not this the very case of the people of God this day? for would they, or durst they, comply with the times, and with the wills and lusts of men, and with the worship of the world and the ways of the world, they should be white-boys,<sup>3</sup> and instead of prisons might stand in princes' palaces as well as

<sup>1</sup> There will come a day when Jews, Turks, and Papists shall pay dear for adding to the Scriptures.

<sup>2</sup> Spelled 'wander.'—G.

<sup>3</sup> A term of endearment, e.g. Ford. 'I know, quoth I, I am his white-boy.'—*Tis Pity*, &c., i. 3. Subsequently applied polemically.—G.

others, and might eat the fat and drink the sweet, and live at ease, and grow rich as well as others. But some do not love that we should either harp hard or long upon this string; and therefore,

[7.] Seventhly, *They that are assertors of Christ, of the true Messiah, and his glorious gospel and gospel ordinances, in opposition to all such as either deny him or his gospel, or that make head against him or gospel ordinances, gospel administrations, they have a good cause, and if they suffer upon that account, they suffer as Christians for well-doing.* The sufferings of the people of God for the first three hundred years, were clearly stated for Christ and the gospel in common. It was the administration of the gospel in the whole and in every part of it, and Gentilism advanced instead thereof, that brought on a warm persecution. Seeing serious Christians are for pure ordinances and pure administrations, and what they have suffered and do daily suffer upon that account, all that do not wilfully shut their eyes may easily discern. It is sad when such men's mouths must be stopped who are qualified, gifted, graced, and called, both by God and men, to preach the glorious, the everlasting gospel, 2 Cor. iv. 4. But when the devil and his factors have done their worst, the gospel will get ground by all the opposition that is made against it, Rev. xiv. 6. Among many other visions that John had, 'he saw an angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth; and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people; saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him,' &c., Rev. xiv. 7, 8. Now mark what next follows: 'Another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen; Babylon the Great is fallen.' Now behold the efficacy and power of gospel-preaching. Let but the gospel be sincerely preached, and Babylon must down. The devil and Dagon must fall before the ark of God's presence; whatsoever the purposes, projects, pretences, policies, conspiracies, combinations, and confederacies of lewd, superstitious, atheistical, wicked wretches be, yet they shall never be able to stop the stream of God's word, dam up the wells of salvation, or hinder the free passage of the gospel, no more than they are able to bind up the wind in their fists, or stop the sun from running its race, or hinder the clouds from watering the earth.<sup>1</sup> It is true that the faithful ministers of the gospel may, by the instruments of Satan, be stocked, stoned, sawn asunder, burned with fire, slain with the sword, clapped up in prison, fettered in chains, plundered, &c., yet the gospel may be, nay is, in lively operation, a light that cannot be put out, a heat that cannot be smothered, a power that cannot be broken; for even then the courageous and constant sufferings of God's faithful ministers, and their cheerful and patient bearing of the cross, doth, as by a lively voice, publish and proclaim the truth of the gospel for which they suffer, and serves to win many to the faith of Christ. Paul's bonds fell out to the furtherance of the gospel, Phil. i. 7, 12-14, 17. Paul's iron chain was more famous and glorious all the world over, than all the golden chains in Nero's palace. Whatsoever persecuting popes and persecuting emperors have attempted against the gospel, Christ

<sup>1</sup> The more wicked men rage, the more the gospel spreads, as you may see, Acts v. 40-42, and viii. 1, 3-6, 12, and xi. 19-21, 26, and xii. 1-4, 23, 24; Heb. xi. 34-36; Rev. ii. 10; Acts xvi. 23-25.



has turned it all to the furtherance of the gospel.<sup>1</sup> The pope's bulls, and the emperor's thunderbolts, did not amaze and discourage men, but did exceedingly animate and encourage them to own the gospel, to embrace the gospel, and to stand up in the defence of the gospel. Cæsar sending the Protestants' confession abroad to other Christian princes, as desiring their advice about it, dispersed and spread it more in all parts than all the Lutheran preachers could have done; for which cause Luther laughs not a little at the foolish wisdom of the papists, in a certain epistle of his to the elector of Saxony.<sup>2</sup> Julian, observing that the more ministers and Christians were persecuted the more they increased, he gave over persecution, and spared those whom he could have wished out of the world. And would it not be the wisdom and the interest of the persecutors in our days to write after Julian's copy? and if they will not, then let them remember that it is the most effectual way under heaven to propagate those truths, opinions, ways, principles, and practices, which their hearts rise and swell against, by laying them in bonds which stand up most eminently in the defence of those truths, opinions, ways, principles, and practices. The nature of man is very curious and inquisitive. Men, as men, are led by common compassion to desire to understand the grounds of men's sufferings. By this means the sufferings, especially the imprisonment of the apostles, carried the doctrine of the gospel to many places where the apostles themselves never came, nor perhaps could come; no doubt but the fame of their suffering went faster and farther too than they could go. But,

[8.] Eighthly, *They that are assertors of any one fundamental truth, in opposition to error and heresy truly so called*, have a good cause; and if they suffer upon that account, they suffer as Christians for well-doing, Acts xxiv. 14; 1 Cor. xi. 9; 2 Pet. ii. 1; Gal. v. 20. Such were those Christians that suffered under the Arian emperors, Constantius, Valens, and others, who suffered for maintaining that Christ was co-essential, co-equal, and co-eternal with the Father; and such were Wickliffe, John Huss, and Jerome of Prague, &c. Are there none this day among us that suffer in their names, in their estates, in their persons, in their liberties, for asserting and maintaining the great truths of the gospel, in opposition to Socinianism, Arianism, Popery, will-worship, &c.? Are there no Socinian atheists among us who deny with open face the godhead of Christ, and of the Holy Ghost, as if Christ were a constituted God, and not of the same substance with the Father from all eternity; not a God by nature, but by donation in time? And though God hath raised up several champions in this his Israel, to disarm them of all their subtilties, and to beat them out of all their trenches, though they were dug as low as hell; yet, how have they put on a brow of brass, and do all they can to bring on a warm persecution upon their opposers? Prov. xxvii. 22. But,

[9.] Ninthly, *They that plead for the reduction of all ordinances, worship, church-government, and discipline, to the primitive pattern and institution, in opposition to all human and antichristian inventions, traditions, and innovations in the worship of God*, they have a

<sup>1</sup> Scultet. Annal.

