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Wisdom justified of her Children.

A
S E R M O N

Preached (in Part) at the publick Lecture
in *Boston*, on Thursday Sept. 16. 1742.

By *Jonathan Parsons*, A.M.

And Minister of the Gospel at *Lyme* in *Connecticut*.

Published at the Desire of a Number of the Hearers.

Placet *Christo*, non Defectu Potestatis, sed ex Abundantia Bonitatis ejus, in congregando Ecclesiam, cum Hominibus agere per Homines; Quibus res sacras ille dispensat, et *Hæreses* et *Hæreticos* repudiat.
Ezek. iii. 17, 19.

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P R E F A C E.

*W*HEN first desired by the Reverend Mr. Foxcroft to preach the publick Lecture in Boston, I found a great Backwardness to it in my own Mind; partly because I did not desire to hinder the People of a better Sermon, and partly because I had concluded to leave the Town the Day before. But being urg'd by him, and some other Gentlemen, with Difficulty I consented: and having given my Word, I then endeavour'd afresh to give up my Heart to GOD, and beg'd his Assistance to lead me to the most proper Subject, and to strengthen me in pleading his Cause; and the Event of all I can chearfully leave with him.

IF any should think it a Piece of Arrogance in a Stranger and a Youth, to come into the Metropolis of a Country, and preach upon such a Subject, as one having Authority; I have this to say in the general, That I did not aim at being a Man-Pleaser therein. I know that the Doctrines and glorious Work which are mention'd with Approbation, are opposite to the Scheme of Religion engraven upon the Hearts of Men as they come into the World. All that is carnal in every Man quarrels with them when they are strictly asserted: And therefore it would be no great Wonder

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Wonder if cold Christians, that have got at a Distance from the LORD, should think I was too severe. But I was pleas'd to see that some of the Ministers (with whom I had a little Opportunity afterwards) were sensible of the Importance of the Truths, and gave GOD Thanks that I was lead to discourse upon them.

ALL the Apology I shall make at present for the Sermon, is only to give some of the Reasons that inclin'd me to preach, and now incline me to print it. And they are as follow, Viz.

1. BECAUSE I was willing to awaken Mankind to consider the great Importance of an orthodox Ministry. There is but little Need of Study or Reading to learn Arminian or Pelagian Doctrines. 'Tis true, the Patrons of such Doctrines labour hard enough to make up a consistent Scheme that may hang together; and set it off as well as they can with unsanctified Reason: But when they have done their best, their Principles can be acceptable to nothing, that I know of, but unhallowed Nature. Every faithful Minister that deals with Souls, finds it no easy Task to bring them off from such hazzardous Principles, into the Gospel-Way of Salvation: And every true Christian that has not buried himself up in Carnality, and forgot that he was purged from his old Sins, finds his corrupt Biass to these self-exalting Doctrines so strong, that he has Reason enough daily to cry out, O wretched Man that I am, who shall deliver me from the Dregs of these Heresies! Considering then, how prone all natural Men are to embrace them, and how liable the best of Men are to connive at them; when they are call'd to chuse a Preacher, they are in great Danger of slighting over that important Affair. If they find a Man of good natural Powers and furnish'd with a good Stock of human Learning, his good Acquaintance with and Stability in the most important Doctrines of Religion are too easily pass'd over: If he is found, what some call, modest in his Opinion, the Matter

Matter is got through with Ease : People are ready to embrace him with Eagerness, and Ministers are in Danger of ordaining him with Indifference. This I know by frequent Observation, and by my own Experience, and doubtless many can come and witness to the same. I could bring my self for an Instance, and the Circumstances of my first Settlement in the Ministry were it proper for me to do it in this Place.

2. *BECAUSE I was willing the World should know something of my Opinion about the just Grounds of Separations. 'Tis a Day of much Discourse about Separations and Divisions in Churches ; and some have actually broke off from the Ministry they were formerly under ; not because they disliked the Constitution, but from some imaginary or real Defect in the Ministry. I dare not say they have no justifiable Reasons for Separation in some Instances ; but I have no Reason to think they have in all. And as to the Manner that has been taken, I look upon it unscriptural, and by no Means to be countenanced in such a Country as this ; where we all profess one Faith, the same in which these Churches were first settled. If a Minister is corrupt in his Principles, or generally neglects preaching the Doctrines of Grace, or plainly endeavours to hide the Work of Grace or bring it into Contempt, then, if I am right, there is Matter enough for his being dealt with by the Churches. Why are they not apply'd to for the Redress of Grievances ? If a Minister is grossly erroneous, and can't be reform'd, he is not fit to be a Minister in the Churches : The Souls of his People are in the greatest Danger : The Interest of JESUS CHRIST will be traduc'd by his Ministry. Why is he not proceeded with according to the Laws of CHRIST, Mat. 18 ? Why are not the Elders and Brethren call'd together to consider of the Matter, Acts 15 ? Are all the Churches grown so carnal, all so erroneous, that there are no Matters of Importance to be laid before them ?*

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I trust not so ! But if that be true, yet I can't guess how I should know it without making Trial. But I'm afraid there are some Separations upon meer Surmises that a Minister is unconverted, even when he faithfully preaches the Doctrines of Grace, and sound experimental Religion. The Preacher is not so lively in his Work as some others, or he checks some Extremes in a Manner not so pleasing as some others do. But who is it that has greatly enliven'd other Ministers ? And how come they to hit upon another Method of correcting those Things that are amiss ? Or perhaps they sinfully let them pass without Correction. Is not the Sovereignty of GOD to be observed in his remarkable Visits of Grace to some and not to others ? What if GOD should withdraw the Quicknings of his Holy Spirit, and hide the Light of his Countenance from those Ministers that have enjoy'd the largest Share ; and pour out his Spirit upon others that have been shut up, until they become a Flame of Fire ? Would this be a reasonable Ground of Separation from the former ?--- This Conduct will not be found pleasing to GOD : It is condemn'd in the Gospel ; and it becomes every one to condemn it. I pray GOD to open the Eyes of all his Children that they might see the Device of Satan herein ; and I trust he will, if he designs further Mercy to the Churches. Indeed, if these Churches had explain'd away their own Articles of Faith, and openly gloried therein, as some of the Writers of the Church of England have done theirs, that would very much alter the Case in my Opinion. But, blessed be GOD ! if some are Enemies to those Doctrines, yet they have been generally too much aw'd by publick Confessions, or some other Considerations, to oppose them in open Councils. ----- Amidst the many Causes of Fear and Sorrow, we are ready to forget our Obligations to unmerited Grace, for preserviag our valuable Confession of Faith from being tramp'l'd upon and thrown out of the Churches.

3. BECAUSE

3. *BECAUSE* I thought that some Christians had been too much encourag'd to separate upon unwarrantable Grounds. After all that can be said upon the Grounds of Separation, they must be reduc'd to what the united Churches publicly esteem Heterodoxy. I see nothing that will make it reasonable to separate from a truly Orthodox Ministry where there are no impos'd Forms. When Ministers and Churches warp off from the fundamental Doctrines of the Christian Religion, or will not openly vindicate them, they are no longer true Ministers and true Churches of CHRIST ; 2 Tim 3. 8. Sensuality and Laxness of Discipline crept into a Church, or Lifelessness in publick Administrations, are Things to be lamented, but not sufficient Grounds of Separation ; Phil. 3. 15. If every Time a Minister is in a dead or low Frame, Christians may be encouraged to separate from his Ministry, we shall soon have Ephraim against Manasseh, and Manasseh against Ephraim, and both against Judah.

4. *BECAUSE* young Converts are in great Danger of separating upon false Principles. Even the meer Circumstance of a complaisant Behaviour in a Minister, a Wigg, or a new Coat, is many Times offensive to the tender Consciences of young Converts : The Tenderness of their Consciences is apt to run them into many wrong Principles ; and hence they may be led to think that such circumstantial Things are sufficient Grounds for Separations.

NOW, though I'm perswaded that Separations are warrantable and highly necessary where the Ministry is corrupt in those Things mentioned in the Sermon, unless it can happily be redress'd a better Way ; yet I look upon the Peace and Unity of the Church of vast Importance to the Growth of pure Religion, and by no Means to be violated where plain Necessity does not call for it. The Way to an Increase of the Body, and to Edification in Love, is to be fitly joined and compacted together, Eph.

4. 15. 16. *Union in Heart and Practice is like the Dew of Hermon, and the Dew that descended upon the Mountains of Zion, where the LORD commanded the Blessing, even Life for ever more. But Separations, groundless Separations, are to be look'd upon with Dread, because they are a great Dishonour to GOD, a great Injury to the Kingdom of CHRIST, and a great Hindrance to the Edification of the Subjects of that Kingdom. Therefore, unless of our own selves Men arise, speaking perverse Things; teaching dangerous Doctrines; awfully neglecting the Doctrines of Grace, or opposing the Works of Grace, and so drawing away Disciples after them; such near Bonds are not to be violated: But being many we may be one Body in CHRIST; and every one Members one of another.*

BUT, perhaps, some may wonder still, that I took such a Method; and that I had expos'd myself so much in a Place of such Concourse.

I need not assign all the Reasons of this, in the most publick Manner, but may be allow'd to reserve some to communicate another Way. Yet thus much I will venture to say further, That several Sermons have been lately preach'd and printed, corrupt in Principle, and plainly level'd against the glorious Work of GOD, without any publick Notice taken of them that I could find: And I think it a great Dishonour to Religion that the glorious Cause of CHRIST may be slander'd in the Land, and Men allow'd the Pulpit, even in the chief Seats of a Country, to send out their Invectives against his sacred Truths and Work, without so much as any Animadversions upon them: It looks as if Men were inwardly pleas'd to have the Cause wounded, though they did not care to strike the Blow themselves, when they take no Notice of them that do.

AND

AND again, it appear'd evident to me that there was a Disposition to separate from all the Ministry, got into some of the Children of GOD : They had fix'd wrong Principles in their own Minds as Reasons for Separation. There may be sufficient Reasons for separating from some in the Ministry at Boston, for ought I know : And if that is true, 'tis the Duty of the whole Church to separate from them unless they can be recover'd : But I must confess that I don't see [through separating from a faithful, orthodox Ministry : Nor do I think those that encourage it are innocent before GOD in their so doing : What Scripture there is to be found to justify such a Conduct I can't yet Light upon. However some might be offended with me for preaching such a plain Sermon, and think that it bore hard upon the Ministry of that Town, yet I look upon them as the Ministers of CHRIST, if they don't deprive themselves of that Character, nor endeavour to screen them that do. And (as I told many private Christians when at Boston) I look upon it an artful Device of the Devil to crumble the true Church in Pieces, that any were encouraged to separate themselves from all the Ministers there. I have particular Acquaintance with several of them, and have no Reason to think but that they are Men of GOD. I can't yet believe that the LORD JESUS will ever thank any of my dear Brethren, if they are found Encouragers of Separations upon private Impulses, or private Judgments, when the Grounds of such Separations will not bear the publick Test. I must say it again, I look upon it a sad Omen that any young Christians, or others, think of forsaking the Ministry of their orthodox Divines. I perceive that it has been suggested as though I had by some Measures, endeavoured to represent the venerable Dr. Sewall as unconverted : 'Tis a base Misrepresentation of what I said or ever design'd. Nevertheless I'll bear it all, and am asham'd that ever I shew'd any Dislike to a Sermon of his preach'd Feb. 26. 1741, 2. before I knew more about it. Let the Reproach fall upon me ;

me ; for I find the Thing I then spoke against was not in his Book.

THE good LORD grant, that, in these Days of glorious Grace, all our Hearts may be made to bow at the Foot of a glorious and absolute Sovereign ; to yield to and embrace the great Doctrines and Work of Grace ; and in this Way scatter the Clouds that have gathered over us, and give us a settled Peace ! This is what we ought to desire and pray for ; and if God graciously hears our Request, the Difficulties subsisting will soon be adjusted. If GOD will make Use of the following Discourse to that End, I shall have my Desire and Reward.

Lyme, Nov. 2.

1742.

Jonathan Parsons.

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Wisdom is justified of her Children.



MATTH. XI. 19.

But Wisdom is justified of her Children.

