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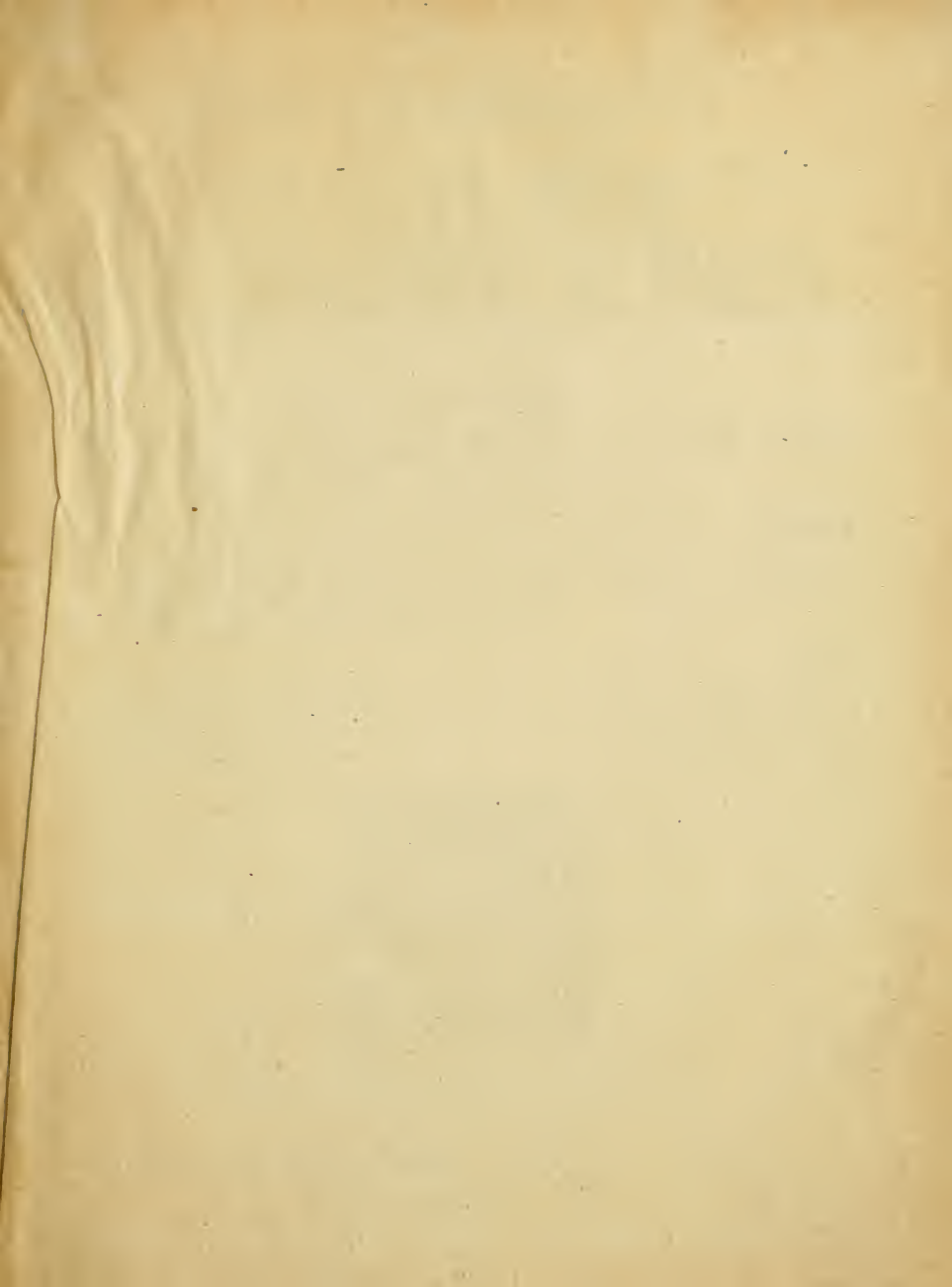
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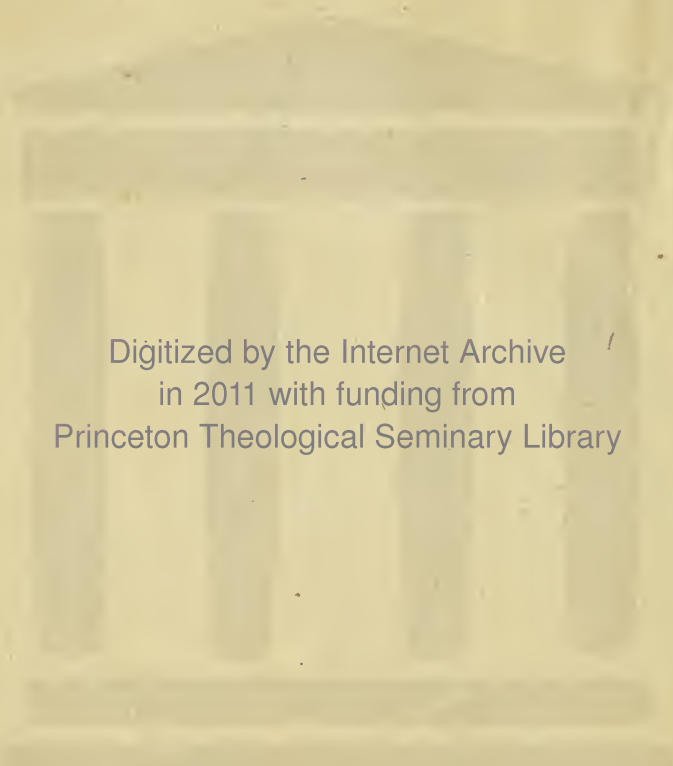
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A
Practical Discourse
CONCERNING
GODS DECREES.

In Two parts.

*The First concerning mans unfitnesse to dispute against
the Decrees of God: out of Rom. 9. 20.*

*The Second tending to Assert and Cleare Gods Absolute
Election of a Limited and certaine Number unto Eter-
nall Life: out of Acts 13. 48.*

By EDVVARD BAGSHA VVE St. of Ch. Ch.



OXFORD,
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Practical Discourse

CONCERNING

GODS DECREES

In Two Parts.

By Thomas Manton, D.D. Sermon preached at the funeral of the late Sir John Mordaunt, Bart. on the 24th of June 1688. at St. Pauls Church in London. Printed by J. Sturges, at the Gunpowder Tavern in St. Dunstons Church-yard, 1688.

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THE END



TO THE
HONORABLE
MY
Lord *BRADSHAWE*
Lord Chiefe Justice of *Chester*.

My Noble Lord,



Late Author in his severall
Treatises wherein he endeavours to defend (I will not say *Mr Pierce*
the *Arminian* Tenets, because
he is unwilling to have them so
stiled, but, which is all one) *Free-*
will and *Conditionall election*,

whether because he was touched with compuncti-
on for his former errors, as he thinks them; or else
to make his present opinions more taking and
plausible (as if he had not fell into them by chance,
but got them after much and serious study) I find
that he frequently doth usher them in, by profes-
sing that he was once a *Calvinist* (for that it

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seemes must be the Name of Obloquie to those, who, according to Scripture (of which *Calvin* was the best Interpreter, that God hath yet vouchsafed his Church) do maintaine *Absolute Predestination*) but *he was frighted into his wits* (for so he is pleased to play upon himselfe) by *considering the Horrible consequences of Absolute Reprobation*.

Were I willing to make my selfe worke in this time of my retirement here, by engaging with a Person, who is, as some thinke very able, I am sure very confident, and very Angry; I would not desire greater advantage then these few words of his might give me: for to be an *Arminian*, I meane an Asserter of *Universall Redemption*, and of those other Tenets which lead to it or flow from it, a very little paines will serve the turne; and every man is so Naturally apt, to make himselfe a sharer with God, and to cozen himselfe with hopes of mercy, that it is a much harder matter to escape those opinions, then to attaine them. Besides for any to be deferred from the maintenance of any truth in *Theses*, because it seemes attended with unanswerable difficulties, and many ill consequences, is to my thinking very unreasonable: since if that may be admitted, all the mysterious part of our Religion which contains the *Credenda* must never expect either to be entertained or defended. I might adde farther, that for any to be *frighted into his wits*, is a thing altogether unusuall: and if it hath indeed in this matter so fared with that Gentleman

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tleman, he is the first who can boast of the Experiment.