<sup>2</sup> Scultet. Annal., 274.

good cause; and they that suffer upon that account, suffer as Christians for well-doing. Surely this is a truth we must live and die by, viz., That no ordinance, worship, government, or discipline, is to be held up or maintained in the church but what has the stamp of a divine institution upon it. The worshipping of God in spirit and in truth is that worship which God commands, commends, accepts, and rewards; and therefore let us make it our business, our work, our heaven, to keep close to this kind of worship, John iv. 23, 24; Rom. i. 9; Phil. iii. 3. Christ will shortly come in flames of fire, and vindicate this kind of worship against all opposers, 2 Thes. i. 7-10. Hold out faith and patience a little, and Christ will call all the troublers of his church and people into the valley of decision, Joel iii. 14; and there, with a strong hand, and with an outstretched arm, he will plead with them, and with all such as have muddied the waters of his sanctuary, and polluted those silver streams; and then it will appear whether the outward ceremonious worshipping of God, or the worshipping him in spirit and in truth, be the true worship, Isa. xl. 10; Jer. xxi. 5; Ezek. xxxii. 2. Judicious Hooker determines, that in God's service to do that which we are not to do is a greater fault than not to do that which we are commanded. Amongst other reasons, he gives this to our purpose, because in the one we seem to charge the law of God with hardness only, and in the other, with foolishness and insufficiency, which God gave us as a perfect rule of his worship and service.<sup>1</sup> But,

[10.] Tenthly and lastly, *They that are assertors of those precious privileges that are the purchase of the blood of Christ*, they have a good cause; and if they suffer upon that account, they suffer as Christians for well-doing, Eph. i. 22, 23; Col. i. 18; Phil. ii. 6-10. As for instance,

*First*, Christ as mediator hath purchased for himself a headship and supremacy over his church. Now such as stand up for the headship of the Lamb, against all those that would rob him of his headship, either at Rome or elsewhere, they have a righteous cause; and if they suffer upon that account, they suffer as Christians for well-doing.

*Secondly*, He has purchased for his people a liberty to serve and worship him without fear, in holiness and righteousness all the days of their life, Luke i. 69, 70, 74, 75. He has purchased for his people a liberty from the ceremonies of Moses' law, which were originally the commands of God himself; how much more then from all Paganish and Antichristian ceremonies! Gal. v. 1. The imposition of traditional observances and ceremonies, is to reduce us under the Jewish yoke, which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear, Acts xv. 10; or to impose them as equally obligatory to conscience, as divine commands; or to impose them as the immediate worship of God, or as duties essentially necessary in order to salvation: Christians justly abhor, as the tyranny of Rome, as the infringement of Christian liberty, and as a violation and making void the commandment of God; as our Saviour told the Pharisees of old, that 'they made the commandment

<sup>1</sup> Ecclesiastical Polity, book ii. c. vi. [2.]: Works by Keble, vol. i. p. 311, 2d ed., 1841.—G.

of God of none effect,' Mat. xv. 6. The Greek word *ἡκυρώσατε*, signifies 'to deprive of all rule and authority.' They had such a superstitious esteem of their traditions, ceremonies, &c., that they sought to shoulder God out of his throne, to divest and spoil him of his rule and authority, to ungod him, as it were, by making his commandment void and invalid. Christ reprehends three things in the Jewish traditions; (1.) That they obtruded outward cleanness on God, instead of the purity of the heart; (2.) That by their human traditions, they made void the worship of God; (3.) That they preferred human traditions before the divine precepts; and were so taken with their traditions, that they neglected the divine precepts; yea, made them altogether vain, as the papists, and others that are popishly affected, do this day.<sup>1</sup> They that are the most zealous for the introducing of useless ceremonies in the church, are usually the most negligent to preach the cautions in using them; and simple people, like children in eating of fish, swallow bones and all, to the danger of choking. Besides, what is observed of horse-hairs, that lying nine days in water, they turn to snakes; so some ceremonies, though dead at first, in continuance of time quicken, get stings, and may do much mischief; especially in such an age, wherein the meddling of some have justly awakened the jealousy of all.<sup>2</sup> Now, whoever shall suffer for asserting of any of the precious privileges, that are the purchase of Christ's blood, they suffer in a righteous cause, they suffer as Christians, for well-doing. And thus you see how a man may know when his cause is good, just, and righteous, and when he suffers as a Christian for well-doing. But,

7. Seventhly, Consider, *That it is not enough for a man to have a good cause, but he must have a clear call; else he may be a sufferer, but no martyr.* Some may have a good cause, and yet want a clear call. Some may suffer for the cause of God, and yet sin in suffering, for want of a call.<sup>3</sup> Christ calls not all to suffer; to some it is given, to others it is not given. When a man's call is clear, his peace will be sweet, his courage will be high, and his comforts will be strong, though his sufferings be never so great, nor never so long. Though it be a high honour to suffer for the gospel, yet 'no man ought to take this honour upon himself, but he that is called of God.' Christians must take as much heed how they espouse a suffering state, as how they shun a suffering state. I am not to go to prison upon choice, but upon a call, but upon a warrant under God's own hand; though it be an argument of a gracious spirit, to be always of a ready and forward mind to suffer for Christ. And when he demands, Who will go with me? who will bear my cross? cheerfully to answer, I will go, Lord, let me bear it: yet should we take heed, that as we hang not back when he says go; so that we run not before he sends us, before he calls us.

*Quest.* But how shall I know when I am called to suffer, when I am called to lay down life, liberty, and all, for the profession of Christ and the gospel? To this I answer:—

<sup>1</sup> Chemnitius.

<sup>2</sup> Dr [Thomas] Fuller, Sermon. [and cf. Spencer, as before under 'ceremonies.'—G.]

<sup>3</sup> Phil. i. 29. A priest might enter into a leper's house without danger, because he had a calling from God so to do. And we may follow God dry-shod through the Red Sea when God gives a call.

[1.] First, *When the truth will suffer, and the name of God suffer, and the gospel will suffer, should we decline suffering*, then we are called to suffer. It is our duty to suffer anything, to suffer the worst of things that the worst of men can inflict, rather than that the truth should suffer, or the name of God suffer, or the gospel suffer.

[2.] Secondly, *When the case stands so with us, that we cannot keep life, estate, liberty, &c., without denying of Christ or the gospel, or without concealing this precious truth or that, or without turning our backs upon this ordinance or that, &c.,* then we are called to suffer. When we cannot preserve our lives, our liberties, our estates, without denying of Christ, or the concerns of Christ, in one degree or another, in one kind or another, then we are called to lay down our lives, our liberties, our estates, &c., at the feet of Christ, as the saints and martyrs of old have done before us.