THE Occasion of these Words was the *assuming, ostentatious, and hypocritical* Conduct of the *Scribes and Pharisees*. They were Men of the highest Esteem among the *Jews*, for their Learning, Shew of Piety, Power and strict Adherence to the Law. They gloried much in the Traditions of the Antients, and in that Righteousness which consisted in Negatives; but greatly despised the Righteousness, Doctrines and glorious Works of our Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST: *slily insinuating*, that although the Things He did, for the Vindication of his divine Authority, were more than *human*, yet that they were to be look'd upon as a *diabolical* Intreague, and therefore to be *rejected* as the Works of a *designing* Impostor. By such Measures as these, pursu'd with plausible Pretences to the Love of the Truth, they prov'd a very unhappy Obstruction to the Progress of the glorious Gospel of the blessed God.

Our blessed Lord upbraids them, and all their *obsequious* Followers, for joining together on the Devil's Side, against a Cause that was *manifestly* from above; and

and especially for doing of it after many *fair* Attempts and powerful Arguments set before them to win them over to his Interest. He reproves them for their Arrogance and Pride which they discovered in *setting* up themselves, *rejecting* the great Designs of divine Grace, and hindering others from entering into the Kingdom of Heaven, when there was the *clearest* Testimonies that it was *come among them*. And it is not at all of a Wonder that he dealt with them in such great Plainness; for they were a *cavilling* Generation, that *excepted* against every Thing and every Person almost, that appeared likely to stand in the Way of their *ambitious* Designs, or bear hard upon their Honour. This *haughty* Selfishness in them put them upon searching after and carping at, *sometimes* the Imprudences or the Weakness of the Instruments made Use of for the Propagation of the Gospel; and *sometimes* the Absurdity they were desirous to find in the great Doctrines which CHRIST taught, and the glorious Works of Mercy and Wonder which he wrought: And thus through conceiv'd Prejudices, and the vain Imaginations of their own Hearts, they kept off the *impartial* Consideration of those Truths, and that Evidence, offer'd for their Conviction.

To *what*, says our Lord, *shall I liken the Men of this Generation?* May they not be illustrated by the Similitude of *perverse* Children, whom nothing can be found out to please? Are they not of such a *childish* Obstinacy, though they would be esteem'd the Oracles of their Age and Place, that they will find Fault with every Body, and every Thing, that stands in their Way? Did not *John* come to them in the most *austere* Manner, *neither eating Bread, nor drinking Wine*; but living a Life agreeable to his Doctrines of Self-Denial; and they say *he hath a Devil*? On the other Hand, I am come without any of his Severities; freely conversing with all Sorts of People, and *particularly*, condescending to use the most alluring Measures with

with *Publicans and Sinners* ; and for this my Humanity they have treated my Person and Character with the greatest Reproach and Injustice. 'Tis even so with some Men since that Day, who profess that they are the Friends of the Lord JESUS : Every one that stands in their Light is *displeasing* ; and every Thing that eclipses their Glory is, to them, a *sufficient* Ground of *Cavil* : CHRIST himself, and his glorious Cause must be *slandered*, when Pride and Lust command it : Whilst he is building the Temple, and ought to bear away all the Glory, the *particular* Circumstances of his carrying on the Work, or the Instruments he chuses out to work by, have been sometimes improv'd to *stigmatize* his most glorious Works, and his Doctrines of Grace too, with Names of Reproach.

BUT there are some, yea many, I hope, in this great Assembly, in whom CHRIST is and will be *magnified*, both by their *living* Examples of Faith and Holiness, and their *stedfast* Endeavours to defend and promote his Interest in the World, to the Glory of GOD : For *Wisdom is justified of her Children*. Tho' there is a Generation that will except against the gracious *Counsels* of GOD, until *Publicans and Sinners* rise up and condemn them for their Madness, yet the Generation of God's Children will appear to *justify* Him.

BY *Wisdom*, I understand, the Lord JESUS CHRIST ; the great Doctrines of the Gospel ; and the glorious Works of divine Grace, wrought in and upon Men. And the Word may well enough be understood by others in this same Light. For the Lord JESUS CHRIST is *expressly* called *the Wisdom of GOD* ; i. e. the Wisdom that the Lord possess'd from Everlasting ; one anointed before all Worlds to be the Person by whom the Father would do all his glorious Works ; the Person in whom are hidden all the Treasures of Wisdom. And the great *Doctrines* of Religion *also*, are called *the Wisdom which is from Above*. As *Moses*, when he was

was *instructed* in the most useful Arts and Sciences known among the *Egyptians*, was said to be *learned in all their Wisdom* ; so he that is a *ready Scribe*, well *instructed* in the great Doctrines of Gospel-Grace, may be said to be learned in the Wisdom that is from Above. And this may as well be understood to have Respect to the *glorious Work* of divine Grace, as in the former Sense: For divine Wisdom is *gloriously display'd* in working the great Doctrines of the Gospel as Principles in the Souls of Men, and in conforming them to the Likeness of Him who is the Image of the *invisible GOD*.

By Wisdom's being *justified* of her Children, I understand, that the Lord JESUS CHRIST, his Doctrines and Works, are *own'd, acknowledg'd, approv'd and vindicated* from the Cavils and *unjust* Imputations of the Wicked, by them that are truly the Children of GOD. They are *concern'd*, and very *desirous*, to *clear* the Methods of divine Grace, from those groundless Aspersions that are cast upon them by the Enemies of the Lord JESUS.

FROM the Words thus explained, as they also stand in a near Relation to the *preceeding* Context, I shall take Occasion briefly to touch upon the two following Heads; Viz.

- I. I would observe, that the Lord JESUS CHRIST, *in his Doctrines and glorious Works of Grace*, is sometimes *slander'd*, and *treated with Contempt*, by wicked Men.
- II. 'Tis the *great Duty*, and *real Character*, of the Children of GOD, to *vindicate* the Lord JESUS CHRIST, in his great Doctrines and Works of Grace, from the *Cavils and Slanders* of wicked Men.

MAY HE who is the *eternal* Wisdom of GOD, and the Fountain of all Grace, assist me in *opening*, and *wisely*

wisely applying these Heads of Discourse, in a Manner *suitable*, and with that Evidence and Light *sufficient* to the Day and Occasion; and make what shall be offer'd of *real* and *spiritual* Service to the *precious* Souls of all them that may hear, that in hearing they may perceive and understand the Truth as it is in Jesus!

I. I am in the *first* Place to show that the Lord Jesus, in his *Doctrines* and *Works* of *Grace*, is sometimes *slander'd* and *treated with Contempt* by wicked Men.

No sooner did the blessed Jesus appear *openly*, and begin to give the Testimonials of his divine Authority, but the *Jews*, and *especially* the Disputers of this World among them, the learned Exponnders and Doctors of the Law, took many groundless Exceptions to the Divinity of his Person, the Truth of his Doctrines, and Glory of his Works. His Extract was so mean that they disdain'd to think he should be received and acknowledged as the promised and long expected *Messiah*: *We know this Man whence he is; but when MESSIAS cometh, no Man knoweth whence he is.* If he was the Son of GOD and Saviour of the World, they would have imagin'd that he must be altogether unknown; tho' their own Prophets had told them he should be of the Lineage of *David*, and born in little *Bethlehem*. And his Parents were of the *lower* Rank, which was a great Stumbling to them: *Is not this the Carpenter's Son? is not his Mother called Mary? and are not his Brethren and Sisters with us?* How comes it to pass that one of such a mean Original is thus applauded, and follow'd as if he was the Redeemer of *Israel* in Truth? Whence has he Letters, having never learned? You may see how offensive it was to the *Jews* to observe his Wisdom, and his mighty Works, because they could not bear One so much beneath them in their own Esteem, should outshine them in the Esteem of others. And then, his *outward* Condition, the Manner of his coming, his Attendants, his Equipage, were

great Disappointments to them. They looked for a Prince to come in great *external* Splendor, to take State upon him, and to appear with the most *glorious* and *magnificent* Attendance : but he came riding upon an Ass, and the Fole of an Ass; and, in the Eye of the World, made a very *despicable* Figure : he was rejected of Men, and despised of the People. And, as was natural to expect from Men blinded by Lust and Prejudice, and bent to please themselves and gratify a vain Mind, they looked upon his Doctrines to be hard Sayings; as indeed they were hard to Flesh and Blood, the Counsellors they advised with. They were *directly* oppos'd to their receiv'd Maxims and Rules ; calculated to beat down the lofty Imaginations of a proud Heart ; and *consequently* must be *set at Nought*. 'Tis no Wonder then, that all his mighty Works of Compassion that were done among them, and *in the Country round about*, were laid to *magic* Art. How could it be expected that they should acknowledge them to be divine, when they were so cross to their Pride and ambitious Intentions ? Is it any Wonder that they cry out, *He casteth out Devils, by Beelzebub the Prince of the Devils !* 'Tis true, all their Prejudices against him were unreasonable, because he *came* and *taught* and *did* the same Things in the same Manner that the Scriptures had foretold of *Him* that should come : but nothing wou'd convince them while they were under the governing Influence of a proud Heart.

NEITHER were the *Jews* the only People that stumbled at the divine Mission, the Doctrines, and gracious Works of the Lord JESUS CHRIST ; but the *Greeks* excepted against them too, and counted them Foolishness. The Doctrines he taught were *new* to them, and *opposite* to the Maxims and Rules they had established : They were very loth to condemn their old Customs, and give up the Superstitions which they and their Predecessors had fallen in with. Though Custom is no reasonable Argument against a Change,
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yet, if a receiv'd Opinion be ever so *absurd*, or an Institution embrac'd ever so *carnal*, Men are ready to start at any Doctrine or Custom *opposite* thereto, for Fear of Innovations. This begat Prejudices in the Mind of *Gentile* Sinners, and made them cavil against JESUS CHRIST, and his Scheme of Doctrines taught in the Gospel, though urged with the strongest Motives. And *besides*, though Simplicity in relating Truth is the greatest Praise that could be of the Relator, yet the *Plainness* of the Relations given was not agreeable to their itching Ears. They wanted to be tickled up with artful Eloquence, and amused with *speculative* Matters and *vain Philosophy*. Therefore to hear a plain Story about the Nature of Regeneration, the Operations of the Holy Spirit, the *arbitrary* Pleasure of GOD in the Dispensation of his Grace, and the like great Truths of the Gospel, were hard Things, and they would not receive them : they wanted to be sooth'd with *Grecian Art*; but CHRIST spake not in the *inticing Words of Man's Wisdom*, but in the *Demonstration of the Spirit and with Power*.

AND after our blessed Lord had triumph'd over the Opposition of *Jews and Greeks*, and had rid forth in Majesty upon this Word of Truth until Pride and Cavil fell under him, many of his profess'd Disciples assum'd his Throne, and made it much of their Care and Study to *hide the Truth*, and throw the greatest Blemishes upon the *pure and most important* Doctrines of the Gospel. In the early Ages of Christianity the Gold become dim, and the most fine Gold was changed ; the Glory of Gospel-Grace was obscured, and the precious Stones in the building of the Church were hardly *distinguishable* from common Rubbish. The *Manichean, Sabellian and Arian* Heresies first of all sprang up in the *second and third* Centuries of the Christian Church, though they have been *zealously* espoused since those Days. The *Pelagian* Heresies ; concerning Original Sin, that the Imputation of Guilt is a Reflec-
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tion upon the glorious Perfections of GOD ; and *concerning* the Liberty of Man since the Apostacy, that his *Power* to will *spiritual* Good, to turn from Sin to GOD, to believe in the Lord JESUS CHRIST, and maintain good Works in an *evangelical* Sense, is the same since as before the Fall of *Adam* : these barefac'd and dreadful Errors were as *early* and *general* in their Spread as the other. And agreeable to what might be expected to accompany or follow such Soul-destroying Opinions, *strenuous* Opposition has risen up against the *absolute* Sovereignty of GOD, *particular* Election and Redemption, *irresistible* Grace, and other most important Doctrines of the Christian Religion. Thus there have been *Fighters against GOD*, from whence Divisions have sprung up among *professed* Christians; *Schisms* on one Side, and *justifiable* Separations on the other. And though Divisions among Professors, shou'd never be imputed to the pure Doctrines of Grace, nor to a steadfast Adherence to them, but to some other Cause; yet they have been so perverted by sinful Men, as to be made the Occasion of much Stumbling at the *Stumbling-Stone and Rock of Offence*. How often have the most important Doctrines and most glorious Works of divine Grace, been represented as such Absurdity that it would be a Reproach to the Reason of Mankind to believe them ?