But, my Lord, I am not desirous to dispute at all in these matters, much lesse with one, who is so taken up with abusing persons of greater worth, that he cannot find leasure to take notice of one so Inconsiderable as my selfe: onely intending to handle some part of that question which is now in contest, I must crave leave to professe, that I never yet was satisfied, but that those fatall consequences, whatever they are, which are thought to attend *Absolute Reprobation*, they do as farre as I can see equally Accompany Gods *Prescience*, of which yet this Gentleman is a zealous assertour. For if God foresees who will refuse the meanes of *Grace*, he foresees likewise that he will assist one and not another: and that without such particular Divine assistance, it is impossible any should believe and be saved. Now what is this else, but for men at long runne, after much time mispent in wrangling, to have recourse unto Gods *Absolute* but yet discriminating *Will* and *Power*, which at their first setting out they were desirous to decline.

As for those Tragicall stories and dreadfull Nothings, wherewith that Gentlemans writings, and before him *Acta Synodalia* are stuffed, concerning Gods *cruelty*, *Tyranny* and I know not what else—As also the vaine and impertinent declaiming from the common places of Gods *Justice*, and *mercy*, thereby to enervate or at least to Enveigh against
Gods

The Epistle

Gods *Absolute, Irresistable, and Unaccountable Sovereignty*. All this terrible talke is nothing but Noise and Flourish, fit indeed to amuse a country Auditory, or to impose upon a lazy and superficial reader; but certainly of very little weight with them, who dare not be frighted from, nor talked out of their faith, and who thinke Scripture truths are to be embraced and followed, in spite of all mens corrupt and empty reasonings against them.

Out of the Scriptures therefore I have undertaken briefly to demonstrate these two things,

First, *That whatever opinion is manifestly revealed in Scripture, (such as I take Absolute Reprobation to be) to argue against it, and by Artifices of Humane Wit, and Eloquence to seek to overthrow and disgrace it, this is nothing else but to dispute against God, and impiously to be wise above what is written.*

Secondly, *That God hath from all Eternity designed a particular Number unto Eternall life, and that this Election is Absolute.* From whence it followes, that all those who are not by God in that Act of Absolute Election appointed to life, they are reprobated, *i.* Designed for destruction; which Decree is Absolute, made by Sovereigne Will; but Executed in justice.

And this my Lord, is the summe of the Ensuing Treatises; for the publishing of which, next to the care, every Christian should have to see the Truths of God, so farre as they are revealed to him asser-

ted

D E D I C A T O R Y.

ted and freed from cavill, especially in a contradicting, and every way too quarrelsome Age; I have no one outward motive more prevailing with me, then my, perhaps too great, Ambition of presenting something to your Lordship, whereby I might testify to the World, not onely that reall esteeme I have of your Lordship's singular worth and eminence in generall, but likewise to manifest in particular how mindfull I am of those many signall and Unparalleled markes of Favour, which You have been pleased to conferre upon my selfe; for which, though the service of my whole life will be too poore and meane a sacrifice, and no endeavour can amount to deserve the name of requitall, yet I could not but thinke it my duty to study an acknowledgment: which Zeale of mine, if your Lordship pleases either to accept or pardon, I have attained my end; For I aime at nothing more then the Honour of being owned for

My Noble Lord

Your Lordship's most Obliged, most thankful, and most Humble devoted Servant

EDVV. BAGSHAVVE.

Ch.Ch.
Decemb. 20.



Romans 9. 20.

Nay but O man who art thou that
repliest against God.



He Apostle in this Chapter handling that great question, why the *Jewes*, who were, by the Apostles own confession, *heires* and *Children of the Promises*, should now be omitted and cast off; and the *Gentiles*, that before were *Aliens*, should now be admitted and taken into the *Covenant of Grace in Christ*; he fixeth it upon *God's Election*: who being a most free *Agent* chooseth one and refuseth another, according to His good pleasure, and not out of any foresight of their *Workes*, whether good or bad; for *Jacob was loved* and *Esau hated*, even before they had done either good or *Evill*—*vers. 11.*

This Doctrine so much detracting from the merit, and thereby abasing the pride of man, the Apostle foresaw would not be easily digested, and therefore he Repeats and Answers the most obvious of those objections, which were likely upon a ratioll account to be made against it; and which in short doe containe the summe of whatever can be urged in this point.

The first Objection is couched *vers. 14.* *What shall we say then is there unrighteousnesse with God--?*

As if the Apostle had said.--You may object: if it be so, that the reason why one man believes, and another doth not; and consequently that one man shall be saved and another damned, be only from *God's Election*, and not from their *merit*, doth not this argue some *unrighteousnesse in God*? a kind of unjust *περσωπλις*, or respect of Persons, thus to preferre one man before another? For as all men are equall by nature, so it seemes to be most just and reasonable, that they should be equall in condition too; & not this vast difference, as to their finall estate, to be put between thē, without any desert or merit of the parties.

To the Objection thus framed, the Apostle returnes a double Answer.

1. In a phrase of abhorrency--*Is there unrighteousnesse with God? God forbid*; let not such a thought enter into our hearts; for whatever the issue of Gods dealings may be, yet, as to the cause of thē, this foundation standeth sure, that *God is righteous in all his doings; and will be justified when he is judged.*

2. By instancing in the example of *Pharaoh*, whom, *God saith, he raised for this very purpose, to manifest His Glory*; from whence the Apostle concludes--*v. 18. That God hath mercy, on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth--* i. that we are not to looke for any outward cause of Gods actings; for he is not tied to mans endeavour, since all our good is from him, and therefore can merit nothing at his hands: He ordaines happinesse, and bestowes holinesse on whom he pleases; they are both free-gifts, we cannot naturally deserve the one, nor are we willing to desire the other---*God therefore hardens--* i. He lets the sinner be a sinner still, he doth not remove the stone, but lets men persist and goe on in their naturall hardnesse; for he is not obliged to his creature, but acts all things, both in mercy or otherwise, according to the Dictates of his *Absolute, Sovereaigne and Unaccountable Will.*

This Answer being so strict and severe, as leaving the
greatest

greatest part of mankind in an hopelesse and irrecoverable condition, it is objected again. *v. 19—Thou wilt then say unto me, why doth he yet find fault, for who hath resisted his will? i. If it be so, that it is not in him that wills, nor in him that runs, but onely in God that shoves mercy: if by any action of ours, barely as such, we can neither merit Heaven, nor escape Hell; if our wills are tyed up so close to the will of God, that like lesser wheelles they move onely as that great mover doth guide them?—then, why is God so Angry with sin and sinners? Why doth he forbid, dehort, and threaten by his Prophets! To what end serve all those examples of vengeance, which we tremble to read of? for if it be so with us, we may be miserable, but we cannot be sinfull; if our spirits be put into an unsuitable frame, so as that we walke contrary to God, it is our sad necessity and not our fault; since none can alter, much lesse resist the will of God, which alone hath made us so.*

And now the Objection being pressed to such a degree of impiety, that it doth tacitely lay the guilt of all mens Transgressions upon God, the Apostle thinkes it high time to cut off all farther Arguing, which he doth in these words—*Nay, but what art thou, O man, who repliest against God? As if he had said—Dost thou know who thou art, thou bold inquisitive creature, or who it is thou dealest with? Consider that thou art but a man, and wilt thou question thy Maker's Justice? Forbeare vaine presumptuous man, stand off, and lay thy hand upon thy mouth, for God is in the Bush, God is, at the bottome of this dispute, and therefore admire with reverence, what thou canst not comprehend with reason.*

So that the words are a short, but yet sharpe, confutation of all carnall reasonings in the matters of God: such Debates are evinced not onely to be sinfull, but likewise unreasonable, by a threefold Argument lying in these words.