[3.] Thirdly, *When our way is so hedged up with thorns, Hosea ii. 6, that we must either sin or suffer, when sin and sufferings surround us, so that we cannot get out or come off, but we must either sin or suffer,* then I must, with the three champions, choose rather to burn than to bow; and with Daniel to the lion's den, than to omit my duty, Dan. iii. 17; and with Moses, choose to suffer afflictions with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season, Heb. xi. 24-26. I may safely and groundedly conclude, that Christ calls me to suffer, when I must either sin or suffer. When the case stands thus, then I may be confident of the singular presence of God with me, the special blessing of God upon me, and a gracious or a glorious deliverance out of all my sufferings. But,

[4.] Fourthly and lastly, *When a Christian, to the best of his understanding, has seriously weighed all things and circumstances, and is well satisfied in his mind and conscience that his sufferings will be the exaltation of Christ, the furtherance of the gospel, the stopping of the mouths of the wicked, the confirmation of those that are strong, and the strengthening and encouraging of those that are weak,* then he may safely conclude that Christ calls him to suffer. But,

8. Eighthly, Consider, *That the sufferings of the saints in these days are light and easy to the sufferings that were inflicted upon the Jews in the days of Antiochus, and on Christians in the times of the ten notorious persecutions under the Roman emperors, and to those that have been inflicted upon the martyrs since.*<sup>1</sup> So cruel was the sight of those tortures which persecutors inflicted, as exceeds all expression.<sup>2</sup> Constant Christians had their flesh torn from their backs with rods, scourges, whips, and cords, so as their bones lay bare; and the raw parts of their bodies were washed with vinegar and salt. They were stretched on racks, their legs were broken, and so left miserably to perish; they were gored with sharp pricks under the lowest parts of their nails; their bodies were scraped with shells to death; their backs were flayed; their skins were pulled over their heads, from the brow to the chin; their noses, lips, ears, hands, and feet were cut off, and

<sup>1</sup> Mac. vi. 9, 10, vii. 1-4. Euseb. Eccles. Hist., lib. viii. c. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Hym. 10, de Rom. Anno. Mart. Laddelacorda computeth forty-four several kinds of torments wherewith the primitive Christians were tried. Adv. Sacr., cap. 123. [As before. See Index, Mauriee de la Corde.—G.]

they, as sacrifices, cut in gobbets; their tongues were cut out by the roots, and pulled out of their jaws; their eyes were bored, and digged out; their bodies were rent and pulled in pieces by strong boughs forced together by instruments, and let loose when the limbs of the bodies of martyrs were tied fast unto them; their limbs were also pulled to pieces with wild horses; their brains were knocked out with fuller's clubs; their legs were broken in pieces; they were burnt with fire; they were a long while together parched with hot burning coals; being hanged by the heels, and their heads downward over a soft fire, they were choked with smoke; they were roasted at the fire, as flesh to be eaten used to be roasted; they were leisurely broiled on gridirons over the fire; they were fried in red-hot iron chairs, as in a frying-pan, which annoyed the standers-by with a stench; hot boiling lead was poured down their throats; they clapped fiery plates of brass upon the most tender parts of their bodies.<sup>1</sup> A persecuting tyrant, considering the nature of the country, that it was terrible cold, and the time of the year, that it was winter, and a night wherein the cold extremely increased, and that the north wind then blew there, commanded forty Christians to be set stark naked under the open air in the midst of the city to freeze to death. Then, when they heard that charge, with joy casting away even their innermost vestment, they went on to their death by cold.<sup>2</sup> They endured the violence of leopards, bears, wild boars, and bulls. Attalus and Alexander were twice baited with wild beasts, to be torn in pieces by them, as Eusebius reports.<sup>3</sup> Attalus, escaping the beasts, was reserved to other torments, to be burnt to death in an iron chair, heated red fire hot. Macedonius, Theodulus, and Tatianus were laid upon a gridiron, and broiled to death.<sup>4</sup> There were many Christians together stopped up in lakes or caves, artificially made close, which lakes or ditches were filled with a company of dormice, kept hungry, to gnaw and feed upon the poor Christians, they being all the while bound hand and foot, that they could not keep off those hunger-starved creatures, which were kept without meat also, purposely that they might fasten with the more eagerness upon the bodies of those precious Christians. They were destroyed with hunger, thirst, and cold.<sup>5</sup> Such as were stifled in prisons, they cast to dogs, setting watchmen night and day, lest any of them should be buried. And such remainders as were left both of beasts and fire, in part torn, and in part burnt, together with the heads and bodies of others, they cast out in like manner, unburied, and committed them some days to the custody of soldiers.<sup>6</sup> Thus the barbarous cruelty of persecutors extended itself as far as it could beyond the temporal lives of the martyrs. Ecclesiastical histories tell us that all the apostles died violent deaths.<sup>7</sup> Peter was crucified with his heels upwards. Christ was crucified with his head upwards, but Peter thought this was too great an honour for him to be crucified as his Lord, and therefore he chose to be crucified with his heels upward;

<sup>1</sup> Brooks is enumerating the engravings of his favourite folio. Clarke, as before.—G.

<sup>2</sup> Basil in xl. Mart. Conc. *Item* Greg. Nyssen de iisdem, Orat. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Eccles. Hist., lib. v. c. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Socrat. Hist., lib. iii. c. 13.

<sup>5</sup> Mag. Cent. iv. c. 3, ex *Theodoro*.

<sup>6</sup> Euseb. Eccles. Hist., lib. v. c. 1, lib. viii. c. 6, 7, &c. Niceph., lib. vii. c. 11, 12.

<sup>7</sup> See my 'Beauty of Holiness,' pp. 413-415. [Vol. iv.—G.]