BUT the Lord JESUS CHRIST was never treated with greater Contempt, never opposed with greater Boldness in the Protestant World, by Cavils and *repeated* Exceptions taken against the most important Doctrines of glorious Grace, than has been since the Year 1708. The *Arian*, *Trinitarian*, *Arminian* and *Pelagian* Heresies, have been reviv'd with more than common Freedom and Assurance. Some have set up Refineries to purge out the Dross and gross Parts that are most visible to Men in general, and with their Purgations wou'd vend them for Gold ; though they are still the same Metal as before: but the World is in greater Danger

Danger of mistaking them for something better in Kind. How far a *temporizing* Disposition in the *Orthodox*, a Disposition that by wretched Abuse, puts on the excellent Name of Charity ; how far, I say, this Disposition has contributed to these Corruptions I need not examine at present, but leave it with the Judicious to consider. But 'tis a plain Case, that the great Doctrines of the Gospel, such as the *spiritual* Impotence of Man, his Deadness, the *universal* Corruption of the *whole* Nature, and its Liableness to the Pains of Hell forever ; the Necessity of an *infinite* Satisfaction, Justification by Faith alone, Election from the *meer* good Pleasure of God, and the like Doctrines, have been attack'd with open Disdain in *Protestant* Countries : And when such Openness will not bear, then the Poison has been gilded over, that so it might be receiv'd without being distinguished from pure Gospel. How great is the Number among the Learned that are *manifestly* grown weary of our *Puritanical* Doctrines, even though 'tis obvious to any *impartial* Observers that God is pleased to honour the Preaching of them with the most illustrious Success ? Have not some of the most celebrated Modern Writers, stuffed their Books with Arguments and Exceptions against these plain *Protestant* Doctrines of the Reformation ? And doubtless, the same Exceptions against them have been heard from the Pulpit as read from the Press. Nor is it an Evidence of a censorious Spirit, if we should think some of these Exceptions are taken, and those Heresies propagated in Disguise by many, especially where they are a little aw'd by publick CONFESSIONS OF FAITH : Some *carnal* Views may make them unwilling to be reckon'd up among Opposers of the great Doctrines receiv'd and establish'd in the *reformed*, and *particularly*, in the *dissenting* Churches. Why should we think otherwise of such as are evidently impatient under the faithful Ministrations of the Doctrines of Grace ? And what shall we think of

of those that dare come out a little bolder, and *zealously* endeavour to represent those most important Doctrines as needless to be preach'd or much concerned about ? And yet, are there not some that go further than these, and *stab* the Character of the zealous Assertors of these Doctrines, whilst they bestow loud Encomiums and Applauses upon the Writers against them ? Is there any Christian Charity in supposing that Man to be a true Friend to the great Doctrines of Grace, who spends his Time and uses his Influence to *vindicate* and *support* the *known* Enemies of them, if they are found in any publick Offices ? Such a Man is but too much like an Officer, who, under Pretence of Love to the City and its Immunities, leads forth his Guards Night and Day for a Shew of Defence from *expected* Armies, and yet suffers its *most dangerous Enemies* to *hide* and *skulk* in its very Bowels, *watching* and *waiting* under the greatest Advantages, for some fit Time to let in *sudden* and *certain* Destruction. But I may have Occasion to speak something further upon this in the *Improvement*, and therefore I pass on to say,

THAT not only the great Doctrines of the Gospel, but the *glorious Works* of *divine Grace* have been the *Subject* of *Ridicule* and *Contempt* among Men. By a Work of Grace I don't mean any such Friecks of Imagination, by which any have been lead aside, *either* formerly *or* more lately. Men may have great Starts of Sorrow at they don't know what ; and as great Flashes of Joy they don't know why : They may be blown up from the Agency of some other Power besides that which is divine. But by a Work of divine Grace I mean, that Work of the Holy Spirit, by which secure Sinners are *awakened*, *convinced* and *humbled* at the Footstool of divine Sovereignty : By which also a Principle of *supernatural* Life is *infused* into their Souls, the *glorious Objects* of the Gospel *presented* to their View, their Understandings *opened* to behold

behold their Glory and Suitableness, their *Wills enabled to chuse* and their Affections to *embrace* them. A glorious Work indeed ! By which of a Sinner, Man becomes a Saint ; and from his Exposedness to the Fury of Devils, he is entitled to the Joys of Angels ! A Work that has been carried on *more or less* in all Periods of the Church unto this Day. *Sometimes* the Subjects of this glorious and rich Grace have been many in a Day : They have been seen *flying as a Cloud*, both for Speed and Number, to the Lord JESUS CHRIST, and *flocking as Doves to the Windows* of the Church. At *other Times*, the Glory of *Jacob* has been made thin, and the *Fatness* of his Flesh has waxed lean ; the *ingathering* of Souls is made like the *Gleanings* after a plentiful Harvest, or the gathering of Grapes when the Vintage is over.

But *especially* these glorious Works of divine Grace, may be consider'd with Respect to the *surprising* and *numerous* Conversions in our Land the *two* past Years, when our *Sons have come from far*, and our *Daughters* were *nurs'd up by our Sides*. When we saw it our Hearts were enlarged, and our Joy broke out as an overflowing River : We flow'd together with Transports of Wonder to behold the Multitudes that came up with Acceptance on the Altar, and God *glorifying* the House of his Glory. Now, though these are *truly* the glorious Works of astonishing and adorable Grace, and are as easily prov'd to be so, as that the *Scriptures* are the Word of God ; yet nothing is more obvious than that many, not only among the common People, but Men of Figure in the World *boldly* assault these great and astonishing Works of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, with Scorn and Slander, and seem to watch for something to lay hold of for their utter Overthrow. *Sometimes* they object that the *Terrors* upon Men's Minds are *too great* to be the genuine Fruits of the Spirit's Conviction of Sin : But such Objectors think but very *partially* of the many Similitudes by which this Work

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of the Spirit is represented in the Bible. I can hardly believe they would object against a Person's being as greatly terrified as any they have seen, if he had a sharp Arrow in his Heart, or Sword piercing between the Joints and the Marrow. And why shou'd it be esteem'd as an unreasonable Thing for a poor Sinner to be as greatly terrified as such a Person, when his Eyes are opened to see the Sins of his Life, and the Sin of his Nature, and the Sword of divine Justice whet and brandish'd in the Hand of an angry God, coming out against him, and just ready to cut him off, and appoint him a dreadful Portion with Unbelievers? *Sometimes* they object that the Conviction is *too short* to prepare the Soul for receiving the Lord JESUS CHRIST. But I beg such Persons to consider with the utmost Seriousness, whether they are not making a Righteousness of Convictions: If it is not so that they imagine a Person must needs be under a Work of the Law, for Weeks or many Months or Years together, in order to work up some good Affections in his Heart, why should they presume to BUTT and BOUND *the holy One of Israel*? Can't he do his own Work in a short as well as in a long Time? Did he not convert Thousands at the Preaching of a single Sermon in the *Apostle's* Days? And must he take a long Time to do that *now*, which he has done in *a few Minutes*? Can't he break the stoutest Heart, and subdue the most stubborn Will, in a Moment as well as in a Year? Or has the Scriptures given any Intimations that God has bound himself to do this Work in a more *gradual and leisurely* Way?---But then, *sometimes* they object that the *Joys* are *too high* in *active* Conversion, or after Exercises of Grace: They can't believe such Extasies are the Effects of any gracious Discoveries. I wish to God such Objectors would look back upon themselves, and consider whether ever they had any true Discoveries of the Face of a reconciled GOD in JESUS CHRIST. And if they have had, were not the Effects
of

of them; not only quickening, Soul-abasing and Heart-purifying ; but also Soul-ravishing ? I must needs say that such an Exception taken, looks like the Objection of some poor self-deluded Soul: for though Men may have false Joys, and such Raptures as are attended with Self-Exaltation, and the like; yet one spiritual Discovery of a glorious GOD in CHRIST, brings greater Joy *than the Joy of Harvest*. ---- But whatever Spring Cavils arise from, or whatever Difficulties come into Men's Minds, certain it is that many are Cavillers against the glorious Work of Grace ; yea, *many more* are indeed so, than are willing to be esteem'd so. Why else are all the *visible* Defects and Imprudences of the *profess'd* Subjects of this glorious Grace, set off in a Manner most disadvantageous to the Work, and that upon the House-Top ?----I would by no Means discourage any Person from giving all due Caution and Reproof, to the *happy* Subjects of this Grace, for their *unhappy* Mistakes : 'Tis doubtless the important Duty of every Christian to *admonish, exhort, rebuke, instruct*, in his Place, according to his Opportunity: a straying Brother needs this kind Office from a gentle Hand, and sometimes he needs *sharp* Rebukes that he may be *sound in the Faith*. And 'tis beyond Question with me, that there is great Need of speaking to some Christians, in these Days of glorious Grace, as the Apostle *Paul* spake once and again, to the *Corinthians*, not as unto *spiritual*, but as unto *carnal* ; yet as unto *Babes in CHRIST JESUS*. But whilst *some* have gone into such Christian Steps for the Reformation of *manifest* Irregularities, and have been blessing GOD for the Work, and done their utmost to encourage it, and vindicate it from those Exceptions taken because of Irregularities : *Others* have as *eagerly* gathered together all the ill Things they could hear of, and *held them up* before the Eyes of Men, with plain Design to keep them from taking Notice of these Things which are the genuine Fruits of the Holy Spirit.----How much

of their precious Time, in spent is *enquiring after* and *spreading abroad* the irregular Conduct of the Friends of this Work; but how *little* in blessing the Lord for the abundant Riches of his glorious Grace *conspicuous* in turning Multitudes from Darkness to Light, from the Power of Sin and Satan to the living God? How *witty* or *judicious* do they seem to be, in their *Train* of Inferences, and *sage* Reflections upon imperfect sinful Worms? How *swift* to utter any Thing that looks likely to bring this Grace of the Lord JESUS into Contempt; but how *slow* to hear and believe the Truth? If they can lay hold of any Thing utter'd that savours of *Enthusiasm* or *Disorder*, these are display'd in lively Colours; and then the Hearers are summon'd up to attend the common Enquiry, *is this the Work of GOD?* I would put another Question to such Persons which may be as necessary to be resolv'd in this Day as the former, and that is *whether ever they experimentally knew what a Work of saving Grace upon the Soul was?* I can't but think that experienc'd Christians would show more Respect to the glorious Work of GOD, than if hard Rocks had brought them forth, and cruel Tygers nurs'd them up. Is it an Evidence of Friendship to this Work of GOD, to catch at all the Irregularities that can be found or heard of, to entertain our Neighbours or the Publick with them, and hide the Glory of the Times under such a Cloud?

Thus it has been all along in the Church of CHRIST, and is so still: Many have and do take groundless Exceptions against the great Doctrines and most glorious Works of divine Grace.----Blessed be the GOD of infinite Compassions, who has preserv'd some in every Period of the Church; and at this Day has a great Army which, I trust, will be found ready to stand up in the Vindication of his Cause, and not be ashamed of the Gospel of CHRIST, nor of the glorious Works of his Grace, tho' they are ever so sinfully slander'd by a carping World.

II. WHICH

II. WHICH brings me to observe in the *second* Place, That it is the *great Duty* and *real Character* of the Children of God, to *vindicate* the Lord JESUS CHRIST in his great Doctrines and Works of Grace, from the *Cavils* and *Slanders* of wicked Men.

'Tis not sufficient with them that they are not found *actually* fighting against the great Doctrines of the Gospel, or the glorious Works of divine Grace : They do not think it enough that they are not *undermining* the Interest and Kingdom of Christ : They will not set still as *idle Spectators*, whilst a *sagacious Devil*, with all his busy Under-Strapers are endeavouring to *force* the Lord JESUS out of his Throne, and *offering* Violence to the great Truths of the Christian Religion : But they look upon themselves call'd to do all they can in their *respective* Places, to *rescue* a glorious Cause basely injur'd ; to *pluck down* the strong Batteries *erected* against it ; to *defeat*, if possible, the grand Design of a *formidable* Host of Enemies, and to *maintain* the Throne of a *sovereign GOD*, and all the astonishing Works of Grace, against the groundless Exceptions of wicked Men.