1. The first is taken from the meannesse and contemptible-nesse of the person disputing; and that is man: The Apostle brings him in with a *Quis Tu! What art Thou!* as if he was of so slight a make and value, that he fell under no definition. *What art thou O man!*

2. From the Greatnesse and Incomprehensible Excellence of the Person disputed against, and that is God—a name able to strike dumbe and confound the most exalted reason. —*What art thou O man who disputes against God?*

3. From the Absurd, Sarcy and Malapert manner of carrying on the Dispute; it is not modestly making an Objection, or proposing a doubt and so away; but a resolved persisting in the Cavill; a kind of challenging God to vye Arguments with him. The word is—*Ανταπεκρίνεσθαι*—*To answer againe and againe;* never to give over; to chop Logick with God, to seek to nonplus him, and to drive his Almighty Power and Wisdome to an absurdity.

So that here is man, vaine man, not disputing but Cavilling, and that not with his fellow-creature but with God—put all this together—Empty, Ignorant, Wretched Man, contesting with a Perfect, Wise and Almighty God; and that in such a way too, as if Man were the better, & the wiser of the too. Strange folly, madnesse & impudence, this! & yet whoever gives his reason the reines, & will resolve to dispute when he should obey, must needs be guilty of it.

The words thus explained and divided may be summed up in this one Proposition—or Doctrine—viz.

Man, in whatever Capacity considered, is not a Competent Judge, of the Equity and Justice of the proceedings, waies and Counsells of God, in the disposing and Ordering of his Creatures.

This may be demonstrated two waies

1. First, from the quality and nature of the Person Judging, and that is Man.

2. Secondly, from the Quality and nature of the things

to be judged. The Wayes and Counsell of God.

In the First I shall prove that *man is not fit to Judge.*

In the Second I shall prove that the Counsell of God, neither do nor can fall under mans Judgement.

For the First, viz. That *Man is not fit to Judge*, it will be cleare, if we consider that there are Two things, especially requisite to qualify a man to be a Judge.

1. *Ability or Skill.*

2. *Authority or Power.* And Man wants both in this Case.

1. First, *Man wants Ability or Skill.* Vaine man, saith *Job*, would be wise, though he be borne like the wild asse Colt. -- i.e. Man would still reteine his Ambitious Humour of pretending to know Good and Evil; he would still exalt himselfe, and be like God; although that very Desire has made him become, like the Beasts which perish, Rash, Heady, and Impertinent. For since our Fall, Pride has taken up the Place of Reason; and Arrogance fills that Roome, which Knowledge possessed before. As in a vessell, when Water, or the more solid body goes out, presently Aire comes in.

cap. 11. 12.

To take a Briefe Survey of mans Weaknesse and Inability, we will consider him

1 In Himselfe.

2 As compared to God.

1 First, Consider Man in himselfe, and then I may aske the Question, which our Apostle doth here, *What art thou O Man?* Declare us thy Originall, discover thy Excellence, where lies thy Worth? whence comes thy Preheminence? Survey thy Out-side, and tell me what seest thou? a rotten perishing Carkasse! As our Saviour said of the Tombes, how glorious soever they seemed; yet they were but Tombes, i.e. Charnell-houses; Faire without, but Rotten within. So the most Beautifull and Specious

Gen. 11. 19.

out-side, Deck it, Disguise, Trimme and Adorne it how you will, yet it is still but Dust; you may change and vary its shape, you cannot change and alter its substance. *Dust thou art, said God to Adam, and to dust shalt thou returne.* Was not this a sad story for Adam to heare, when he thought of nothing else, but of being, as the Divell had promised him, *like unto God knowing good and evil*: God doth presently undeceive him, by minding him of his Originall, and telling him what would be the Exit of all his Borrowed Glory. This no doubt did levell his Thoughts, and lay low those Proud Imaginations, which otherwise might have ceazed him, since a Casket of so meane a value, can scarce be conceived to containe in it a Jewell of any Excellent Price.

Gen. 6. 3.

I will not, saies God, alwaies strive with man, for that he also is flesh: which may be interpreted, for that he is of the same weak, Fraile, and Infirme Nature with other Creatures. Wherein God seemes to make it as an Argument of his Bearing with man, because Man was *Flesh*, i. e. unable to beare what God was able to lay upon him. But if God drawes an Argument of Compassion from Mans Frailty, ought not we from thence likewise to draw an Argument of Submission? If God is pleased to forbear punishing and striving with us, because we are but *Flesh*, ought not we for the same Reason much more to forbear judging of, and contending with him? This use did Abraham make of it. *Behold, saith he, I have now taken upon me to speake unto the Lord, who am but Dust and Ashes*: Abraham lookes upon it as a Boldnesse, for which he seems to aske Pardon, that he undertook so much as to speak to God, *since he was but Dust and Ashes*; how much lesse do we thinke for the same reason would he have offered to have disputed with him? But

Gen. 18. 27.

Secondly, look into man a little nearer, and teach his Inward and Hidden worth: what is that Principle which
men

men ordinarily do so much boast of and magnify? They call it *Reason!* and pray what is *Reason?* Is it not that ϕωγῆς καὶ ἀνοησίας that *Carnall or Animall man, which cannot* 1 Cor. 11. 14.
conceive the things of God, and looks upon all the Actings of the Holy Spirit as Folly! Certainly a small wind will fill our Saile, if such a Principle of knowledge as this can pufse us up: little cause have we to boast of that, which cost us so deare, and is so little worth: for as to get Reason, we lost Paradise; so till we renounce our Reasons, we can never recover it.

But take Reason at its best and highest Elevation, *Sa-* Prov. 20. 27.
lemon says it is *the Candle of the Lord:* and shall the Candle say to the Sun, thou halt no Light in thee? shall our Faint, Glimmering, and Derivative Lustre, preferre or oppose it selfe to the Fountaine, from which it issued? *There is a Spirit in man, saith Job, but the Inspiration of the* cap. 32. 8.
Almighty giveth understanding: and do we think he gave it for these purposes, to argue and dispute his doings? so much to abuse and misimploy our Talent, is certainly a greater sin, and will bring down a greater Punishment, then barely not to use it.

In short, mans Reason at its best and utmost extent, is a Narrow, Shrunke. and Limited thing; in Spirituall things altogether blind and perverse: in Naturall things either Ignorant, or onely changing Ignorance into Uncertainty: and shall a man so much stretch this Principle, as by it to condemne his Maker? shall we with this scantling measure Infinity? or set our selves Judges in the highest administrations of Providence, who cannot demonstratively prove the Motion of the smallest Atome? what is this but to *darken Counsell by words without knowledge;* Job 38. 2.
 to put a False Comment upon a Cleare Text, and to blurbe the beauty of Providence with our Perverse and short-sighted Interpretations.

Secondly, Mans Inability doth yet farther appeare, if
 you.

you consider him as compared to God. It is not for nothing here that the Apostle doth put this Question, *Who art thou, O Man, that repliest against God?* but he does it, thereby to aggravate the Sinfull Presumption of the Disputer; it was against God, therefore the more heinous. And indeed a man can never know his owne Weaknesse and Imperfection aright, till he has lost himselfe in contemplating the Vast Abyffe and Ocean of Gods Perfection: as if we would exactly know whether a thing be little or not, we do not use to set it by something that is lesse, but to compare it unto something Greater, as a Sparke to the Flame, a Drop to the Ocean, and the like. So in this case, while a man Centers in himselfe, and drawes all his Lines inward; he may perhaps please himselfe with some thoughts of *Selfe-sufficiency*; but when he once goes out of himselfe, and takes a strict view of the Amazing Greatnesse and Majesty, which God discovers even in his works of Providence, then doth a man presently begin to perceive his owne Emptinesse. For suppose a man were kept up close imprisoned in a Dungeon all his dayes, and if after some time of Durance there in that Horror and Darkenesse, he should by chance have a little Glimpse of light let in to him at a small Cranny, how infinitely would he be delighted and pleased with it; but if afterwards he were taken from thence, and by degrees fitted to endure, and then placed in full Sun-shine, how strangely would he loath his former plaee of Restraint and Bondage? It is just so with a man, who by degrees is taken off from himselfe, and prepared to a gracious Discovery of Gods excellence. *When I consider,* saith the Psalmist, *the Heavens, which are the worke of thy hand---* it followes presently, *what is man that thou art mindfull of him, or the Son of Man that thou considerest him?* Look upon God in the Glory and Brightnesse of his Appearance, and then all Conceits of Humane Excellence

Pf. 18. v. 3, 4.

lence will presently vanish, as Starres do disappare at Noon-day.