and Andrew was crucified by Egeus, king of Edessa; and James, the son of Zebedee, was slain by Herod with the sword, Acts xii. 2; and Philip was crucified at Hierapolis, in Asia; and while Bartholomew was preaching the glad tidings of salvation, multitudes fell upon him, and beat him down with staves, and then crucified him; and after all this, his skin was flayed off, and he beheaded; Thomas was slain with a dart at Calumina, in India; and Matthew was slain with a spear, say some; others say he was run through with a sword; and James, the son of Alpheus, who was called the Just, was thrown down from off a pinnacle of the temple; and yet having some life left in him, he was brained with a fuller's club. Lebbeus was slain by Agbarus, king of Edessa, and Paul was beheaded at Rome by Nero; and Simon the Canaanite was crucified in Egypt, say some; others say that he and Jude were slain in a tumult of the people; and Matthias was stoned to death, and John was banished into Patmos, Rev. i. 9; and afterwards, as some histories tell us, he was by that cruel tyrant Domitian cast into a tub of scalding oil, and yet delivered by a miracle. Thus all these worthies, 'of whom this world was not worthy,' Heb. xi. 38, except John, died violent deaths, and so, through sufferings, entered into glory. To conclude, Lactantius saith, not only the men among the Christians, and those of stronger years and hearts, but even our women and little children, saith he, have endured all torments, and been too hard for their tormentors. No rack, no fire could fetch so much as a groan from them, which the stoutest thieves and malefactors among their persecutors could not undergo, but they would roar and cry out through impatience and disability to endure them.<sup>1</sup> I suppose that more cruel torments cannot be invented than of old have been inflicted on Christians. Persecutors have acknowledged that they were overcome, and had no more to inflict.<sup>2</sup> Such torture and torments so courageously and manfully have sundry Christians in all ages suffered as to them who only heard thereof they seemed incredible; and to many who were eye-witnesses thereof they seemed so strange, and beyond admiration, as they thought the martyrs to be mad, witless, and senseless: but the martyrs had peace and rest and quiet within, and the favourable presence of God so shining upon their souls, that they were encouraged and enabled with a holy and heavenly bravery of spirit to bid defiance to their most cruel persecutors.

Now, Christians, if you compare your most cruel sufferings with the sufferings of the saints of old, how easy and light will they be found to be! What are molehills to mountains, scratches upon the hand to stabs at the heart? No more are your greatest sufferings to those that the saints have met with in former ages. And therefore, though men frown upon you, and threaten you with censures, imprisonment, banishment, confiscation, and all the evil human might and cruelty can do unto you, yet be not moved, but account yourselves happy that you have any opportunity to do or suffer anything whereby you may testify that Christ and his concerns do lie near your hearts, and whereby you may further his opposed interest, and bear witness to his despised truth, 1 Pet. iv. 14, 15. But,

9. Ninthly, Consider, *That the saints and martyrs of old have made*

<sup>1</sup> Lact., lib. v. c. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Euseb. Eccl. Hist., lib. v. c. 1.

*little reckoning or account of their lives, liberties, relations, or estates, when they stood in competition with Christ, or his truth, worship, ways, ordinances, interest, or with their profession of the Christian faith.* Witness that glorious testimony that the apostle gives of them, 'They would not accept deliverance.'<sup>1</sup> He means deliverance from death, or preservation of life. This, though offered, they would not accept—namely, on persecutors' terms or conditions, which was to deny the truth of God, or renounce their faith in him. They scorned deliverance upon base terms, and would rather die than deny Christ or his truth. This phrase, 'Not accepting deliverance,' presupposeth that deliverance was offered to them, otherwise they could not have rejected it, for their not accepting was a rejecting. Their persecutors offered them deliverance upon their compliance with their wills, lusts, ways, worship, &c. This is evident by that which Nebuchadnezzar said to Daniel's three champions when they were accused for not worshipping his idol, which was this, 'If ye be ready to fall down and worship the image,' Dan. iii. 15. He hereby implies that they should be spared; for he addeth, 'If you worship not, you shall be cast into a fiery furnace.' And this is further evident in those to whom the apostle hath reference—viz., the Maccabees, 2 Mac. vi. 18–31. And this was the common practice of the persecuting emperors in the ten persecutions; and after them, with the Antichristian persecutors; and more particularly, with the high persecutors in Queen Mary's days. But the Christians in those several ages had such a mighty presence of God with them, that they chose rather to suffer the worst of deaths than to preserve their lives by complying with the wills, lusts, ways, and worship of their persecutors. For ever remember this, that the envy and malice of persecutors is more against the glorious truth the saints profess than it is against their persons; for let but Christians relinquish the truth, deny the truth, reproach the truth, or oppose the truth, and presently they shall be white-boys,<sup>2</sup> great favourites, good sons of the church, and what not. That the envy and malice of persecutors is more against the truth than the professors of it, is most evident, in that they persecute strangers whom they never knew before. It is said of Paul, that 'if he found any such, he brought them bound,' Acts ix. 2. All was fish that was caught in his net. If father or mother, brother or sister, child or cousin profess the truth, plead for the truth, stand up for the truth, men of persecuting spirits will prosecute and persecute them to the death: 'The brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child; and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death,' Mat. x. 21; Luke xxi. 16. Alphonsus Diarius delivered up his own brother John at Neuberger in Germany into his enemies' hands.<sup>3</sup> So Dr London<sup>4</sup> made Filmer the martyr's own brother witness against him, by supplying of him with meat and money, and by telling of him he should never want. So one Woodman was delivered by his own brother into his enemies' hands.<sup>5</sup> And in the civil wars of France, not to mention that of England, the sons fought against their fathers, and brothers

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xi. 35, *vide* Estius.

<sup>2</sup> As before.—G.

<sup>3</sup> Sleidan, lib. i. 17.

<sup>4</sup> *Sic*.—G.

<sup>5</sup> [Foxe,] Acts and Mon., fol. 1112 and 1501.

against brothers; and even women took up arms on both sides for defence of their religion.<sup>1</sup> And Philip, king of Spain, could frequently say that he had rather have no subjects than heretics, as he called the Protestants; and out of a blind, bloody zeal he suffered his eldest son Charles to be murdered by the cruel Inquisition, because he seemed to favour the Protestant side, [Jerome.] Truth is a glorious, shining light, that discovers the ignorance and darkness, the wickedness and baseness, the unsoundness and hypocrisy, the superstition and vain conversation, of persecutors; and therefore they cannot endure this light, they hate this light, and will do all they can to suppress this light, and those that hold out this light to the world, John iii. 19. The saints and martyrs of old were as willing to die as to dine. Pliny, writing to Trajan the emperor, declares to him that such was their zeal and courage in behalf of their God, that nothing could stir them from it.<sup>2</sup> Neither the imperious checks of the potent emperors, nor the soft language of the eloquent orators, could draw them from the faith; but they steadfastly owned it, and constantly persevered in the defence of it, and were ready and willing to lay down their lives for it. When Ignatius was to suffer, It is better for me, saith he, to be a martyr than to be a monarch. It was a notable saying of a French martyr, when the rope was about his fellow, Give me, said he, that golden chain, and dub me knight of that noble order. Let, saith Ignatius, fire and cross, invasion of beasts, breaking of bones, pulling asunder of members, grinding of my whole body, and what else the devil can inflict, come, so I may hold Jesus Christ.<sup>3</sup> Lucius thanked him that brought him forth to suffer, and said that he should be free from those evil masters, and go to God, a good Father and King.<sup>4</sup> Germanicus, when he was brought forth to be torn in pieces and devoured by wild beasts, the governor, persuading him to be mindful of his youth, that he might be spared, of his own accord incited the beasts against himself. Sanctus, being under tortures for professing himself to be a Christian, unto every question propounded to him, he answered, I am a Christian; whereby he occasioned his torments to be continued to death.<sup>5</sup> Can we think that St Laurence would have accepted of deliverance, who, lying on a red-hot gridiron, over burning coals, with an invincible spirit thus said to the tyrants: Turn the side broiled enough, and see what thy burning fire hath done; and being turned, and thoroughly broiled on the other side, saith thus again: Eat that which is broiled, and try whether raw or broiled be the sweeter. Hippolytus, when he was tied to wild horses to be pulled asunder, thus prayed: Let them rend my limbs; do thou, O Christ, wrap up my soul. To omit other particulars of the ancient martyrs in the primitive times, with whose courageous speeches, manifesting a contempt of death, of which volumes might be filled, it is indefinitely recorded of many, who were famous for their wealth, nobility, glory, eloquence, and learning, that nevertheless they preferred true piety and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ before all those.<sup>6</sup> And though they were entreated by many of their kindred and friends otherwise,