BUT if it should be *enquired* here ; *How* the Children of God are to *vindicate* the Lord JESUS CHRIST in the great Doctrines and glorious Works of his Grace, from the *Cavils* and *Slanders* of wicked Men ?---I will reply briefly,

I. *BY an open and frank Acknowledgment of them* before the World. Whatever they suffer for their Fidelity, yet the substantial Parts of Religion they are openly to *confess* ; Matth. 10. 32. Indeed, Things *meerly* circumstantial or indifferent, Christians are not oblig'd to torment themselves about : 'Tis very possible to be scrupulous to a Fault in those Matters where Christians are not call'd to expose themselves ; but if they have Faith they should have it to themselves before God. But with Respect to the great

Doctrines of the Gospel and the glorious Works of divine Grace, Christians are *expressly* commanded to *confess CHRIST before Men*, and *not to be ashamed of his Testimony*, 2 Tim. 1, 8. If therefore they shou'd, from any Consideration, refuse to acknowledge the great Doctrines or glorious Works of divine Grace in the open Light, this would be look'd upon, by the great Author of our Religion, an *implicite* disowning and casting Reproach upon him. He esteems such hiding Disciples rather a Dishonour than a Credit to his Cause : And no Wonder ; for they withhold from him that Reputation which he may reasonably expect from them, and that Strength which their open and frank Acknowledgement of him might give to his Interest. This then, must be one Way in which the Children of God are to vindicate these Doctrines and gracious Works of JESUS CHRIST : They must be ready upon every fit Opportunity to tell the World what Doctrines they believe, in what Way they venture their Souls upon CHRIST for Salvation, and what they look upon a Work of saving Grace upon the Souls of others.

2. By *intreating* their Fellow-Creatures to *embrace the same Gospel*, and to fall in with the same Way for their Salvation. Christians *in general*, as well as Ministers *in particular*, are Debtors to others ; to the Jew and to the Barbarian ; to Men of all Conditions and Nations, Friends and Enemies : What St. Paul says to *Timothy* is applicable to all Christians according to their Talents and Opportunities, 2 Tim. 2. 25, 26. As they venture their Souls in this Way, and find Sweetness and Safety in it, 'tis but the Part of Christian Charity for them, when they see a *precious* Soul pursuing its own Destruction, to *invite* and *beseech* the poor Sinner to return and embark upon the same Bottom with themselves. And they would be *deeply* guilty of suffering Sin upon their Brother, if they did not rebuke him when they see him *forcing* his Way to eternal

ternal Ruin, through all the Restraints of Religion, and the Offers of Grace through an All-sufficient Saviour. How then can Men be said to vindicate the Doctrines of the Gospel and the Works of divine Grace, when they see bold Sinners *deriding* and *trampling* upon them, and do not engage, to their Power, to win them over to an Acquaintance with and Acknowledgment of them ?

3. *BY zealously espousing them* against opposing Enemies. 'Tis good always to be *zealously* affected in a good Thing : And true Christian Zeal ought to rise in Proportion to the Importance of the Cause about which it is employ'd. Men must surely, then, give up all Pretences to Christianity, if they are not *zealously* careful to see the great Doctrines and glorious Works of CHRIST honoured, & as much concern'd to see them dishonoured. If they dare not come out against the *boldest* Attacks, and oppose the *carnal* Prejudices of the most haughty Enemies, it illy becomes them to wear the Christian Name. With what Light and *Flame* did *Paul* espouse the great Doctrines and glorious Works of Grace ? How did he oppose the World that stood in his Way ? How did the *primitive* Christians stand in a trying Day ? Surely they had greater Trials and Difficulties to go through than any of our Time ; *Eph.* 6. 12. And yet they went forward and got the Victory through CHRIST JESUS the Captain of their Salvation. Neither may Christians in these Days shut their Mouths or keep Silence, when they see a glorious Cause suffering, or in Danger of an Overthrow, and it is in their Power to afford any Relief.

4. *BY suffering any Thing for them* rather than have them trod upon. 'Tis true, no Man is call'd to run himself into needless Sufferings ; nor to expose himself to them when he can avoid it with a good Conscience. Our Lord will never thank any of his Children for *inviting* sinful Men to afflict them, by any imprudent

imprudent and unreasonable Expressions of their Zeal for the Truth. But whenever they are call'd to it upon any fit Occasion, they are to make a bold and open Profession and Vindication of the great Doctrines and Works of Grace, let the Consequence to them be what God will. Some Men can appear very bold when there is no Obstructions : They can plead *zealously* for the Doctrines of the Gospel, and the glorious Work of divine Grace, if they don't hazard their Reputation among their Friends ; but rather than give up even *this*, the glorious Cause of CHRIST must fall a Victim to the Pride and Rage of its Adversaries. They are so far from quitting *all* to be the Followers of JESUS, that they will not part with their Honour which they *receive one of another* for the Sake of CHRIST and the Gospel. But those that would vindicate JESUS CHRIST in his great Doctrines and glorious Works of Grace, must give up all at his Command ; They must stand for the Defence of this Cause, though Father or Mother, or dearest Friends stand against them : Tho' they should be loaded with Chains and hated of all Men ; though it be with the Loss of all worldly Enjoyments and Interests ; though they are ever so much exposed for the Testimony of JESUS ; yet they must not behave as those that are ashamed of the Truth, but join in Company with such as endure Reproach, even tho' they should be a Gazing-Stock for it. Did the Children of God in the Beginning of Christianity think any Thing *too much* to bear, or *too dear* to part with for this *same* Cause ? They took joyfully the *spoiling of their Goods*, endured Fines, Imprisonments, Reproaches, ruining of their dear Families ; yea, they went up and died, many of them, for the Name and Cause of JESUS. Nor may Christians of *later Times* esteem the glorious Cause less than they did, if it should be deserted and despised by ever so many of the *degenerate* Offspring of faithful Servants, and Sufferers for CHRIST.

If you ask *why* the Children of GOD are *bound* and *inclin'd* to *vindicate* the Lord JESUS CHRIST in the great Doctrines and glorious Works of His Grace ?

I answer,

I. THEIR *Love* to God *binds* and *inclines* them hereto. None can reasonably doubt whither the Children of GOD *love him with all their Heart, and with all their Soul, and with all their Mind, and with all their Strength.* They behold his adorable Perfections as most amiable in CHRIST JESUS, esteem and desire Him above all, and take the most complacential Delight in Him as their greatest Good : All *temporal* Enjoyments and Preferments are very *low* in their Esteem compar'd with their Love to and Delight in GOD. He is a Being so *transcendantly* glorious in their Eyes, that the greatest Monarchs of the World, yea the whole Universe *dwindles* away to a *small* Drop of the Bucket before Him, when He shines in His amazing Beauty, Majesty and Glory upon their Souls. But is it possible to behold the glorious Excellency of the Lord ; to esteem and desire Him above all in Heaven and Earth ; to view Him a reconciled GOD and merciful Father in JESUS CHRIST ; to take the highest Complacency in Him as the *only* and *all-sufficient* Good ; to have greater Gladness of Heart in the Light of his Countenance, than in the Increase of Corn and Wine and Oil, and *all* worldly Good ; to be fill'd with Love to His Holiness and Justice, his absolute Sovereignty and infinite Wisdom, His Power and Goodness, with all his other divine Attributes ; is it possible, I say, thus to be wrap'd up in divine Love, and not *zealously* espouse the great and most important Doctrines of our holy Religion, and the most glorious Works of Grace ? These are the Tokens of his most excellent Majesty, His sovereign and stupendous Goodness. Surely that Man that pretends to love GOD above all, and can nevertheless, *quietly* see Works of divine Grace run down, and the great and most important Doctrines of the Gospel

Gospel hid, or very much loaded with the Rubbish of Men's *carnal* Reasonings, give but too plain an Evidence that he sets *carnal* SELF above God, instead of loving God above all. The greatest Opportunities Men have to express their Love to God, are the Times when they are call'd out to defend the most important Articles of the Christian Religion, and most wonderful Works of divine Grace, against the unreasonable Cavils of their Adversaries. If our Souls have truly said unto Him, *Thou art my GOD*, yet our *Goodness* extends *not unto Him*, but at most to the Honour of His great NAME in the World; to the Defence of His Doctrines and glorious Cause: And as we *regard*, *vindicate* or *neglect* these, He esteems himself honour'd or reproach'd by us. Hence therefore, it is manifest that supreme Love to God binds, and if in *lively* Exercise will *powerfully* incline us to defend and vindicate these great Truths, and this glorious Work of Grace.

2. CHRIST JESUS as Redeemer *righteously expects this* of all his Children, of every Condition and Degree. They not only owe this Service to God, who is infinitely worthy of their highest Love, as a Being of *transcendant* Excellency, and demands their Love and Service as their great Lord and Proprietor; but this is also due from them to the Man CHRIST JESUS, as he is the alone Saviour of all them that believe: for he has *bought them with a Price*; a Price that cannot be equal'd by Thousands of Rams, and ten Thousands of Rivers of Oil; by the Fruit of the Body, or the Cattle upon a thousand Hills; the *invaluable* Price of his own most precious Blood, which was *freely* shed for the Remission of Sins. And therefore he may *justly* call them who are Redeemed, to *glorify GOD in their Bodies and in their Spirits, which are his*: According as God has distributed to every one a Measure of Gifts and Grace, and as the Lord has called every one, *so are all his Children to walk and improve their Talents* and

and Opportunities for the Defence of the Gospel, and the Work of divine Grace. And is it not most reasonable that JESUS CHRIST, the gracious Redeemer, should be served of His Children in the Cause of his blessed Gospel, seeing he has rescu'd them out of the Paws of the devouring Lion, and *redeem'd* them from their Slavery to Sin and eternal Death ? Has not this astonishing Work of Grace and Pity cost him infinitely more than all their Services and Sufferings in His Cause can amount to ; even though they should serve Him in the Gospel, at the Expence of Reputation, Liberty, and at last of Life it self ? They owe even their own Selves to Him, and every Thing that they enjoy of a *temporal* and *spiritual* Nature. Therefore He does them no Injury when He calls for their Talents and their ALL to be given up to Him, and employ'd, if need be, in the Defence of the Gospel.

3. THEY are under the *most solemn* Ties of a *Covenant-Vow* hereto. They, and all that they have, are dedicated in the most solemn Manner to GOD the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, by the sacred Vows of their Baptism. In this Dedication they engaged to renounce the World, the Flesh and the Devil, and to cleave to the Lord, and to Him only. And since that *first* Dedication, how many Times in their Closets upon their Knees before God ; in the Family, in publick Assemblies, at Sacraments, and under various Providences, have they as solemnly *renew'd* this Oath of the Covenant ? And have they not as often bound themselves to *consecrate* their Time and Talents and all to the great Interests of the Kingdom of CHRIST ? If then, from any *carnal* Views, through the Fears of the Displeasure or the Hopes of the Favour of any Man ; if from any *cowardly* Spirit, or other temporal Consideration, they *refuse* to *come forth* to the Help of the Lord, or *neglect* to do their utmost, *especially* for the Vindication of his suffering Cause, they are guilty of *robbing* GOD himself. By such a Neglect they lie under

der the greatest Guilt, by an *express* Violation of their *baptismal* Vow, after a repeated Renewal of it. A *meer* Disingagedness for the Defence of the most important Doctrines of the Gospel and most surprizing Works of divine Grace, is look'd upon by CHRIST himself, as being employ'd in the Service and Cause of the Devil, and a Vindication of sinful Lusts. Here then, is *Perjury* and *Sacrilege* with a Witness, whether it be found at the Doors of Ministers or *private* Christians. This is for Men to betray CHRIST JESUS *with a Kiss* as treacherous *Judas* did : it is a delusive Mockery for His professed Followers to *refuse* doing all that lies in their Power according to their *several* Stations, to advance His Name and Interest, His great Gospel-Doctrines, and the glorious Works of his Grace.