Certaine it is, that if men were more frequent and serious in the contemplating of Gods Power and Wisdom, they would not be so taken up with thoughts of their own; a want of comparing our own emptinesse to Gods fullnesse, is the only thing that doth most pusse us up and swell us. A pregnant Instance of this may be seen in the Case of *Job*; he finding himselfe under a great Pressure, and feeling, as he thought, hard measure from God, grows Impatient, and seems to long for nothing more, then that he might dispute with God; thinking no doubt but he had so much to say in his own behalfe, as would pose even God himselfe to answer. Hence are those Passionate Expressions, --*Oh that a man might plead with God, as a man pleades for his Neighbour*; and *Oh! that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his Seat! I would order my Cause before him, and fill my mouth with Arguments.* i. e. I would Dispute and Argue the Case with him: his Friends dissuade him from this Attempt all they can, they tell him over and over, that he forgets himselfe in turning his Spirit against God, and in letting such words goe out of his mouth. And when that would not take him off, *Elihu* undertakes to answer in Gods behalfe, and urgeth against him, that *God is greater than Man, and gives no account of his Matters.* That his Counsellors are Inscrutable, for touching the Almighty who can know him, or search him out unto Perfection. With many other arguments to the same purpose; yet still *Job* remains unsatisfied, and nothing but disputing with God himselfe will content him. Well! at last God doth condescend to answer his Curiosity: and what is the Issue? when once God doth mind him of his Power, that all we see or feele is only an Effect and Product of his Goodnesse: when even the most common and ordinary *Phænomena* of Nature,

cap. 16.

cap. 32. 31. 4.

cap. 15. 13.

cap. 34. 23.

cap. 37. 23.

Job. 38.

ture, viz. Haile, Snow, Raine, &c. are evinced to be beyond the reach of mans Reason to comprehend, then Job presently alters his Note, he is not now for Disputing any longer, but sinkes into an humble Acknowledgment. *Behold I am vile, saith he, what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth.*--- A dejected sense of our own vilenesse is most likely to be the Result of comparing our selves to Gods Excellence.

cap. 40. 2, 3, 4.

Thus man wants Ability to Judge.

Lus. 12. 14.

2^o. Secondly, as man wants *Ability*, so likewise he wants *Authority*, which is the Especiall Requisite to constitute a Judge. When one came to our Saviour to ask his Resolution in a case of a Civill concernment, our Saviour, though he had all power in him, yet acting as Man, refused to meddle, and askes him, *Who made me a Judge?* So I aske thee, thou Bold Disputer, whoever thou art, who made thee a Judge? and by what Authority dost thou argue these things? if thou hast no Warrant, nothing in the Word of God to shew to justify thy Confidence, thou art not only a Rash and Ignorant Censurer, but an Impudent Intruder: I find in Scripture murmuring reprov'd, Disputing forbidden, and nothing but Obedience required. Wilt thou then upon no better a Ground, then because thou art unsatisfied with the Justice or Reasonableness of such and such a Proceeding, take upon thee to sound the Depths of God, and to call him to thy Tribunal? what? shall the *Judge of all the Earth* be now arraigned at thy Barre, and *give thee Account of his Matters?* or else thou wilt charge upon him Folly, Injustice or Cruelty, with other things, which I Tremble to Thinke of. *Quo jure!* how comes this about, let us know when God parted with his Prerogative, and made you his Overseer?

The Apostle *James* commanding those to whom he writes, *not to speak evill one of another*, he gives this Reason for it, *because thereby they should judge the Law*, which forbids all Uncharitable Backbitings. *But*, saith he, *if thou*

Judge the Law, thou art no longer a Doer of the Law, but a Judge, i. e. Thou art a Thing which God never intended thee; he gives his Law to be a Rule of thy Obedience, and not a Subject of thy Reasoning. So say I here, if any takes upon him to Judge Gods proceedings, i. e. if thou weighest his wayes in thy Ballance, if thou measurest him by thy Line, if thou doest Limit & circumscribe him by thy Compasse, and so proceedest to passe Sentence upon him; in this case thou art no longer a Servant of the Lords, but a Judge: and then thou mayest expect and feare what will follow; for if so many perished at one time barely for looking into the Arke; and if he that judges another, though his fellow-creature, is threatned to be Judged, how much sorer Punishment, how much severer Judgment shall he expect, who thus provokes the Lord by Judging, Censuring, and even Condemning him?

Jac. 4. 11.

So much for the first Reason: that Man is not fit to Judge.

The second Reason is taken from the Nature and Quality of the things Judged, they are the Wayes, Counsells, and proceedings of God, and so cannot fall under Mans Judgment. Thus the Apostle doth argue *à pari*: *As no man can know the things of man, but the Spirit of man that is in him; so none can know the things of God, but the Spirit of God.* Shall God be God, and not have peculiar wayes and Methods of Acting, not to be fathomed or understood by man? He himselfe hath told us to prevent our search, that *his wayes are not as our wayes, nor his thoughts as our thoughts.* He is not tied to our Narrow Definitions of *Just* and *Injust*, they are words onely that bind us, but can lay no constraint upon him, who acts, like himselfe, in a *Souveraigne* and *Unlimited* manner. Now, as in an Engine, if we do not see the Springs and Wheelles that move it, it is impossible we should know how or which way it will turne; so since we cannot discern or discover the

1 Cor. 11. 11.

1/. 4. 8.

Principle, upon which the Great Mover and Disposer of all things acts, this being locked up and hid in the Cabinet of his own Will, to which only his Son and Spirit have a key, we have nothing to doe but to submit in Silence. *Whatever God doth*, saith the Preacher, however it may appeare outwardly Deformed or Mis-shapen, yet *nothing can be added to it or taken from it*: it hath in it selfe an Entire and Absolute Perfection, and the reason why God doth sometimes bring strange—and perplexing things to passe, is, that men might dispute! no, but *that they might feare before him*.

Ecc. 3. 14.

Use.

The use is, if it be so, that *no man is a Competent Judge of the Equity and Justice of Gods Proceedings*, then it should Teach us, *to silence our Vaine Reasonings in the Matters of God*: we should look upon them as Mysteries beyond our Reach, and therefore infinitely above our Cavill. Perhaps it is not a Rationall, I am sure it is not a Christian way of Arguing, *Non intelligo, ergo non Credo*. This I do not understand, I cannot perceive how such or such a point can be made out by Reason, or can consist with those Conclusions which I have embraced, therefore I will not believe it. It is the Taske, and it should be the Triumph of Faith, to break through all such Difficulties, & to remove even Mountaines of seeming Contradictions. The Apostle calls *Faith our Victory, by which we overcome the World*; and if *Faith* overcomes the *World*, how much more ought it to overcome our Doubts, and our Reasonings, which are but as it were the Clouds and Misty part of the World. When our Saviour had discoursed concerning that great Mystery of Living and Feeding upon him by Faith; the Apostles presently cry out, *This is an hard saying, who can beare it?* this is so Absurd and Irrationall, that there is no enduring it. Our Saviour perceiving how they staggered, he doth gently acquaint them with the Reason of their Erroneous Apprehension, viz. because they

1 Joh. 5. 4:

Joh. 6. 60.

they judged according to flesh, and humane appearance; *the Spirit, saith he quickneth, the flesh profiteth nothing, my words they are spirit and they are life.v.63.*

To apply this—doth any dealing of God, put thee into an Anxious and a disputing State, by all means suspend thy censure, least thou shouldst *charge God foolishly*; and search first into the principle by which thou proceedest, whether it be *Flesh* or *Spirit*: for *reason* it selfe, till it be purged, till the dreggs be taken off and refined by the spirit of God, it is still but *Flesh*, a weake, low and carnall Principle, not at all fit for a Christian to own: but is indeed one of those earthly members, which we are commanded to subdue and Mortifie. To distrust our own understandings, not to passe sentence upon the first blush and offer of things, nor in spirituall concernments to be led by Humane appearance, this is the first and most Necessary part of *selfe-deniall*.