<sup>1</sup> Hist. of Council of Trent, fol. 647.

<sup>3</sup> Euseb. Hist. Eccl., lib. iii. cap. 36.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, lib. v. cap. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Epist. lib. x. ep. 97, p. 316.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, lib. iv. cap. 15.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, lib. viii. cap. 9.



yea, and by others in great place, and by the judge himself, that they would take pity of themselves, their wives, and children; yet would they not be induced and entreated by so many, and great ones, so to be affected with the love of this life as to forbear the confession of our Saviour, and to set light by the denial of him. Thus you see what little reckoning or account the Christians of old have made of their lives, liberties, and estates, or whatever else was near or dear unto them, when these things stood in competition with Christ, his truth, his worship, his ways, his interest, or with their profession of the Christian faith.

Take a few instances of a later date. John Huss being at the stake, a pardon was offered him if he would recant; to which he answered, I am here ready to suffer death. So Jerome of Prague: If I had feared the fire, said he, I had not come hither. Francis Camba, a martyr, in the diocese of Milan, being much assailed by his friends, and terrified by his foes, by no means could be overcome; but gave thanks to God that he was accounted worthy to suffer a cruel death for the testimony of his Son; and such were his expressions of joy in his sufferings, that his persecutors caused his tongue to be bored through, that he might speak no more to the people. Another [Mrs Anne Askew] being offered the king's pardon if she would recant, gave this resolute answer: I came not here to deny my Lord and Master. By that which she with admirable courage and constancy endured, she verified that which of old Julitta spake concerning their sex, viz., We women ought to be as constant as men in Christ's cause. Another [Walter Mill] who suffered martyrdom in Scotland, being solicited to recant, made this reply: Ye shall know that I will not recant the truth, for I am corn, I am no chaff; I will not be blown away with the wind, nor burst with the flail; but I will abide both. Another, [Mr John Rogers,] being the first martyr in Queen Mary's days, being solicited to recant, that so he might save his life, boldly replied, That which I have preached I will seal with my blood. Another, [Hooper, bishop of Gloucester,] when a pardon was set before him in a box, cried out, If you love my soul, away with it; if you love my soul, away with it. Another [Mr Thos. Hawks, a gentleman in Essex] on the like occasion, gave this resolute answer, If I had a hundred bodies I would suffer them all to be torn in pieces, rather than abjure or recant. So another [Bishop Ridley] spake to the like purpose. So long, said he, as the breath is in my body, I will never deny my Lord Christ and his known truth. Another [Father Latimer] used such a speech to one that advised him to spare himself, as Christ did to Peter on the like occasion, 'Get thee behind me, Satan.' There are a world of other instances of the like nature, but enough is as good as a feast.<sup>1</sup> By all these instances, you may see that blessed word verified, 'They loved not their lives unto the death,' Rev. xii. 11. They were willing to lay down their lives for the glory of Christ, and for the truth of Christ; so that *οὐκ ἠγάπησαν*, 'They loved not,' is put for *ὠλιγόπησαν*, 'they neglected or contemned' their life, as Brightman hath well observed.<sup>2</sup> They slighted, yea, despised their lives, and rather exposed them to hazard and loss, than to deny Christ,

<sup>1</sup> Foxe and Clarke, as before.—G.

<sup>2</sup> Works, 1644, 'Revelation of the Apocalypse.'—G.

or their holy profession. It is a paraphrase of the constancy of their faith, even unto martyrdom for the name of Christ. But,

10. Tenthly, Consider, *That God puts a great deal of honour upon suffering saints.* To suffer for Christ is honourable, Phil. i. 29. God will not put this honour upon every one, he puts this honour only upon those that are vessels of honour. By grace God makes men vessels of silver and vessels of gold, and then casts them into the fire to melt and suffer for his name, 2 Tim. ii. 20, 21; and a higher glory he cannot put upon them on this side glory. The crown of martyrdom is a crown that the blessed angels, those princes of glory, are not capable of winning or wearing; and oh, who art thou? and what art thou, O man, that God should set this crown upon thy head? Mark at what a rate Peter speaks: 1 Pet. iv. 14, 'If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.' The very suffering condition of the people of God is at the present a glorious condition, 'for the Spirit of glory rests upon them;' and therefore they must needs be glorious, yea, very glorious, upon whom the Spirit of glory falls, and in whom the Spirit of glory dwells, Rom. viii. 9, 11. What a glorious mould and metal were the three children made up of, that were cast into the fiery furnace, Dan. iii.; and what a deal of honour and glory did God put upon them in the eyes of all the world! The apostles all along accounted their own sufferings, and the sufferings of the saints for Christ, to be the highest honour and glory that God could put upon them in this world, as will be evident by our comparing the scriptures in the margin together.<sup>1</sup> To suffer for Christ is the greatest honour and promotion that God gives in this world, said old Father Latimer; and, therefore, when sentence was pronounced against him, he cried out, I thank God most heartily for this great honour. So Saunders, 'I am the unmeetest man for this high office that ever was appointed to it.' So Careless, the martyr, 'This is such an honour,' said he, 'as the greatest angel in heaven is not permitted to have.' God forgive me mine unthankfulness,<sup>2</sup> &c. John Noyes took up a fagot at the fire, and kissed it, saying, 'Blessed be the time that ever I was born to come to this preferment.' So when they had fastened Alice Driver with a chain to the stake to be burnt, 'Never,' said she, 'did neckerchief become me so well as this chain.' So Balilus,<sup>3</sup> the martyr, when he was to die, requested this favour of his persecutors, viz., that he might have his chains buried with him as the ensigns of his honour. 'What are we, poor worms, full of vanities and lies,' said Calvin, 'that we should be called to be maintainers of the truth; for sufferings for Christ are the ensigns of heavenly nobility.' To die for Christ is the greatest promotion that God can bring any in this vale of misery unto, said Mr Philpot, the martyr. A French soldier, for his zealous profession of the Reformed religion, was condemned to the fire with others, only he should have the favour of going to the stake without a wyth; but he desired that he might wear such a

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xi. 36-38; 2 Cor. xi. 23-28; Heb. x. 23-26.