4. THE *Reason of Man* approves the Doctrines of our holy Religion, and the glorious Works of divine Grace. 'Tis true, the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* had many rooted Prejudices against our Lord JESUS CHRIST, the Doctrines he taught, and the miraculous Works which he did, when *personally* upon Earth : The *Greeks* and *Gentile* Sinner also cavil'd, and were ready to esteem every Thing Foolishness that was contrary to their received Maxims and Rules. So, many in the several Periods of the Christian Church, and *particularly* in our Day, have assaulted the most important Doctrines and most surprizing Works of Grace with *bold* Cavils and *open* Slander. But however, God in his holy, and wise Government, suffers it to be so, that some shou'd *actually* reproach and others sinfully neglect them, yet sound Reason will never reproach any Man for *believing* and earnestly *defending* them against the Cavils of the boldest Sinners.

PARTICULARLY, with Respect to the great Doctrines of Grace, such as the *absolute* Sovereignty of God, *particular* Election and Redemption, *Effectual* Calling, and others join'd in the same Chain ; *unprejudic'd* Reason will never reprove any Man for giving his fullest As-

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sent to this Scheme of Doctrines ; nor for *defending* them both in *Theory*, and as *inwrought* Principles in the Souls of Men. To give all these a distinct Consideration would swell into Volumes ; and besides, they have been consider'd from Time to Time by able Divines, sufficiently clear to satisfy any Man of a *teachable* Disposition. Yet suffer me to say, that they are Doctrines clearly taught in the holy Scriptures, and the Children of God are taught them *sensibly* by the Holy Spirit : They have felt the Power of them upon their Hearts, and those that are Strangers to a *sensible* Apprehension of their Truth, are also Strangers to JESUS CHRIST and to *themselves*. The Mysteriousness of *some* of them, and the other Difficulties thrown into the Way of *others*, are no rational Arguments against the Truth of them ALL. There never was any Scheme, among the greatest Philosophers, of explaining how the Rays of the Sun give Light and Heat, but what had its Difficulties : Neither has any one Man so clearly open'd the *Theory* of Vision, but that there remains a Mystery in it still : But have any rejected these Things as *incredible* because of some particular Objections against them ? And must we reject those Doctrines as *incredible* which come recommended to our Belief with *sufficient* Evidence, *meerly* because of some Difficulties arising in Men's Minds about the Manner of their being true ? This surely would be a most unfair Way of arguing, and indeed no Argument at all against the Truth of them. Neither will the Children of God that are born from above reject them from such Considerations, or dispute against them, unless their Hearts are much better than their Heads, and they are deserted of God. For they are not only taught plainly in the Bible, but they have felt the Truth and Power of them upon their own Souls ; and *consequently* will according to their Capacities and Places, endeavour to vindicate them from the *groundless* Cavils of unreasonable Men, and urge them against the
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licentious Doctrines of the contrary Scheme. And no Wonder ; for this is the Scheme of Doctrines that stains the Glory of all Flesh, and exalts the Throne of an *eternal* God ; whilst the contrary Scheme of Doctrines leads Men to settle upon their Lees, to throw haughty Contempt upon the Majesty of God, and to fill Men's Hearts with lofty Imaginations concerning themselves. And truly, what better can be expected from the Doctrines of Free-Will, Universal Redemption, good Works before Justification, Resistance of the *effectual* Grace of God, and the like ; what better, I say, can be expected from such Doctrines as these, than to pull down a glorious God from the Throne of His *absolute* Sovereignty, and (if I may be allow'd the Phraſe) bereave Him of the Perfections of His Nature ? What better can be expected from such a dangerous Scheme of Doctrines, than to have Men lead by them to *trample* upon the righteous Law, and bring it into Contempt in the Sight of the World ; and to promote and establish a Spirit of Pride and Libertinism in the Hearts of sinful guilty Rebels ? No Wonder at all that those who have been *effectually* wrought upon by the Spirit of the living God, are *commanded* and inclined to rise up against such a God-dethroning, Soul-confounding Scheme of Doctrines, and as *zealously* to vindicate the other Soul-abasing, God-exalting Scheme in the most open Manner.

AND so with Respect to the Work of divine Grace upon the Souls of Men, and *particularly*, the glorious Work of God in convincing and abasing a vast Number of Sinners, and many *surprising* Conversions of late in our Land : No Man's Heart need to reproach him as long as he lives, for *owning*, *approving* and *vindicated* the same from the groundless Exceptions that Men have taken against it. If the Doctrines of God's *absolute* Sovereignty, *effectual* Calling, and the like, are the great Doctrines of the Gospel ; then it is certain that this Work upon the Hearts of Men is the
glorious

glorious Work of divine Grace. For there is nothing more evident of such a Nature, than this, that the Effect of this Work is to fetch down the haughty Hearts of Men from the Throne of God, and lay them at the Footstool of His Sovereignty ; to make them admire and adore *free, sovereign and distinguishing* Grace ; to feel the Power of the *irresistible* Calls of the holy Spirit, and to fill their Souls with Love and Praise for the *free, electing* Love of the Father in CHRIST JESUS from all Eternity. Wherever this Spirit lays fast hold of the Heart, and breaks down the stubborn Will, not only *actual* Sins rise up as *a Cloud of Witnesses*, but *original* Corruption of the Nature boils up as a Fountain, and Guilt for *both* stare the Sinner in the Face ; the poor *Self-condemned* Criminal has nothing to plead that looks like an Obligation on God's Part to forgive ; but his Cry is, *Guilty, guilty ! Mercy, Lord, sovereign Mercy !* And now, the Doctrines of Free-Will, good Works before Justification, God's graciously bringing himself under Obligation to pity a Rebel upon the highest Efforts of Nature towards Conversion, and such like, fly from him as Smoke before the Wind. ----- NEITHER is the *extraordinary* Industry of the Devil to delude Souls by his artful Stratagems, nor the great Diligence of his Instruments to overthrow this Work any rational Argument against it : But on the contrary ; it may be fairly argu'd that 'tis a glorious Work of God, from his *uncommon* Zeal to transform himself into an Angel of Light ; and from the great Opposition it meets with from those that are most *friendly* to those *licentious* Doctrines which *directly* tend to overthrow the main End of the Christian Religion. For what Reason can possibly be alledg'd why the grand Adversary of precious Souls should bestir himself at the *extraordinary* Rate he has lately done ? Why should he take so much more Pains than heretofore, to beat up and rally his huge Armies, mount and fire his largest Canon, and send out his Guards from every Quarter, if his Kingdom

was

was not shaking, and coming down apace, and the Kingdom of our blessed Lord JESUS CHRIST, his *implacable* Enemy, *rising* upon its Ruins.---- Surely this glorious Work must be approv'd by the Reason of Man, and the more so because the Devil is so *exceeding* angry at, and *maliciously* set against it.--The Children of God are therefore *bound*, not only to *own*, but are *inclin'd* to *approve* and *vindicate* the great Doctrines of the Gospel : And to rise up for the Defence of the glorious Work of GOD against all its Enemies ; as a Work that *illustrates* these Doctrines and puts Credit upon them ; as well as a Work that proves of most happy Consequence to the Souls of a Multitude that were *perishing* in their Sins. Nay ; how impossible must it be, to such as have known and felt the *convincing* and *effectual* Influences of the Holy Spirit, to see the bold Attacks of the Enemies of this glorious Work, and yet to *neglect* proper and *appointed* Measures to vindicate it from the *unjust* Prejudices taken against it ? We must suppose the Graces of a Christian in a *very languishing* State, and look upon him *overwhelm'd* in Carnality ; yea, we must suppose him *acting* against himself, and the strongest Propensions of his Soul, if we find him *reconcil'd* to, or *silent* under the Loads of Reproach cast upon *that* Work which his Soul approves as a glorious Work of divine Grace.

Now, if we put all these Things together, and weigh them in equal Ballances, I dare leave you to judge, whether that Man does not forfeit his Title to the Character of Wisdom's Child, who does *not approve*, and to his Power *vindicate*, the great Doctrines of the Gospel, and the glorious Works of divine Grace ? And with this Appeal, I venture to leave this Head as it stands, and pass on to the

A P P L I C A T I O N.

USE I. LEARN hence, that many of the *professed* Children of Wisdom are *apparently* Bastards and not Sons.

Sons. I grant that Wisdom's true Children may *differ* in less considerable Matters, while they are agreed in the important Doctrines and glorious Work of Grace. *Meat commendeth us not to GOD ; for neither if we eat, are we the better ; neither if we eat not, are we the worse.* They may disagree in many circumstantial Things : They may disagree in the Measures they take for the Reformation of those Mistakes and Irregularities found with the Subjects of God's Grace : They may disagree with Respect to some of the Appendages of the glorious Work of God. ---- BUT I must beg Leave to bewail it, that those whose Hearts are join'd together in one glorious Cause, should so far disunite as to enter the List against one another in Paper-Quarrels ; and by that Means take up their precious Time and call off the Minds of others from Things of much greater Importance. 'Tis, in my Opinion, just Matter of Lamentation at this Day of rich abundant Grace, that any in our *respective* Provinces, who, we trust, honour the Work of God and the great Doctrines of His Grace in their Hearts, shou'd, from any Considerations whatever, be led into those Steps that manifestly disserve the glorious Cause, and *unhappily* promote the worst Interest. ---- But after all, they verily design to serve the Interest of JESUS CHRIST, and the glorious Works of divine Grace ; and are united in asserting those great Doctrines of the Gospel which maintain the Majesty of God, fix him in his Throne, and leave sinful Dust and Ashes trembling at his Foot.

BUT then, how *many* are there who wear the Name of Wisdom's Children, that instead of approving and vindicating the great Doctrines and glorious Work of Grace, which can never be honour'd enough by Mortals, do *either* silently pass them over *or* load them with Reproach and Slander ? Can such Men as these be the Thing design'd by the Name of Christians ; or be they not manifestly carrying on an Interest *opposite* to that of CHRIST's ? 'Tis beyond Question that Wisdom's

dom's Children will endeavour to promote her, in her most important Doctrines and most glorious Works : The *Prophets* and *Apostles* were indefatigable in their Services for that End : They were treated shamefully, imprison'd, bound with Fetters of Iron, and some of them put to Death for their *zealous* Vindication of the Truth : Yet whilst they liv'd and had Opportunity they espous'd the *suffering* Cause of CHRIST with all Boldness, against the *muttering* Cavils of *licentious* Men. They counted nothing dear to them so they might testify of the Grace of God. Nature, indeed, was reluctant, but Grace prevail'd to part with Reputation and Friends and worldly Interest and all ; yea, to suffer the Loss of natural Life in the Defence of the Doctrines of Grace. Thro' what abundant Labours did they travail, in Stripes, in Perils, in Weariness, in Watchings often, in Hunger and Thirst, in Fastings often, in Cold and Nakedness, for CHRIST's Sake and the Gospel's ? And as all Christians, but *especially* Christian Ministers, are bound to *devote* their ALL to the Honour of the Lord JESUS CHRIST, and the Vindication of the great Doctrines and glorious Works of Grace ; so it is their Character that they *solemnly* surrender *all* to Him, and contribute, as they are able and have Opportunity, to defend and promote his most important Cause. Yet we *voluntarily* shut our Eyes, or they are already blinded by Lust and Prejudice, if we don't observe *many profess'd* Christians striking at those Doctrines and Works which are the Glory of the Mediator's Kingdom : and *some others*, whilst they are called to harden their Faces as a Flint, against the corrupt Doctrines advanc'd by the Adversaries of the Cause of CHRIST ; whilst they should be strong against all the Terrors of a threatening World, they can *tamely* set by and hear the pure Gospel run down with the greatest Reproach, and another Gospel suited to the Pride of carnal Men applauded. Has not this been verily the Case in some Instances in this Day of rich and surprising

zing Grace ? The Reason may be easily assign'd : 'Tis because the Furniture of the Head will not serve the Turn in those Times, without having the great Doctrines of the Gospel inwrought Principles of the Soul.