This use may be improved in many Particulars, but there are two things I mainly intend it for.

1. First, *to fix, and settle our spirits, in that great, and so much Controverted Doctrine, concerning Gods decrees of eternall Election and Reprobation.*

2. Secondly *To suppress and silence our murmurings, and repinings against God, in his Acts of Providence and outward dealings with us.*

First the consideration of mans unfitnesse to Judge in the matters of God, ought to *settle and fix us in the Doctrine of Election and Reprobation.* That God hath from all eternity chosen some, on whom he will have mercy: and hath; out of his good pleasure, reprobated others, is cleare from this and many other places of Scripture. But to reconcile this to Humane reason, or to satisfy all the Objections which may be brought from Philosophy against it, I think the Apostle himselfe did not pretend to doe. Here in this verse, he seemes to Imply, that the best way to *decide*

this controversy, is not to *dispute* it: and in another place, when in a kind of Extasie he cries out *ὦ Βιδο;* — *Oh the Depth, of the Riches of the knowledge and wisdom of God: How inscrutable are his judgments, and his waies unsearchable?* Rom. I. I. 33. certainly he did thereby intend to put a stop unto our enquiry, that we might not venture into a depth, which we could not fathome.

What is said by all sides in this dispute, I have often, as farre as my weaknesse would give me leave, considered, but yet could never find satisfaction in any thing, but in that question of the Apostles, and in bringing my reason to a *Non plasse*.

For whatever the *Arminians* pretend that the Doctrine of *Absolute Predestination* is *Blasphemous*, and I know not what, because it seemes to make *God the Author of Sin*; yet indeed it doth no more do it, if it be well weighed, then their Doctrine of *Prescience* doth: for which reason, *Socinus*, who very well understood the Controversy, did not feare to deny even *Prescience* it selfe: since whatever is infallibly fore-known, must infallibly come to passe, that is necessarily. For to distinguish between the necessity of the event, and the necessity of that which causes the event, is, I confesse a subtilty that I understand not, and am hopelesse ever to be satisfied in.

Leaving therefore the Disputers of this Age, to the mercilesse Fury of one anothers Penns, I shall give some few Practicall rules, whereby whoever guides himselfe, will be freed from all those perplexities which his reason otherwise would engage him in.

First, *In all doubts never enquire what is rationally, but what is revealed:* the Word of God alone, which is the ground of our Faith, ought to be the object of our search. If you find this Doctrine, that *God hath prepared some, even for everlasting destruction, whilst he hath compassion on others, and that meerey to manifest his own Glory* — if this

this Doctrine be plainly laid down thee, then farewell Reason, and set your Faith on worke, to find out carefully of which number you your selves are. For there are the $\Sigma\omega\zeta\acute{\iota}\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\iota$ and the $\text{A}\pi\lambda\lambda\acute{\upsilon}\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\iota$ the *Saved* and the *Lost*, whose condition is as sure and Irreversible as if they were in Possession of it already.

Secondly, *Let no doubts or Perplexities take you off from your obedience.* As no man needs feare to embrace Gospell-Truth upon its own termes, so neither ought he by any consequences of vaine & Carnall reasoning to be withdrawn from the doing of his duty. He that finds in himselfe such a frame, that he is resolved to goe on, and leave the Issue to God; though he perish yet he will trust in him, he will find at last all his darknesse and doubtings cleared up and scattered: for then we believe indeed, when with *Abraham* we act even against & beyond all *Humane Probability*.

Thirdly—*Be often asking your selves this Question with the Apostle—what am I, that I should limit the Almighty, or Iudg the Holy one of Israel? What are we, poore dust and ashes, that we should looke up to God except it be with trembling and amazement: to admire and not to dispute his doings? For what are we, that we should be prescribing rules to him, and finding out new waies and methods of salvation, others then God himselfe hath been pleased to discover? What are we, that we should sit upon the Decrees of God, and staine the wisdom of his counsells, with the dirt and mire of our own fancies? This Impartiall selfe examination will serve to cure, or at least to allay our Curiosity.*

Lastly—*In all disputes and doubts: ever think that part of the tenet safest, which doth least Honor mans Pride, and doth most advance Gods Glory: we cannot think too meanly and humbly of our selves, nor can we too much advance and exalt Gods Sovereignty.* Tis this on which the Justice of all Gods proceedings is grounded: let God be Great and
Glorious.

Glorious, though every man be miserable. To make God *all in all*, besides that it is our duty, is likewise nothing else but an Anticipation of happinesse, and is by the Apostle recorded— to be the Blessed Posture, of our future state.
1 Cor. 15. 28.

2 Use.

Secondly, The consideration of our *Incompetence to Judge the equity of Gods proceedings*, serves to suppress and moderate all repinings at the Providence of God in his outward dispensations. No one thing is so great an inducement to Atheisme, & direct denyall of God, as to distrust the wisdom & equity of his Providence. David confesseth that the temptation arising from hence, did so farre prevaile upon him, that his feet had at most slipped.—i. he was just then sliding, even almost going into some erroneous and blasphemous conceit about this matter. The temptation was taken from the prosperity of the wicked—*I was envious at the foolish*—saith he, v. 3. *when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. Cur malis bene sit*, has been a question that much puzzled the Heathen world, and some of them have many excellent sayings about it: but to speak the truth, they seeme to be only things of wit, rather than of serious judgment: for this is certaine, who ever sticks long upon this question, cannot be guiltlesse: since reason cannot resolve it—*When I sought to know this*, saith David, *it was too painfull for me.* v. 16. I did endeavour to debate and argue the case by my own reason, and from thence to answer my scruples, but I could not doe it, the objection did still prevaile and overmaster me. What did David then? we find that he went into the *Sanctuary of God*, v. 17. he consulted the Oracle, and there he found the reason of their Advancement—And then he concludes that discourse, with taxing himselfe of great folly, for not taking this course sooner, but giving so much scope and latitude to his corrupt reasoning.—*So foolish was I and ignorant, I was as a Beast before thee.* v. 22.

Psalm. 73.

That

That which was *Dauids* practise ought to be ours, when we are set upon with the same temptation, we have lived to see as great variety of strange providences as any nation under Heaven; nor is the reason of this as yet revealed, we cannot yet spell out Gods meaning, but certainly he has a great worke doing, which will in due time be accomplished.

So likewise in all particular events which concerne us, let us not so much consider and reflect upon the things we see and feele, as upon the hand which sent them. This will either ease our burdens, or at least make us bear them with more cheerfulness if we consider that God laid them on, whose Power we cannot resist, whose wisdom we ought not to question.