<sup>2</sup> Acts and Mon., 1361. *Ibid.*, 1744.

<sup>3</sup> Query, 'Babilas'?' Bishop of Antioch: Clarke, 37.—G.

chain as his fellows did, esteeming this rebuke of Christ more glorious than the ensigns of St Michael's order.<sup>1</sup> It was an excellent saying of Prudentius, 'Their names,' saith he, 'that are written in red letters of blood in the church's calendar, are written in golden letters in Christ's register, the book of life.' The passion-days of the martyrs were anciently called the *Natalitia salutis*, the birthdays of salvation, the daybreak of eternal brightness. We count it a great honour to have princes to be our companions; Christ, the Prince of peace, and the angels, those princes of glory, are our companions in all our sufferings.<sup>2</sup> Such is the honour that God puts upon his suffering saints, that nothing shall hinder him from being their companion in all their sufferings, in all their afflictions, in all their temptations; and this, believe it, is no small honour. I have read<sup>3</sup> how that, in the primitive times, when some good people came to comfort some of the martyrs that were in prison and ready to suffer, they called them blessed martyrs; Oh no, said they, we are not worthy of the name of martyrs! These holy humble hearts thought martyrdom too high an honour for them. And Luther, writing to those which were condemned to death, saith, The Lord will not do me that honour after all that bustle I have made in the world. In the primitive times they were wont to call martyrdom by the name of *Corona Martyrii*, the crown of martyrdom. We read of a woman-martyr who, having her child in her hand, gave it to another, and offered herself to martyrdom. Crowns, said she, are to be dealt out this day, and I mean to have one. You see what high and honourable thoughts the saints had of their sufferings in those days; and oh that all suffering saints would labour to write after that noble copy that they have left upon record! But,

II. Eleventhly, Consider, *That suffering saints do put a great deal of honour and glory upon God, Christ, religion, and upon God's truth, worship, and ways.* What a spreading fame and glory of God did the sufferings of the three worthies scatter all the world over! Dan. iii. 28, 29. God is acknowledged and adored by Nebuchadnezzar: a decree is made that 'Every people, nation, and language, which speak amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill,' &c. Here God's glory wonderfully shines out of their sufferings; here this poor, blind, idolatrous heathen prince is forced to confess that there is no God like Israel's God. Basil and Tertullian do well observe of the primitive martyrs, that divers of the heathen, seeing their zeal, courage, and constancy, glorified God, and turned Christians. Religion is that phœnix which hath always revived and flourished in the ashes of holy men; and truth hath never been so honoured and gloriously dispersed as when it hath been sealed by the blood of the saints. This made Julian to forbear to persecute; *non ex clementia, sed invidia*, not out of piety, but envy; because the church grew so fast, and multiplied, as Nazianzen well observes. We read that sometimes the sufferings of one saint have begot many to the love of the truth. We read that Cecilia,<sup>4</sup> a poor captive virgin, by

<sup>1</sup> Thuan. Hist., lib. xi. Anno 1553.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. ix. 6, 7; Dan. iii. 24, 25; Isa. xliii. 2, and lxiii. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Euseb. Eccles. Hist., lib. v.

<sup>4</sup> Clarke, as before.—G.

her gracious behaviour in her martyrdom, was the means of converting four hundred to Christ. Justin Martyr was also converted by observing the cheerful and gracious carriage of the saints in their sufferings. And so Adrianus, seeing the martyrs suffer readily and joyfully such grievous torments, asked why they would endure such misery, when they might, by retracting, free themselves. Upon which one of them cited that text: 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him,' 1 Cor. ii. 9. Upon the naming of this scripture, and seeing of them suffer so willingly, cheerfully, and resolutely, such a divine power took hold of his heart, that he was converted, and afterwards became a martyr. Now God, and Christ, and truth, and religion are never more honoured than when poor souls are soundly converted.<sup>1</sup> Surely the crown of martyrdom is a glorious crown; and every soul won over to God by a dying martyr will be as an Orient pearl and precious diamond in his crown, of far more value than that adamant found about Charles Duke of Burgundy, slain by the Switzers at the battle of Nantz, sold for twenty thousand ducats, and placed, as it is said, in the pope's triple crown.<sup>2</sup> Oh, what foretastes of glory, what ravishments of soul have many of the blessed martyrs had in their sufferings for Christ! Holy Lord, stay thy hand, I can bear no more, said one of the martyrs; like weak eyes, that cannot bear too great a light. Is it not a high honour to a king to have such captains and champions as will not yield to their sovereign's enemies, but stand it out to the uttermost till they get the victory, though it cost them their lives to get it? yet no mortal king can, as Christ doth, put spirit, courage, and strength into a subject; only we may well conceive and conclude that such valorous soldiers as are ready to hazard their lives for their sovereign serve a good master. Thus do suffering Christians and martyrs give persecutors to understand that they serve a good Master, and that they highly prize him, who hath done more, and suffered more for them, than their dearest blood is worth; and who enables them, with courage, constancy, and comfort, to endure whatsoever, for his name's sake, can be inflicted on them; and therein to be (*ὑπερνικῶμεν*) more than conquerors, or above conquerors, Rom. viii. 37. How can that be? Can a man get more than the victory? The meaning is, 'we do over-overcome,' *supersuperamus*—that is, triumph and overcome before we fight. We are famous and renowned conquerors, we easily conquer, we conquer by those things which are used to conquer us, we beat our enemies with their own swords, as Julian sometime said, being confuted by heathen learning, 2 Cor. ii. 14. Martyr and Piscator expound it thus, We do more than overcome—that is, we obtain a noble, a famous victory. And is not this a great honour to Christ, the captain of our salvation? The invincible courage of suffering Christians puts life and spirit into others. In an army valorous leaders much animate the rest of the soldiers, and embolden them to follow their leaders, Heb. ii. 10. Now you know the church is an army with banners, Cant. vi. 4, and suffering

<sup>1</sup> All the preceding names in Foxe and Clarke, as before.—G.