WHAT shall be thought of those then, who spend much of their Time in gathering up Objections, and their Tallents in ranging them against the Doctrines of Grace ; or in raking together all the Fooleries of the Subjects of Grace, with manifest Design to render the glorious Work of God in this Day of surprizing Grace, the Matter of Ridicule and Contempt ? I am far from inviting any Man to an *implicit* Faith : Let *Rome* suffice, yea, and be more than sufficient, for imposing her Dictates upon Men without Examination. I am far from desiring any Man to think that all the *extraordinary* Appearances of the present Day are truly the Dictates of the Spirit of God. Where Ministers or People in their Places, teach and recommend those important Doctrines of the Gospel, and the Work of God *emphatically* so called ; they also do well “duly and mildly to testify against and condemn the “Blemishes of both.” And O that there was less Occasion to reprove and rebuke the happy Subjects of the Grace of God, for the unhappy Blemishes cast upon the Work of God, through their *unguarded* and *sinful* Conduct ! O that since their Souls are *purified* to obey the Truth through the Spirit, they might keep themselves without Spot, *unrebukable*, until the appearing of our Lord JESUS CHRIST !----- But the Press and Shops sufficiently declare, not only that some *cautiously* guard against those Things that hurt the Truth and Work of Grace, but that others * hide the Doctrines

* *Vid. A Letter concerning the French Prophets. Mr. Caldwell's Sermons on 1 John 4. 1. and Matth. 7. 15. and others of the like Stamp.*

and glorious Works of Grace, under the Mud and Dirt they heap upon them. They don't blame the Irregularities of others, with any *visible* Design or Desire to relieve and reform them, as becomes Christians ; but seem to rejoice at an Opportunity to blemish the whole Work of God, or to shew the World that they think they have a Right to censure, where they have no Heart to assist. Perhaps some of them pretend to believe the most important Doctrines of Religion as they are contained in the Bible, and ranged in our CONFESSION OF FAITH ; yea, they may *profess* that they believe there is a glorious Work of divine Grace carrying on to the Conversion of great Numbers in a little Time. But let me *solemnly* enquire, wou'd an hearty Friend to these Things that are pretended to, collect together all the Objections he could hear of, and hold them up before a Company, or in an Assembly, unanswer'd ? Does this look like giving Credit to a Doctrine or a Work as Divine, plainly to endeavour that the Glories and Beauties of them might be hid ? It would look like Friendliness to the glorious Work and great Doctrines I speak of, if a Man was careful and concern'd to remove the Difficulties and answer the Objections that rose up at any Time in Men's Minds against them : But to fetch in all the *Wood, Hay and Stubble*, that is built upon the Foundation, and then to hold them up in their worst Shapes between the Eye and the beautiful Object, the *Silver, Gold and precious Stones* ; and having made all Things ready to the Purpose, then with a solemn Face to put the Question, *is this the Work of GOD ?* Or some Enquiry of the like Sort : this, I say, looks like Enmity instead of Friendship to this Work of God.

SHALL I go a Step further and ask ; What shall be thought of those that *sit still* and say nothing to *justify* or *condemn* those Doctrines and Works of glorious Grace ? Some live with as much Caution or Carelessness as if they intended Wisdom should die with them,

them, or else it was not of any great Consequence how these Things issu'd. They please themselves with a Conceit that they are not of a Party with the Enemies of these Doctrines and Works of Grace, though they know that they are not engaged to vindicate them. But is it possible for Wisdom's true Children to keep Silence, when the Devil has so many to side in the War that he has proclaim'd, against those great Doctrines and glorious Works which threaten to beat him out of his *usurp'd* Dominion ? Men may possibly imagine themselves Neuters in this Engagement, but our blessed Lord tells us the Thing is impossible, *Mat. 12. 30.* All are engaged for the Doctrines of CHRIST and the Works of his Grace, or against them ; and they that do not *actually* approve, justify and endeavour to propagate them, according to their Places and Abilities, do oppose and betray them. What shall be thought then, of such as refuse *actually* to join with, and *expressly* to give up themselves to to defend this Cause ? Don't they continue their Rebellion to JESUS CHRIST while they adventure to call themselves his Children ? However some of them may hide themselves under a fair Profession of Religion, yet, until they come over to approve and vindicate these Doctrines and Works of Grace, they *drive on* the same common Design with the Devil. 'Tis vain to pretend Harmlessness ; for *he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad*, says our Saviour. In vain do Men hope to shun the Censure of being against CHRIST, who are not *active* in his Cause : They must gather with him, or else he will have us esteem them his Enemies. And let this have it's due Weight upon those that set still in this Day : at such an *extraordinary* Season of Grace ; and at such an *extraordinary* Time of Cavilling, Silence is the more Criminal. Are not the Victories of CHRIST over his Enemies *glorious* ? Is not the Harvest *plenteous*, and the Fields *white* ? Are not groundless Exceptions many, and Enemies very industrious ? And

now, when this is the true State of our religious Affairs, to make any Thing serve for an Excuse to lag *behind*, is *mean* Cowardize, and a dark Sign that Men don't care to engage in a *critical* Day and a *difficult* Service, when their Help is most expected. I wish such Men, whether of *high* or *low* Degree, would seriously and upon their Knees before God, ponder those Words, *Judg.* 5. 23.

USE II. GOD calls Wisdom's Children to *Lamentation* and *Mourning* at this Day, that the Doctrines and glorious Works of divine Grace are a *Derision* to so many People. I shall not fasten upon any Names, but leave that to the Doctrines they *propagate*, or the Things they *urge* in their *private* Conversation. Nor wou'd I have any Mistake my Design, as though I was *suggesting* suspicious Things respecting those that have been faithfully endeavouring to vindicate the Truth, and undeceive blind deluded Souls that stumble at the important Doctrines and Work of Grace, even though they should differ in the Measures they take to effect it. We may be called in one Hope of our Calling; have one Lord, one Faith, one God and Father in us all, so as to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace, and yet differ in our Customs and Opinions, that are not essential to true Godliness. But as I am call'd by the Providence of God to speak at this Time, doubtless, to a mix'd Assembly of Guilty and Innocent, I would no sooner flatter or sooth up the *former*, than impeach and hurt the Character of the *latter*; especially considering it is unlikely that I shall ever meet them else where, before we all meet in a greater Assembly at the *awful* Tribunal of the great Judge. We may shut our *Eyes* against the clear Light of the shining Sun, and then fancy to our selves that we can have no Objects presented to our Minds from *that* Sense: Nor would it be more unreasonable to argue with our selves that it is impossible for us to see Colours,

lours, than it is to flatter our selves that none in the Ministry have *manifestly* oppos'd the glorious Work of God, by treating these great Doctrines of Grace with Contempt, or at least with Indifference, if by no other Means. 'Tis not easy to reckon up what a vast Number of Sermons, now in Print, are calculated only to get Men 'out of the Road of Wickedness, into the ' Road of Self-Righteousness,' and there to leave them settled down at Ease in *Zion* : a Way that some Preachers have taken, as fatal to the Soul as open Profaneness, though it seems to lead People along with greater Calmness down to Hell. Whither there be any of this Character in the Ministry that now hear me, God knows : I wish to God that every one would make the same solemn Enquiry concerning himself, that the Apostles did to their blessed Master, on another Occasion, *Lord is it I ?* I could wish that not one Minister would put it off with Disdain : I'm sure none will that are in the lively Exercise of Grace, and have a due Sense of the Worth of Souls and the Importance of the Ministry. I have Reason to believe we all come exceeding short of our Duty in vindicating the great Doctrines of Grace, undeceiving Self-righteous Persons, and in honouring the Work of Grace that has been so glorious in our Land. *Flesh and Blood* pull us back, and bid us *spare* ourselves, lest the Number of our Enemies encrease daily. O that the Lord would pour out his Spirit *abundantly* upon us, and make us *wisely* bold in his Cause, and *compassionately* industrious for the *eternal* Welfare of those *precious* Souls we have in Charge !

HOWEVER my Hearers stand affected towards these Things, sure I am that such as of Design *speak slightly* of the Puritanical Doctrines, or *represent* them as Doctrines in which the Vitals of Religion are not greatly concern'd, are no Friends to the best Parts of the Reformation from Popery, but evidently leave " the ' most *diabolical* Part of *Antichristianism* undestroy'd."--

Yea

Yea such as thus represent these Doctrines of the Gospel, *Speak Evil of the Things which they know not*; whether they be Ministers or People; and take a ready Course to bring upon their Hearers *swift Destruction*. And those also, who set at naught the glorious Work of divine Grace that has lately been so conspicuous in our Land, however secret or open they are in their Measures taken against it; however they may impute their Opposition to a Zeal for the Truth; yet suffer me to bear them Record this Day that their Zeal is not according to Knowledge; and unless they are soon reform'd, *the Chariots of their Glory*, will be *the Shame* of all them that uphold them.

THE Elders of the Children of Zion, the Heads of our Tribes, and those that have the Cognizance of the most important Affairs of Religion, together with all the People of *Jerusalem*, may well have their Eyes fail with Tears, and their Bowels *greatly* troubled, that any of the Prophets have seen vain and foolish Things for them, and not discovered their Iniquity. Because of this, some of the Enemies of the glorious Works and great Doctrines of Grace have opened their Mouth against them; they have hissed and said, *we will swallow them up*. They have as truly *crucified the Lord of Life and Glory* in his Doctrines and Works of Grace, as if they had been the *russian* Soldiers that laid violent Hands upon his very Person. Will any of you, *my dear Hearers*, stand by and see the blessed Jesus strip'd and stab'd; and only say, as *Pilate* did, why will you treat him thus? *What Evil hath he done?* ---- O that the blessed Saviour should be brought forth from Day to Day; mock'd by the Tongues of Men; scourg'd and spit upon; and have many crying out, *away with him, away with him: crucify him, crucify him!* If he had taught those Doctrines in our Streets which *dethrones* a sovereign God, and exalt the haughty Sinner; or if he had wrought any Works of *Magic*, let all bear Witness of the Evil: But if not so, why should he

he be smitten ? Why should, or how can the Children of Wisdom sit still, and see many seeking false Witnesses against him to put him to Death ? Is it not Matter of deep Humiliation that CHRIST should be a Stone of Stumbling, and a Sign to be spoken against ; that the World should hate *Him* without a Cause, who has once *already* liv'd a Life of Dangers, that you might be brought to Mount *Sion*, the City of Solemnities ? Is it possible that you should bear up under the Burden, if you see the great Doctrines of his holy Religion trifled with ; or the glorious Work of his Grace, which is the costly Purchase of his precious Blood, despis'd and spurn'd at by Mortals ! O that the blessed JESUS, whom Angels adore, should suffer himself to be crucified afresh, and put to open Shame, by insolent Rebels ! *Men, Brethren, and Fathers*, is it sufferable that he, who is *worthy to receive Power, and Riches, and Wisdom, and Strength, and Honour, and Glory, and Blessing forever* ; should be mock'd, and have many Things *blasphemously* spoken against him ? O amazing Patience of God ! Oh Heaven daring Insolence in Men ! Oh that they were convinced and ashamed of smiting *Him* with the Palms of their Hands, and spitting in *his* Face, at whose Presence Heaven and Earth flee away ! How will they be able to answer their taking Counsel against JESUS to put him to Death ! Will they not be quite speechless, when the Lord JESUS CHRIST comes to make that solemn Enquiry, *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me* ? Why hast thou villified the great Doctrines or the glorious Works of my Grace ? Am I worthy of nothing but Stripes, and Blows, and Scourges, and Derision, and Hissing, and Death ?----O that Love to the Lord JESUS CHRIST, and tender Compassion to such false Accusers, might stir up Wisdom's Children, and open the Springs of their Souls, and send them to God ! O that they would send up *incessant* Cries to that God who is able to help, and sovereign in his Mercy, that he would graciously prevent the Rage of Man, venting it

it self against those important Things, wherein the Glory of CHRIST and the Interest of his Kingdom are so much concern'd !

USE III. LET all *take Heed to themselves and of the Ministry they attend upon?* There are none of the Doctrines or Works of JESUS CHRIST that escape the Assaults of the Devil : He has a rooted Enmity against all the great Concernments of the Redeemer's Kingdom. He is far enough from favouring any just Attempts for *building up* the Interest of CHRIST, and *promoting* the Salvation of precious immortal Souls. And therefore, as he lets none of the Doctrines or Works of CHRIST go untried, so he has a peculiar Aim at Blemishing or overthrowing the *most important* Doctrines of the Gospel, and *most glorious* Works of divine Grace. Neither does he want for Men of Wit and Figure to abet his *malicious* Designs, who will readily afford him their Assistance according to their Power ; and to employ their Skill and Talents to support what JESUS CHRIST is casting down. Not only the are Crowd on the Devil's Side, but even *all* are fighting for him that can despise or neglect the most important and Soul-searching Doctrines of Religion, or trample upon the astonishing Work of divine Grace.