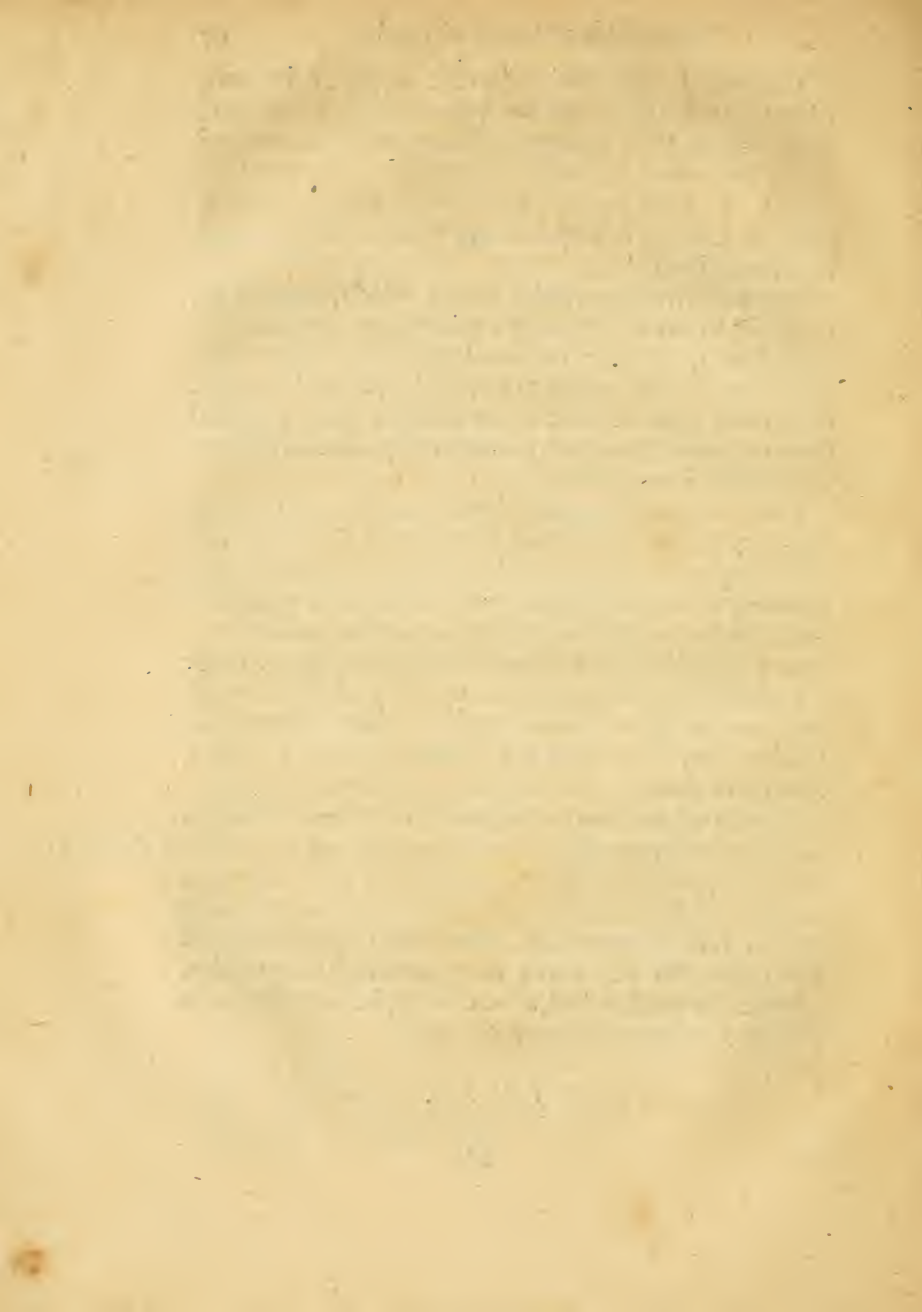
Let us stop our mouths, and quiet our discontents with this, that God is in the cloud, that *he workes all things* not according to his will barely, though that was enough, but according to the counsell of his will. There is a wisdom and designe in every thing though we cannot reach it.

Many impatient *Jonahs* there are in the World, who think it becomes them to quarrell and contest with God, though they have but left their gourd. Whose spirit is like a troubled Sea, any small wind will raise a storme and beget a tempest in them.

Let all such hearken to that advice of *Hamah*--*Talke no more so exceeding proudly, let not Arogancy come out of your mouth, for our God is a God of knowledge, by him Actions are weighed*--And not Actions onely, but events likewise: there are no such things as rash, casuall and unpremeditated events: but that part of the skale, which falls to our lot, whether for good or bad, comes onely, because God is so pleased to order and turne the balance.

F I N I S.

D



G O D S

Absolute Election

O F

A certaine and limited Num-
ber unto

Eternall Life:

Asserted and Cleared out of

Acts 13.48.

Δεῖ τὸν κύριον Ἰησοῦν κριτὴν τῆς αὐτῆς γλώσσης, μὴ νευροσπασμένον
ἀλύγων δίκην οργάνων, αερομάς ἴσως μόνον παρὰ τῆς ἐξωθεν
αἰτίας λαμβάνοντας. *Clem. Στρωμ. 4. pag. 505.*

O X F O R D,

Printed by *H. HALL*, 1659.

1800

Alphabetic Index

of the names and titles of the
persons mentioned in the
preceding pages

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Acts 13:45.

Καὶ ἐπίστευαν ὅσοι τεταγμένοι ἦσαν εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον.

*And as many as were ordained to
Eternall-life, believed.*

THe Apostle *Paul* having in a large discourse deduced Christian Religion from its very Originall, and shewed, how in the severall ages of the World, God still carried on the same designe for the salvation of men by *Jesus Christ*, as he that was not onely foretold, but figured in all their Legall Worship: you find - v.45. the Jewes *contradicting and blaspheming*: - i. either railing on *Christ*, or else reviling *Paul*, and ignominiously slighting and traducing the Doctrine which he had delivered.

Whereupon the Apostle Παρρησιασάμενος: - i. *speaking freely*, or *plainly* tells them that the losse and damage by so doing would onely redound to themselves for *hereby*, viz. by refusing the tender of Salvation so freely offered, they evidenced that *they judged themselves unworthy so great a mercy*, and therefore they being, as it were Αὐτοκατάκριτοι *men self-condemned*, he would have no more to doe with them, but from thence forward publish the Doctrine of the Gospell to the Gentiles: intimating that God till then had empaled his Church, and confined it to the narrow circuit of *Judea*, thereby as it were imprisoning that sun in a lanterne: but now God would resume his whole right, that
the

the earth might be the Lords, and the fulnesse thereof: excluding no place, restraining no people from the benefit and comfort, which would flow from the light of the Gospell steaming in and shining amongst them.

Whereupon it follows v.48. *That when the Gentiles heard this they were glad, and Glorified the Word of the Lord — And as many as were ordained to Eternall Life believed.*

From the words I intend to insift upon and clears, two Propositions.

1. First—That *there are some, and that a definite and limited number, which are by God from all eternity ordained unto Eternall life or salvation.*

2. Secondly *that the reason why one man believes, i. embraces the means of salvation, and another doth not, is finally to be resolved into Gods eternall Election of the one, and reprobation or rejection of the other.*

Both these doctrines are cleere from the words of the text, for this phrase—*Ὅσοι τεταγμένοι ἦσαν*—&c. *As many as were Ordained believed* implies, first that some certaine persons were ordained, whereby they are distinguished from the rest of the common hearers, and likewise it is added as a reason, why these believed, while the others continued in their impenitence: they were Ordained, therefore they Believed.

Before I prove the first Proposition viz: *That there are some and that a certaine number appointed unto life,*—which I think is evident in the text—I must not omit that this Word—*τεταγμένοι* hath been variously rendred, and many attempts have been made to draw it from its true and native signification. The summe of what they say is briefly this that *τεταγμένοι* signifies Actively—*Qui se parant Vitæ æternæ, fitly disposed and qualified for the Gospell*—so that *Ordained* according to them, are not—*Ordained by God,* but such as are *Ordained by themselves;* Thus *Socinus, Grotius,*
and

his interpreter Dr *Hammond*.

That these men who do professedly *ἡλεῦεν τὴν ἑαυτοῦ ψυχήν* serve a side, and are unwilling to own any thing more in Religion then they can reconcile to reason, should thus strangely (I will not say Ignorantly, for it is too much Learning that causes this madnesse) but contrary to all rules of Grammar, and Analogy of the Greek tongue, make a passive verbe signify Actively, is to me no great wonder: for if they did not this, they would loose their cause, and then what would become of their reputation with their followers; which, whatever becomes of the truth, must be secured: so impossible is it to drive on those two contrary trades, of Gospell obedience, and Humane Applause.

But since the Learned and Ingenuous Mr *Mede* suffered himselfe to be so farre gone in his Criticismes, as to render this Word--*In Procinctu*-i. such who are in a posture to lay hold upon, and candidates of *Eternall life*, *quot quot de Agmine & Classe fuerant credentium*. So that *ταραχῆν* shall be not Ordained but Ordered -i. *modo militari*, In ranke and file as it were, marshalled and Embattelled unto eternall life: This is a conceit so streined, so unsuitable to Scripture language: and withall so much misbecoming the learning of that Worthy man, that I cannot passe it over without observing these two things,

1. That it is a very hard matter for the soberest and best tempered Christians, such as I take Mr *Mede* to have been, to captivate their reason and to subdue their Learning unto the plainnesse and simplicity of the Gospell.