<sup>2</sup> [Foxe,] Acts and Mon., vii. 55-57.

ministers and suffering saints are as leaders; they courageously and victoriously make the onset, and other Christians, by their pious examples, are pricked on to follow them so far as they are followers of the Lamb. But,

12. Twelfthly, Consider, *That all the sufferings and persecutions that you meet with on earth shall advance your glory in heaven.* The more saints are persecuted on earth, the greater shall be their reward in heaven.<sup>1</sup> Look, as persecutions do increase a Christian's grace, so they do advance a Christian's glory. In heaven the martyrs shall have the highest degree of glory; for though God doth not reward men simply for their works, namely, for the merit of them, yet he rewards according to their works, and proportions the degree or measure thereof according to the kind of work which on earth is done, and according to the measure of grace whereby he enables men to do it. Now martyrdom is the most difficult, the most honourable, and the most acceptable work that on earth can be done, and therefore in heaven martyrdom shall be crowned with the highest degree of glory. On this ground, they who set down the different degrees of celestial glory by the different fruits which the good ground brought forth, some thirty, some sixty, and some a hundredfold, Mat. xiii. 8; apply the hundredfold, which is the highest and greatest degree of glory, to martyrdom. Doubtless God's suffering servants, and amongst them especially his martyrs, shall sit down in the chiefest mansions and in the highest rooms in the kingdom of glory.<sup>2</sup> According to the degrees of our sufferings for Christ will be the degrees of our glory. 'What shall we have,' says Peter, that have suffered so many great and grievous things for thy name, 'that have forsaken all, and followed thee?' 'Verily,' says our Saviour, 'every one that hath forsaken houses, &c., shall receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life; but ye shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel,' Mat. xix. 27-29. A Christian will never repent of all the hard things that he has suffered for Christ or his truth, whenas every one of his sufferings shall be a sparkling jewel to give a lustre to his crown of glory. Suffering for Christ and religion is the most gainful kind of merchandise. Christ is so well pleased with the sufferings of his saints, that he has engaged himself to make up whatever they lose upon his account, yea, to repay all with interest upon interest to a hundred times over. Oh, who would not then turn spiritual purchaser! Christ is a noble, a liberal paymaster, and no small things can fall from so great a hand as his is: Mat. v. 10-12, 'Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice, and be ex-

<sup>1</sup> *Quis quisvolens detrahit famæ meæ, nolens addit mercedi meæ,* saith Augustine—The more we suffer with and for Christ, the more glory we shall have with and from Christ, Rom. ii. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Keep your eye upon the recompense of reward, as Moses did, Heb. xi. 26, and as Christ did, chap. xii. 2; as Paul did, Rom. viii. 18. This will work you—(1.) To walk more holly, humbly, thankfully; (2.) To live more cheerfully and comfortably; (3.) To suffer more patiently, freely, resolutely; (4.) To fight against the world, the flesh, and the devil more stoutly and valiantly; (5.) To withstand temptations more steadfastly and strongly; (6.) To be contented with a little; (7.) To leave the world, relations, and friends more willingly; (8.) And to embrace death more joyfully.

ceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you:’ Luke vi. 22, 23, ‘Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man’s sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy; for, behold, your reward is in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.’ They that are now excommunicated and anathematised as notorious, shameful, and abominable offenders,—they that are now opposed and persecuted by men, shall at last be owned and crowned by God; yea, and the more afflictions and persecutions are multiplied upon them in this world, the greater shall be their recompense in another world. The original words *ἀγαλλιᾶσθε* in Matthew, and *σκιρτήσατε* in Luke, signify ‘exceeding great joy,’ such as men usually express by skipping and dancing. Let your hearts leap, and let your bodies leap for joy, for great is your reward in heaven. A Dutch martyr, seeing the flame to come to his beard, said he, What a small pain is this, to be compared to the glory to come. Helen Stirk,<sup>1</sup> a Scotch woman, when her husband was at the place of execution, she said to him, Husband, rejoice; for we have lived together many joyful days; but this day, in which we must die, ought to be the most joyful to us both, because we must have joy for ever; therefore I will not bid you good-night, for we shall suddenly meet within the kingdom of heaven. The subscription of Mrs Anne Askew to her confession was this, Written by me, Anne Askew, that neither wisheth for death nor feareth his might, and as merry as one that is bound toward heaven. Oh, how my heart leapeth for joy, said Mr Philpot, that I am so near the apprehension of eternal life! God forgive me mine unthankfulness and unworthiness of so great glory. I have so much joy of the reward prepared for me most wretched sinner, that though I be in a place of darkness and mourning, yet I cannot lament, but both night and day am so joyful as though under no cross at all; yea, in all the days of my life I was never so merry; the name of the Lord be praised therefore for ever and ever! The same author, in a letter to the congregation, saith, Though I tell you that I am in hell in the judgment of this world, yet assuredly I feel in the same the consolation of heaven; and this loathsome and horrible prison is as pleasant to me as the walks in the garden in the King’s Bench.<sup>2</sup> Thus you see that suffering saints have had a heaven beforehand,—they have had an exuberancy of joy such as no good could match nor no evil overmatch, 1 Pet. i. 8. Bernard, speaking of persecutors, saith, That they are but his Father’s goldsmiths, who are working to add pearls to the saint’s crown. It is to my loss, saith Gordius the martyr, if you abate me anything of my present sufferings. Sufferings for Christ are the saints’ greatest glory. *Crudelitas vestra, gloria nostra*, your cruelty is our glory, say they in Tertullian, and the harder we are put to it, the greater shall be our reward in heaven. Chrysostom hit the nail when he said, If one man should suffer all the sorrows of all the saints in the world, yet are they not worth one hour’s glory in heaven. By the consent of the schoolmen, all the martyrs shall appear in the church triumphant, bearing the signs of their Christian

<sup>1</sup> Query, ‘Stark’?—G.