THEREFORE, *my dear Hearers*, if you love the Lord JESUS CHRIST, or value your own eternal Welfare, give no Countenance to such a Ministry as traduces the Doctrines of Grace, or the Work of Grace : Attending upon and encouraging such a Ministry will be no Evidence that you approve and wou'd vindicate those Things which that runs down, or passes over in a sinful Silence. Our blessed Saviour very expressly cautions against false Teachers, *Matth. 7. 15.* The Reason given for the Caution is found in the preceding Verses, viz. Because the Way to Destruction is broad, and the Way to Life narrow, and attended with many and great Difficulties : Therefore, says our Lord,

Lord; it concerns you so much the rather to be upon your Guard against false Prophets. Q. D. They are like to lead you into a loose Way of thinking about Religion; and to represent the Way broad and the Gate wide, that lead to Life; and therefore to be watch'd against and avoided. --- But will you ask who these false Prophets are? Our Lord tells you; they are *Wolves in Sheep's Cloathing*. They will make as great a Profession of Religion as other Men; and as great Pretences to Holiness; and thus they resemble the Sheep; but they are *Wolves* nevertheless; and the more dangerous Sort, *ravenous Wolves*. If you consider the Character of a Wolf, you may see how well it agrees with a false Teacher. The Scriptures represent a Wolf as a sly crafty Creature to catch the Prey: he comes in upon the Flock when the Shepherd is secure or careless. So false Teachers are said *to lie in wait* to deceive; and *privily* to bring in damnable Heresies; 2 Pet. 2. 1. With a Pretence to Religion they get into Office, and then *sophistically* introduce flesh-pleasing carnal Principles: They hear not the Voice of the Shepherd, neither will they follow him, because they are not his Sheep; but the Voice of Strangers they hear; and with fair Speeches, and plausible Interpretations of the Scripture, they pervert the Christian Religion in its most important Articles, till they lead away the Hearts of the Simple. So the Apostle compares them to *Wells without Water*, 2 Pet. 2. 17. 'Tis well known that Wells without Water are filthy and over-spread with Spider's Webs: and so usually false Teachers, as to sound Doctrine they are very barren; but establish the Hope of the Hypocrite which is a Spider's Web. Their Doctrines are calculated to build Men up in carnal Confidences: They represent the great End of God's providing a Saviour, to be the Happiness of Man; 'sincere universal Obedience to the Law the Condition of Acceptance before God'; or Doctrines of the like Tendency. Or else miserably

those that attend their Ministry : For when they go laden with Desire to hear the great Doctrines and Works of divine Grace opened and vindicated, they are entertain'd from Sabbath to Sabbath with some Appendages of Religion, circumstantial Matters, or outside Obedience, which is no true Christian Obedience ; and those Doctrines which exalt the Throne of God and abase the sinful Creature are pass'd by in awful Silence. No Wonder then St. *John* represents these false Teachers as *Deceivers* 2 John 7. For they pretend to be worthy Preachers of the Gospel, and Friends to the great Interest of Religion, when they are not so. If they carried their true Mark in their Forehead, viz. *Heresy ; False-Doctrine ; Dethroners of a sovereign GOD ; Flesh-Pleasers ; Wolves in Sheep's Cloathing, &c.* many would be afraid of them that are, doubtless, lead astray by their Insinuations. But these Marks they hide as much as they can, when they apprehend a Discovery is dangerous to their Cause ; and pretend to be orthodox, Friends to the Truth, Followers of *JESUS*, and Guides of the Blind.

THESE are some of the Characters of those Teachers which you are to avoid : and I the rather add these Things because of some *abusive* Perversions of the holy Scripture lately attempted, to slur the Character of such as are faithfully asserting and inculcating the great Doctrines of the Gospel, to undeceive poor Mortals that are in Danger of being led aside by the cunning Craftiness of Men. I beg that none would be prejudic'd against the Truth because of this Plainness of Ministration. 'Tis the Cause of *CHRIST* I am pleading, and must not seek to please the *carnal* Inclinations of Men : For then I should not approve my self a faithful Servant of *CHRIST* in the Embassage I am now upon.

AND has not *CHRIST*, the great Purchaser of all our Blessings, denied himself enough, *my Friends*, for your Sakes ? Are not all the great things that he has done
and

and suffer'd, enough to lay you under the highest Obligations to *do* and *be* any Thing that he requires for his Cause : Can you view any Thing that belongs to the Glory of his Grace and the Enlargement of his Kingdom, struck at, and not be enflamed with Zeal and pious Care ? *Especially*, where his Glory lies most at Stake, *that* deserves your greatest Industry to give in your Testimony for his Name and Cause. 'Tis true, if you deny yourselves ever so much, upon all temporal Considerations, to be Witnesses for JESUS, he needs none of your Service ; but then it is his Will to require your Testimony, and bafe in you to grudge him any Thing. Yea, and as to your own *spiritual* Interest, and the Welfare of the Church : You are like to starve your Souls, hazzard the Church's Purity, and draw others into a dangerous Snare to their Ruin, unless you do your uttermost in your respective Capacities, to discountenance and discourage those Prophets that *see* Vanity, and *divine* Lies.

PARTICULARLY therefore, *beware* of that Ministry which teaches *unsound Doctrine*. I mean, those Doctrines that are pleasing to corrupt Nature, and tend naturally to bolster Men up in Pride and Opposition to God and the Designs of his Grace : Such as Free-Will in Opposition to the *absolute* Sovereignty of God ; Election from Faith foreseen ; good Works before Justification, &c. For if the contrary Doctrines are the great and most important Doctrines of the Gospel, such Doctrines as these are of the most dangerous Tendency and pernicious Consequence : if the *former* Doctrines which I have mentioned, are the Doctrines which *display* rich and sovereign Grace, *exalt* the Name and Honour of God, *magnify* the Law, and *debase* the sinful Creature, then these Doctrines *degrade* the Riches of free and glorious Grace, *run down* the Name and Honour of a glorious God, *villify* his holy Law, *take off* the Crown from the Head of the Lord JESUS CHRIST, and place it upon the Head of haughty, guilty Man.

If the former Doctrines are the Doctrines that lead up to Heaven, then these Doctrines lead down to Hell ; for they stand in *diametrical* Opposition, the one to the other. Whatever Pretences therefore, such *unsound* Preachers may have, by which they may flatter or amuse their Hearers and stupify their Consciences, yet they are the Seducers of the People, speaking Peace to them, *when there is no Peace*, building up a *slighty* Wall, and daubing with untempered Mortar,

AGAIN, such as in *the general* Course of their Ministry *neglect* to preach the great & most important Doctrines of the Gospel, Sermons for the Reformation of Manners are needful : One End of CHRIST's Coming into the World was to reform it ; Profaneness and Debauchery are the Reproach of human Nature, the Plague of human Society, and the undoing of the Souls of Men as they spring from a corrupt Fountain of Iniquity in the Heart. But all the Reformation-Sermons that ever were printed or preach'd, never brought a Soul to JESUS CHRIST, unless it was *first* taught the Corruption and Enmity of the Heart ; the *absolute* Sovereignty of GOD ; the Emptiness and *spiritual* Deadness of Man ; and the only Way of Justification by an *imputed* Righteousness. Let Men build up ever so fair a Wall of Profession upon the Foundation of *moral* Virtue ; and then let a Preacher come and daub it over with ever so much Art, to hide the Cracks and render it beautiful ; if after all it make ever so goodly an Appearance, yet it must all come to the Ground, and *they* must be brought to see that there is no Safety in it : *they* must be brought off from that old Foundation, and by the *irresistible* Influences of the Spirit of GOD, fix'd upon the Rock of Ages ; or else the Hail-stones of GOD's amazing Vengeance, will at last batter down their beautiful Superstructure, and they must perish in its Ruins. If so be then, that a Ministry which consists in negative Blamelessness in Doctrines ; I mean such a Ministry as in a general Course neglects the
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most important Doctrines of the Gospel should be countenanced in the Churches, the Ministry of such a Man is but too much like the Righteousness of the boasting *Pharisee*, which stood chiefly in Negations.

AGAIN, beware of such a Ministry as *expressly denies* or *plainly* endeavours to *hide* the glorious Work of divine Grace under the Filth of human Imprudences. Those that reject the late surprizing Work of Grace, in the Conviction and Conversion of Sinners, cannot *reasonably* be suppos'd to be real Friends to the great Doctrines of Grace, whatever their Pretences may be to believe them. If Men have these Doctrines wro't as Principles in their Souls; if they have them wro't into their Hearts and Wills, as well as in their Understandings; if they are broken down at the Footstool of divine Sovereignty by the Spirit of the living God, and brought entirely off from Self-Dependance to close with JESUS CHRST in his mediatorial Character, they could not reject this Work of amazing Grace, even though in some Instances it has been attended with a *disturbed Imagination*. Nor can it be *rationaly* thought that they would endeavour to hide the Glory of the Work from the Eyes of Observers, by holding up *nothing* but *Visions, Revelations, Enthusiasms*, and other Fooleries, suppos'd to be found with those who, we hope, are the Subjects of this Grace; and then gravely tell us that this is a **STRONG PRESUMPTION** that they have nothing but a *strange Fire* working in them: because such Appearances were common among the *Montanists*, and have been found sometimes in *Popish* Countries. I grant, to *instruct, reprove, exhort, and admonish* young Converts, is the plain Duty of every Minister of CHRIST: This kind Office they are commanded to attend with Diligence & Care; and for this they have the best Examples set before them for their Direction and Encouragement. 'Tis therefore very base and ungrateful to represent such faithful Monitors as *Opposers* of this Work of divine Grace; and a plain Evidence

vidence of a great Defect in a Work of Sanctification. But then, there is a vast Difference between *reproving* and *directing* the Children of God ; and *laying bold* of their Sins, their Multitude of Imprudences, and *holding* them before the Eyes of the People to hide the Work of glorious Grace. The *former* is like a Man who when he has found a *precious* Jewel with its various Beauties much defac'd, and its Worth very much hid from the Eyes of Men, by lying in Puddle-Water, and being tramp'd under Foot, *lays bold* of it as a rich and valuable Treasure, *rub*s and *scour*s it ; *warn*s all his Friends and others that pass by, not to sully its Beauties ; *justly* reproves them if *even* for Joy, they should tread upon it ; and invites all his Acquaintance to behold and admire its Excellencies, and to rejoice in the Smiles of Heaven. But the *latter* is like a Man that lights upon the *very same* Jewel in an ugly Hue ; *beat* and *bruised*, and its Beauties very much hid from the Eyes of careless Passengers ; he will not himself be perswaded but that it is a baser *Metal* ; instead of cleansing it of Mud and Dirt, carefully stands by to keep on the filthy Dress, and rather tramples it under Foot than otherwise, lest Beholders should take it for the Thing it really is : At least, he will not take off its filthy Covering that it might appear in its true Colour and Worth.