2. That there is great need for all those who are students in Divinity, and who designe themselves for that Honourable, and never enough valued Profession of Preaching the Gospell, that they make themselves worthy of it, as by all other excellencies, so especially by carefull and diligent search of the Scriptures in their Originall Languages

Languages: And that, not onely because he ought not to Prophecy who knowes not how to interpret, but lest men who pretend to skill and exactnesse in those Tongues, doe abuse our ignorance to an Embracing of their errors, while we are not able to distinguish between a true Text and a bad comment. For I doe not see how we can rationally refuse any Interpretation though false, if we are not able knowingly to make out a better of our owne.

But for the clearing of this Text very little skill will serve, for who knowes not, that knowes any thing of Greeke, that *πεταγμένοι* was never yet taken Actively, and that the word cannot be otherwise rendred here, then it is every where else-viz. *Ordained or Appointed*. Thus Rom. 13. 2. *the Powers that are, are πεταγμένοι ὑπὸ θεοῦ*--*Appointed of God*. And Act. 17. 26. *God hath bound or limited καὶ ραὶς προπεταγμένων*--*the fore-appointed seasons*-i. God hath set a fixed and certaine period unto the duration of those severall changes and scenes of time, which he himselve hath preordained: so in this place *πεταγμένοι εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον* are those that are by God certainly and infallibly appointed unto eternall life. God being not onely *τομίας χρόνων*, the disposer of seasons, but of persons.

2 Cor. 4.

These are they who by the Apostle Paul are called *Σαζόμενοι*--the *saved* i. saved already-whose salvation is as sure and certaine, as if they were already put into full Possession of it.

In another place they are stiled *προορισθέντες* *foreordained or predestined to Grace and Glory*: and that we might not doubt, what it was that gave the birth, and rise to such a gracious appointment-- The Apostle addes that it was *κατὰ πρόθεσιν*, according to the purpose of him, who doth not wait for nor depend upon outward motives, but *works all things according to the Counsell of his own will*.

Eph. 1. 5. &c.

Rom. 11. 5. They are called *εὐλογηὶ χάριτος*, the *Election of Grace* i. such persons of whose Election Grace onely

was

was the Cause; and v. 7. simply *Ἐκλογῆ*, the Election; i. e. those whom God hath culled and chosen out from the Rest of Mankind, and designed for Everlasting Happiness.

The force of these and many other Texts of Scripture to the same purpose, make all sides agree, that *Some indeed are Appointed unto Life*, but *who these are, that God himselfe doth not know*, so *Socinus*: that *though some are Appointed, yet there is a Possibility for All*, so *Arminius*. That is in short, that *Some shall be saved is Certaine*, but that the *Persons and their Number is unlimited and uncertaine*.

Before therefore I prove the Point by Scripture, give me leave to bewaile a little the sad Condition of those men, who take a Liberty to Interpret Revealed Truth by Rationall Notions; for in so doing, through a just Judgment of God upon their Curiosity, they are forced to run into and maintaine those Fond and Ridiculous Errors, which a Sober man would blush to own.

As in this Case, can it be imaginable that God should designe any of his Creatures unto Eternall Life, and yet not know who they are? as *Socinus* affirms, who brings in God, as the *Platonists* did of Old, not chusing of Persons, but Propositions; not designing this or that man to Salvation, and so to Faith Absolutely by vertue of his Prerogative; but onely to Salvation Indefinitely upon supposition of Faith, which whether any will embrace or not, he doth not feare to Assert, that God himselfe doth not know. So carelesse are men of Gods Honour, while they Study and Contend for their own. For if the Case be so indeed, God doth onely leave himselfe in the Darke, and doth not exercise his Power and Prescience about his Noblest Creature, Man.

The Doctrine of *Universall Redemption*, though not so barefaced, yet labours with the same Absurdity: for if

God knowes who shall be saved, then it is certaine there is no Possibility for all; or else we must conclude Gods Knowledge to be onely Guesse, and maintaine a too Apparent Contradiction: for if God knowes who shall be saved, then it is evident that these onely shall be saved, who are so known: whereas if there be a Possibility left for all, then it is Certaine, that God did not infallibly know, who they were that should be saved; but left the whole to Hazard.

I must confesse I doe not willingly desire to deale this way in Reproving any Error: for had I lesse to say in Reason then I have, for Gods *Eternall Absolute Election*, yet the Scripture being so Full and Positive in it, to that alone I would resigne and give up my Faith, and not willingly suffer my selfe to partake either of their Fate, or of their Folly, who cannot endure to be Taught, but in Spirituall, and therefore Inconceivable Things, would faine be wise above what is written.

For that there is a *Set and Limited Number appointed to Salvation*, appears from Scripture, in that God is said to Know who are his, *2 Tim. 2, 19.* i.e. Not their Natures onely, but their Names also: for therefore our Saviour *Luc. 10. 20.* bids his Apostles *rejoyce in that their Names were written in Heaven*, put into Gods Muster-roll and Catalogue of Eternity, from whence they could never be blotted out.

Known unto the Lord, saith the Apostle, *are all his works* ἀπὸ ἀἰῶνος *from Ever, Act. 15. 18.* i.e. so known as to be disposed and ordered by him; nay therefore known, because ordered, for so to distinguish between Gods Knowledge and his Power as in his Actions *ad extrà* to separate one from the other, is to speake neither Sense nor Scripture: for *whom God forknew, them, all them, & onely them*, not in their Qualifications, but in their Respective persons, *did he predestine to be conformable to the Image of his Son.*

Rom.

Rom. 8. 29. And if of an Elect person *all the Haires are* Math. 10. 30. Numbred, how much more of Christs Myfticall Body, are all the Members numbred? which Body is already compleat as to Gods Purpose concerning it, and to Imagine that any shall fill a place there, whom God doth not already know as particularly, as if they were Actually Existing, is to measure Eternity by time, and to make God like our selves Fraile and Fallible.

The Reason of this is, because *every Act of God is Absolute*: as his Nature is, so are the Actions which flow from it, Unconditionall and Irrespective.

For the clearing of which Reason, it will be necessary to explaine in the Act of Election 1. How God, who Elects, 2. How man, who is elected, are to be Considered.

For the First, Many there be that think *God in the Act of Election, is to be Considered as a Judge*, and hence argue against this Absolute and Irrespective Election from those Known and Obvious places of Scriptures, --- *Shall not the* Gen. 18. 25. *Judge of all the Earth do right? shall God accept persons?* & Rom. 3. 5. or *preferre one before another, when all are Equall?* Aff. 10. 30. how is this Reconcilable to his Justice?

I answer, that in the Act of Election *God is not to be considered as a Judge*, because

1. *A Judge as a Judge, is tied to a Rule, which he may not Transgresse*, but what Rule can be Imagined to Tye God, except what he hath set himselfe? which in the Act of Election, that being Eternall, and flowing onely from the Will of God, cannot rationally be supposed.

2. *The Businesse of a Judge, as a Judge, is to Bestow Rewards and Punishments according to Merit*, but in Election the Motive onely on Gods part is Grace, and the End is Glory.

3. *God is not at all Obliged to Man*, he that made man, may freely appoint him to what Ends he pleases, without doing him any Injury: for *hath not the Potter power over*

his Clay? though for a man to plead with God in this Case is somewhat a worse Solecisme, then for Clay to quarrell with the Potter. Since there Matter strives on-ly with its Fashioner, but here Nothing contends with its Maker. There the Clay though it be not a *vessell of Honour*, yet remains Clay still; but here not the Quality only, but the Substance likewise is subject to the Pleasure of its Framer.

Lastly, *The Apostle*, being to give a Reason of this Difference between one man and another, *ascribes it altogether to Gods good pleasure*; and for a Proove of that Assertion, he alledges a Saying of God himselfe *Rom. 9. 15. I will have Mercy on whom I will have Mercy*,

So that the Act of God in chusing some to Everlasting Life, and refusing others, is not an *Act of Justice*, for they neither did nor could deserve it; nor is it properly an *Act of Mercy*, for that any should be saved at all was meerly from Mercy, but that these rather then others, was not properly from Mercy, because Mercy is Equall to all that Equally deserve it, or Equally stand in need of it, but here between Equalls a distinction is made. *Election* therefore is an Act of *Souveraigne Will*, the Apostle calls it *Ἐκλογὴ τοῦ θελήματος* Eph. 1. 5. *The good pleasure of Gods will*, which as none can resist, so none ought to Question; for neither is Man stronger than God, nor ought he to think himselfe Wiser. Thus God in the Act of Election is not to be Considered *ut Judex, sed ut Dominus*; as a Judge, but as a Sovereigne.