<sup>2</sup> [Foxe,] Acts and Mon, fol. 613, 1154, 1130, 1670, 1663.

wounds about with them, as so many speaking testimonies of their holy courage, that what here they endured in the behalf of their Saviour, may be there an addition to their glory. O Christians, all your sufferings will certainly increase your future glory; every affliction, every persecution, will be a grain put into the scale of your heavenly glory, to make it more weighty in that day, wherein he will richly reward you for every tear, for every sigh, for every groan, for every hazard, and for every hardship that you have met in the way of your duty, 2 Cor. iv. 16–18. For light afflictions you shall have a weight of glory; and for a few afflictions you shall have as many joys, pleasures, delights, and contents, as there be stars in heaven, or sands on the sea-shore; and for momentary afflictions you shall have an eternal crown of glory. If you have suffering for suffering with Christ on earth, you shall have glory for glory with Christ in heaven. Ah, Christians, your present sufferings are but the seeds of your future glory; and the more plentiful you sow in tears, the more abundant will be your harvest of glory, Ps. cxxvi. 5, 6. Christ our general, the captain of our salvation, promises a<sup>n</sup> crown, Rev. ii. 10, and a throne, chap. iii. 21, to all his afflicted and persecuted ones, which are the greatest rewards that a God can give, or that man can crave. It troubled one of the martyrs when he was at the stake that he was going to a place where he should be for ever a-receiving of wages for a little work. But,

13. Thirteenthly and lastly, *Afflictions, sufferings, persecutions, will discover what metal men are made of.* All is not gold that glisters.<sup>1</sup> Many there be that glisten, and look like golden Christians; but when they come to the fire they prove but dross. He is a Christian more worth than the gold of Ophir, who remains gold when under fiery trials. The stony ground did glisten and shine very gloriously, for it received the word with joy for a season, Mat. xiii. 20, 21; but when the sun of persecution arose upon it, it fell away. Men that in times of liberty and prosperity embrace the word, will, in times of persecution, distrust the word, reject the word, and turn their backs upon the word, if it be not rooted in their understandings, judgments, wills, affections, and consciences. Men may court the word, and compliment the word, and applaud the word, and seemingly rejoice in the word, but they will never suffer persecution for the word, if it be only received into their heads, and not fast rooted in their hearts. The house built upon the sand, Mat. vii. 26, 27, was as lovely, as comely, as goodly, and as glorious a house to look upon as that which was built upon a rock; but when the rain of affliction descended, and the floods of tribulation came, and the winds of persecution blew and beat upon the house, it fell, and great was the fall of it. No professors will be able to stand it out in all winds and weathers, but such as are built upon a rock; all others will sink, shatter, and fall when the wind of persecution blows upon them. As sure as the rain will fall, the floods flow, and the winds blow, so sure will an unsound heart give out when trials come. No heart but a sound heart will hold out bravely when sufferings come; no heart but a sincere heart will bear the brunt of persecution. The three worthies, Dan. iii. 17, 18, Shadrach, Meshach,

<sup>1</sup> Mat. xiii.; 2 Tim. i. 15, 16; 1 Tim. i. 19, 20; 2 Tim. iv. 10, 14–16.

and Abed-nego, would rather burn than bow, they would rather suffer than sin, which was an evident proof of their sincerity and ingenuity; they would be Nonconformists, though court, city, and country cried up conformity, which was a sure argument of their integrity. Hypocrites have heart enough for themselves, but none for God. If they see their names, estates, or carnal interest any way touched, they are all on fire, and ready to be burnt up with the flames of their own zeal; but they can see the name, truth, and interest of God, assaulted and torn in pieces, and never stir. In their own concerns, they are as if they were all heart; but in the cause of God, they are as if, with Ephraim, they had no heart at all, Hosea vii. 11. Oh, it is sad that men should have a heart for themselves, and none for God; that they should have courage in their own cause, and none in his. As the soul is the glory of the body, so integrity is the glory of the soul. A sincere Christian, with Job, will rather let all go than let his integrity go, Job xxvii. 5; he will sooner let the blood be pressed out of his veins, and his soul out of his body, than his integrity out of his soul. Oh, how bravely did the primitive Christians carry themselves as to this matter. Pliny, writing to Trajan,<sup>1</sup> declares to him that such was their zeal and courage in the behalf of their God, that nothing could stir them from it; neither the imperious checks of the potent emperors, nor the soft language of the eloquent orators, could draw them from the faith; but they steadfastly owned it, and constantly persevered in the defence of it. But now base unsound hearts will exceedingly shuffle and shift to shake off persecution. Witness those false teachers, Gal. vi. 12, 'As many as desire to make a fair show,' or, as the Greek has it, to set a good face on it, in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised, only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.' Mark, at this time the Jews, out of zeal to their law, did sorely persecute those that did either preach or practise anything contrary to their law. Now these false teachers set a good face on it, and make a fair show, as if they were all for carnal rites and ceremonies; and they pressed circumcision upon the Galatians, but not out of any true affection or zeal that they did bear to the law, but only to procure favour on the one hand, and to avoid and escape the malice and persecution of the Jews on the other hand. They that were no Jews, to avoid persecution, would comply with them that were; they would seem to be very earnest for Judaism, but not for Christianity, that so they might escape the fury of the Jews. Unsound hearts will say anything, and do anything, and be anything, to avoid persecution, and to ingratiate themselves with persecutors. The Samaritans, so long as the Jewish religion flourished, and was in honour, caused a temple to be built on Mount Gerizim, that therein they might not be inferior to the Jews; and they boasted themselves to be of the progeny of Joseph, and worshippers of God with them. But when they perceived that the Jews were cruelly afflicted and persecuted by Antiochus Epiphanes for worshipping of the true God, and fearing lest they should be handled in the like manner, they changed both their coat and their note, affirming that they were not Israelites, but Sidonians, and that they had built their temple, not unto God, but unto Jupiter.<sup>2</sup> Thus

<sup>1</sup> Epist. xvii. p. 316.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph. Hist., lib. xiii. [As before — G.]



you see that times of affliction and persecution will distinguish the precious from the vile, Jer. xv. 19. It will difference the counterfeit professor from the true. Persecution is a Christian's touchstone; it is a *Lapis Lydius* that will try what metal men are made of, whether they be silver or tin, gold or dross, wheat or chaff, shadow or substance, carnal or spiritual, sincere or hypocritical. Nothing speaks out more soundness and uprightness than keeping close to Christ, his worship, truth, and ways, in a day of warm persecution. To stand close and fast to God and his interest in fiery trials, argues much integrity within.

These thirteen particulars are so great truths, written with the beams of the sun, that no man or devil can deny, and therefore I shall make no apology to the persecutors of the day to excuse my writing of this general epistle; but shall beg hard of God that it may be so owned and crowned and blessed from on high, that it may really and fully answer to all those holy and gracious aims and ends that the author had in his eye and upon his heart when he writ it. And thus much for this general epistle.