SUCH a Ministry as this, *my dear Friends*, you are caution'd to *beware* of. This is the Ministry that perverts the great Doctrines and glorious Works of divine Grace : This is the Ministry that leads Men along in the broad Way to Destruction, under the Pretence of guiding them in the narrow Way to eternal Salvation, as I have already observ'd. And where this is truly the Case with any, they are to be treated by such as love and long for the Coming of CHRIST'S Kingdom ; by such as love their own Souls and wou'd honour the great Doctrines and glorious Works of Grace, as Despisers of the Gospel. You are to be-
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ware of them as Men that pervert the Gospel ; agreeable to what St. Paul hath taught us, Gal. 1. 8, 9.-----
Though we, or an Angel from Heaven preach any other Doctrine unto you, than that ye have received, let him be accursed. Such Perverters of the Gospel do but run back and take hold of the worst End of Popery : These are the Errors that not only shake but overthrow the Foundation of the Christian Religion. Such Errors as these separate the Church from CHRIST, and those that support them are guilty of Schism. They are endeavouring to make an Agreement *between the Temple of God and Idols* ; and therefore you are called to *come out from among them, that you be not Partakers of their Sins, and that you receive not of their Plagues,* 2 Cor. 6. 16, 17. Such Men as these you are exhorted to treat as Enemies of the Cross of CHRIST, and Corrupters of the Word of God ; 1 Tim. 6. 3, 4, 5. The State of such Persons I leave with God to judge : I know not what to say of them ; but these are dangerous, yea damnable Heresies ; yet it is possible for ought I know that some Persons, even against their own Experience, may have the Weakness to defend them, and be saved. But the Eyes of your *Understanding being enlightned, that you may know what is the Hope of his Calling, and what the Riches of the Glory of his Inheritance in the Saints,* you must be inexcusable, if you are led away in woful Blindness. The Doctrines that such *oppose or neglect* are the very Doctrines by which the Church of our LORD JESUS CHRIST will stand or *fall* : if these Doctrines are vindicated and supported the Church may be kept pure from fatal Corruptions ; but if they are beat down or kept under, we must expect nothing but to have her overspread with Midnight Darkness. And therefore it is no Wonder that St. Paul so much insists 'upon bearing Testimony against all them, *especially Teachers,* that pervert or neglect these great Doctrines of the Gospel : nor is it any Wonder that St. John solemnly warns

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Christians to beware of such a Ministry, as he clearly and expressly does, 2 John 9. 10, 11.

BUT why should I, that am a Child, insist upon these Things any further? I hope my Fathers and Brethren will do it again, and again, in a strong Light, and a particular Manner. I should not have said so much upon this Head, but that we may expect pure Religion to rise or fall in our Churches, in some Measure according as these Doctrines are *vindicated, received, neglected or despised*. And I cannot but fear that the brightest Luminaries of the Churches will be put out after a little while, and Men will grope for the Wall as the Blind, and grope as if they had no Eyes, unless the Lord, in abundant Mercy calls up and spirits his faithful Ministers strenuously to oppose and discountenance those absurd Doctrines and all their Adherents, that sap the Foundation of the Christian Religion. A temporizing Disposition and Conduct, which have *prodigiously* crept in among us in past Days of Degeneracy and Deadness, have given *inexpressible* Advantage to the Adversary of CHRIST's Kingdom; and unless speedily reform'd, will probably, set some zealous Christians at an *unhappy* Distance from those that are really the Friends of God, and of the great Doctrines and Works of his Grace.

I can't dismiss this Use without entering a Caution, though it seems to be a Digression from the Subject I am upon. 'Tis to Wisdom's Children, and *especially to little Children*, young Converts: *Beware that from these Things you be not lead into groundless Separations*. I speak this the rather because young Christians are apt to torment themselves with Scruples, and spend their Time and Zeal about those Things wherein the Essence of Religion is not concern'd. The *Corinthians* were guilty of very great Disorder in setting up one faithful Minister of CHRIST and pulling down another as faithful as he: *One said I am of Paul, another I am of Apollos, and a third I am of Cephas*: But such a dividing

viding Principle was a clear Evidence of their Carnality ; because these were all the faithful Ministers of CHRIST, and faithfully vindicated the Doctrines and Works of Grace, according to the different Talents given them. And Ministers may now, *faithfully* and *clearly* vindicate the most important Doctrines and Works of Grace, and yet differ in many less considerable Matters ; or in their Manner of opposing the Errors that are more or less dangerous to the Church. Irregularities they must reprove, and Things that are amiss they must endeavour to set in Order, or else they will be found guilty of betraying the Truth, and of approving Sin. And what if every one does not go into the same Measures to rectify one and the same Mistake? yet if they are united in advancing the great Doctrines and glorious Works of Grace ; if they are united in maintaining the Throne of God, and in overthrowing all that would *usurp* his Dominion, or oppose the Royalties of a glorious Redeemer, lesser Matters where they are *not impos'd*, are no just and reasonable Grounds for Separations. I think God calls me to leave my Testimony in this Place, against separating from a Soul-searching Ministry, *merely* because of some circumstantial Matters ; or because of some *supposed* or *real* Mistakes, where the Essence of Religion is not particularly interested. As I have done this once and again in *Connecticut* ; so now, may I be allow'd to say? Why should those that are reconciled to God, and redeem'd by a glorious Saviour, who breathes nothing but Love and Goodness to his Children ; why should those that are sanctified by the purifying Influences of the Holy Spirit, who is also a Spirit of Unity ; why should those that have embrac'd the same Gospel of Peace, and laid down a Spirit of Defiance against the dear Saviour and his glorious Cause ; why should such grieve the Holy Spirit and disgrace the Doctrines of our holy Religion, by Party-Zeal or needless Separations ? ----
Dear Brethren, 'tis possible some of you in this great

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Assembly may think you should honour some particular Minister of CHRIST, if you set him up, to the Ruin or great Discouragement of other Ministers that are faithfully endeavouring in their Measure, to promote the same glorious Cause : but if they are espousing the same great Doctrines of the Gospel, and striving to encourage and *defend* the same glorious Work of Grace, why should you dote on one to the Prejudice of others in their arduous Labours ? Will not such a Party-Zeal, if found among you, unhappily tend to eclipse the Glory and Majesty of God, that shine the more illustriously in giving this Treasure in earthen Vessels ? When the best of Ministers have done the best they can, it is but to plant and water, whilst all the Increase is in the Hand of a sovereign God. You will not then, I hope be led away to *gaze* at one and *glory* in another faithful Minister of CHRIST, under the mistaken Thought, that the strong Reasonings of one, or the singular Eloquence of the other, can give Beauty, Life or Grace to the Gospel of the blessed God. O what a dreadful Reproach would it be to the Majesty of the glorious Gospel, if you should receive the same divine Truths when preach'd by one, and despise or neglect them when published by another ! O sad Case that the poor Church of the Lord JESUS CHRIST would soon be in, if the dear Lambs of the Flock, that are so numerous in our happy Day, should so far fall from the Love of the Truth, as to have Men's Persons in Admiration ! Happy, happy will it be to behold the dear Children spreading themselves like Olive-Branches round about the Table, with united Hearts and Hands to encourage and promote the glorious Cause of CHRIST, and the Interest of *immortal* Souls, against Despisers of that Grace of God which brings Salvation ! But O how dark the Aspect would be, if those that are united in the great Doctrines of Grace, and glorious Work of Grace, should begin to separate one from another, *merely* because of some
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lesser Points ! O how happy, beyond Expression, if all the Children of Wisdom that profess, and all the faithful Ministers that preach the same Faith ; the same great Doctrines of the Gospel, the same glorious Work of divine Grace, would but join their Hearts, and Pens, and Tongues, against the common Enemy ! Might not Union in these Things be accounted for the Trophies of Victory, under JESUS CHRIST, who stands for an Ensign of the People, and who will mount up until his Rest becomes glorious ? O, if we were all united under him, what a Defence might we make, and what a Victory might we get, by his Blessing, over the Enemies of his Cause ! Beautiful as *Tirzah*, comely as *Jerusalem*, and terrible as an Army with Banners, if our Forces were all united ! O that all *private*, selfish Views might be let go, and our Hearts given up to the Lord without the least Reserve, for the Mortification of Pride and a steadfast Engagedness for the common Interest ! How soon should we see threatening Evils vanish ; every Mountain become a Plain, and precious Souls in greater Abundance than ever, flying, with Acclamations of *Grace, Grace*, to the Windows of the Church, untill it looks forth as the *Morning*, fair as the *Moon*, clear as the *Sun* ?

USE IV. LET us earnestly beg of GOD, the God of all Mercy, that he would deliver the Church from a corrupt Ministry. The Scripture tells us not only that there were false Apostles, deceitful Workers that transformed themselves into the Apostles of CHRIST, in the early Ages of the Church ; but there should arise false Teachers, speaking perverse Things, to draw away Disciples after them. And among other Methods us'd to draw Men from the Truth of the Gospel, some will wrest and pervert the Sense of the Scripture, by false Interpretations, even in the fundamental Doctrines of the Christian Religion ; and bring in damnable Heresies contrary to the Analogy of Faith. By what Methods so

ever they get into the Church, they are the greatest Injuries to it of any Men whatever. If they make ever so great Pretences to be religious, yet they deny the Power of Godliness, make Merchandise of Men's Souls and are daily sowing the Tares of Error and Delusion.

THE great Adversary of Wisdom and all her Children, we may reasonably suppose, sets highly by his Throne; and is too sagacious and cruel willingly to come down. Consequently he will make the strongest Resistance that possibly he can, against the Overthrow of a corrupt Ministry in those Instances where it may be found: For as he values his Dominion and maliciously hates the Progress of the Gospel, so he cannot have Servants more successful to maintain his Cause against the Throne of God, than such as deny and neglect the Doctrines of Grace, and the glorious Works of Grace, *especially* if they are found among the Leaders of a People. But instead of being a Discouragement, this should be a powerful Incentive to Wisdom's Children, to send up their incessant Cries to the Throne of Grace for the Churches speedy Deliverance. False Teachers, who neglect or despise the great Doctrines or Works of Grace, are like Traitors at the Head of an Army, who under Pretence of being engag'd to defend and introduce the rightful Sovereign, and make his Enemies bow before him, open the City Gates for a vile Usurper to come in with all his Armies, and keep the Prince out of his just Dominions. They are advancing the Kingdom of Satan, under the Pretence of pulling it down: The Glory of the Mediator's Kingdom is as much debas'd by such a corrupt Ministry as the Exaltation of it is the Design of the Christian Religion. Such Teachers usurp the Royalties of the Lord JESUS CHRIST, by a shameful Neglect of, or *actual* Opposition to the most important Articles of the Christian Faith and Terms of Life. Instead of answering the holy Purposes of the Gospel-Ministry, these

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Corrupters of the Word of God, do but enslave their Hearers worse and worse ; nor is there any more Hope of Salvation by their Calculations, than there would be to go to a Retailer's Shop to buy a Pardon.

Shou'd we not, *my Friends*, have Reason to esteem Deliverance from such a Ministry wherever it obtains, an unspeakable Favour of Heaven here upon Earth ? O that the glorious Head of the Church would not leave it comfortless ; nor open to the Devourer ; but speedily deliver it from the Hazzard of utter Ruin, wherever it lies in these Struggles between Life and Death ! We know not what to do, O Lord, but our Eyes are unto thee, and we are resolved to wait for thy Salvation ! O that God, who does Wonders, would make bare his Arm, and declare his Strength among the People ! Is this the Place that Men call the Perfection of Beauty, the Joy of the whole Earth ? Shine, O God, out of *Zion* the Perfection of Beauty ? God is our Refuge and Strength, a very present Help in Time of Trouble ! O that the City of God might rejoice because God is in the midst of her, that she should not be moved, but established for ever in the Truth !

MY dear Hearers, such Calamities as the Church has labour'd under, now of a long Time, by Corrupters of the Word, should awaken your drowsy Spirits to plead its Cause with the great Shepherd of *Israel*. He who has said *the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it*, has also appear'd once and again to deliver it where it was overspread with Error. And is his Hand shortned at all by past Deliverances that he cannot redeem ? Has he no Power to deliver, at whose Rebuke the Sea is dried up ? Surely it is established of God ; the God of Peace, who will shortly bruise Satan under our Feet. Will you therefore, be intreated and encouraged to cry mightily unto God, and say, *Save thy People, O God of our Salvation ; gather them together and deliver them from their most dangerous Enemies, that they*

they may give Thanks unto thy holy Name, and glory in thy Praise. Lord ! what will the End be if our Churches should be generally drawn in to embrace or connive at those Doctrines that subvert the Foundation of the Christian Religion ? O that the precious Seed might be preserved and separated from all gross Mixtures ! O that those who are united in the great, the fundamental Doctrines, and the glorious Works of Grace, were driven together without a Storm ? Oh that the Dross among the Churches might be purged out, and the puritanical Doctrines of the Gospel might be revived in their Simplicity after a sad Neglect ! So shall the Wilderness and the Cities thereof lift up their Voice ; the Villages that Kedar doth inhabit : The Inhabitants of the Rock shall sing, and shout from the Top of the Mountains. AMEN.

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