- For the second, viz. how the Persons, who are Elected, are to be Considered. Some affirme they are to be looked upon as *Believers*, viz. *That God foreseeing some would embrace Faith and Salvation, when it was offered them, he did therefore chuse some unto Everlasting Life*. And this Con- ceit is not onely maintained by our Moderne *Arminians*, but, that I may not seeme to mince the matter, was in gene-

generall the opinion of almost all the Greeke and Latine Fathers, except only *Austine* of the Primitive and Purer Times. They who have read them, will affirme as much, and they who doubt may read their Sayings to this Purpose, faithfully Collected by *Vossius* in his *Historia Pelagiana*.

But this Supposition, however Plausible (as indeed what is not, that gives man a Power) and though backed with so much Authority, yet seems to me to be directly contrary both to *Reason* and *Scripture*.

First to *Reason*, because

1. *This puts something as a Cause to move Gods will:* for if Faith foreseen in man were the Cause why God chose him, then something without God shall have an Influence upon him: which certainly is very Absurd, if not Blasphemous: for if God shall be supposed to take a Reason of his Actings from something without himselfe, that thing must needs alter him, and consequently be greater than he.

Secondly, because *this very Faith thus foreseen is the Gift of God*, as the Apostle affirms *Eph. 2. 8.* and none that I know deny it: so that if *Faith foreseen* were the Cause of chusing any, the Decree of God must thus be ordered,--- I foresee that I will give such a one Faith, therefore I decree that I will save him, i.e. I decree to give the meanes, before I have yet appointed the End: which is a Method of Marshalling Gods Decrees, that a knowing Heathen would be ashamed to think of.

More might be urged, but I hasten to *Scripture* Confutation: we find our Saviour sayes of his Disciples (which who sees not how Applicable it is to all the Elect) that *he chose them, they had not chosen him, Joh. 15. 16.* but if *Faith foreseen* were a Cause, he must have said the cleane contrary, for then he would have chosen them, because they had first chose him.

And the Apostle *John* 1 Ep. 4. 10. sayes, *this is love, not that we loved God first, but that he loved us, and for that reason sent his Son, not as foreseeing our Affection, but as pursuing the Intent, and procuring in us the Effects of his own.*

And the Apostle *Paul* doth every where assert *Faith* to be a *Fruit* and not a *Cause* of *Election*; that we are *chosen* unto Good Works, not for them; i. e. that they who are *Predestined*, shall certainly *Believe*, not they who *Believe* were therefore *Predestined*; which is the summe of his Discourse *Eph. 1.*

So that in the Act of Election, men are to be considered as meerly *Passive*, i.e. as *Creatures*, not as *Believers*; as such who were liable to be disposed by God how he pleased, but had no Possibility of meriting any thing from him.

This is affirmed of the *Israelites* in Generall, *Deut. 7.* that God chose them, not because they were better, or more *Righteous* then other People, but because he set his Heart upon them. And lest they should perhaps pride themselves with a Conceit, that for their own worth and Excellence this Priviledge was given them, they are expressly told there was no such matter, for they were a *stiffnecked and Rebellious People*, *Deut. 9.6.* Able rather to thwart, and, if possible, to undoe Gods Election, then to procure it.

Thus we find *Math. 11.* that *Christ* preached the Gospel to *Bethsaida*, and to them of *Capernaum*, who were so far from meriting, that our Saviour affirms of them, *Sodom and Gomorrah* had they enjoyed the like Favour, would have been much more repentant then they.

And to conclude in Particulars, the Apostle *Paul* handling this very Argument, and intending for ever, so far as Scripture evidence will reach, to silence the Disputer of this World, that God alone may have the Glory of his Grace, he instances in *Jacob*, who was by Virtue of this
Abso-

Absolute Election preferred before *Eſau*, (the Temporall Condition ſerving to ſhadow out the Eternall) for leſt any Imagination ſhould ariſe, as if *Jacob* in himſelfe were the more deſerving of the Two, he ſaies it was done *before any of them had done either Good or Evil*, Rom. 9. 11. And if it ſhould be Asked, how it came to paſſe that one was taken, and the other leſt; what did induce God to put ſuch a Difference between Two, who were Morally Equall, and Naturally *Eſau* was to have the Advantage, the Apoſtle addes, that it was done to this End, *that the Purpoſe of God according to Election might ſtand, not of Workes, but of him that calleth*. Wherein the Apoſtle pleading the Cauſe of Gods Honour, and being Jealous of his Prerogative, reſolveth all things into Gods Purpoſe, and referres us thither to ſeek the Ultimate Difference of men's either Temporall or Eternall Condition. And he that will not acquieſce, when he thus finds it written, but will bring his Wit to ſtrive and Wreſtle againſt the Will of God, he cannot alter that, but onely does unhappily evince to himſelfe, that while he continues that Humor, he is not of the Number of Gods Elect, for all that are, a Willing, Humble, and Obedient People.

Againſt this which hath been urged, there is that I know of but one Conſiderable Objection; and that is, *if the Number of thoſe which ſhall be ſaved be limited and Certaine, ſo that there is no Poſſibility for more, how comes it to paſſe that the Prophets and Apoſtles, are ſo Importunate, with all indifferently to Come in, and Repent, that they might be ſaved: and God himſelfe is often brought in in Scripture chiding and Expoſtulating with Sinners for deſtroying themſelves, and for reſuſing Salvation, which ſeems to be a Vain and Ludicrous thing, if the Number be ſo Set already, that there is no Rcome for more.*

This Objection is yet made more Tragicall by the many Heavy charges and Enditments, which are drawn
up

up against this, as some stile it, Partiall and Cruell dealing, from the Common Places of Gods Justice and Mercy, which men who love themselves are very willing to Enlarge, and therefore easily hearken to those who dare declaime upon such Subjects: But these Vaine and Empty Flourishes, however insoluble they may seeme to some, who are guided by the first Impression and sound of Words, are of no Importance, if we fix *Election* onely upon *Gods Will*; for this will presently cut off all Witty Cavills, if we can prove that God will indeed have it so; and therefore I look upon the former Objection as their maine strength, because it immediately tends to Practise, and seemes to beget this Opinion, that Gods *Secret* and *Revealed will* do Thwart & Contradict each other. Therefore I answer

1. That *though few shall be saved, and those Few determined, yet because they are unknown to us, we are to look upon all as in a saveable Condition.* Thus the Prophets and Apostles did in their so frequent and Repeated Instances with those to whom they preached, and their Example we are to follow: For peremptorily to conclude against any, and to deny them the meanes of Salvation, because they are not Elected, is an Uncharitable Presumption in us, which we shall more heavily account for, then they will do for their Disobedience and Unbeliefe.

2. *There is no other way for those who are Elected, to come to the Knowledge of the Truth, but by a Generall Proposall of it Indifferently to all, which is our Saviours meaning in those many Parables, which intimate a Promiscuous Call; from whence he concludes, that though many are Called, yet few are Chosen; and we may invert the Proposition thus, though Few are Chosen, yet many must be called.* In this World the Tares and the Wheat must be equally Tended, and though they grow together with some discernable Difference, yet it is not the Ministers

sters businesse to make a Finall Separation.

Lastly, *There is a Twofold end in Preaching the Gospell, the first and principall is to bring in Gods Elect, but Secondly it serves to condemne the Reprobate, and to make their Damnation Just.* For what can they pleade at the last day to Justifie their Unbelieve; since when they were Called as it were by name, yet they did willingly exclude themselves, and thereby, as the Apostle sayes of the Jewes here, *judged themselves Unworthy of Eternall Life.*

Thus the Apottle saies that *Gods Divinity and Spirituall Being was discovered in the Creation:* and if it was asked to what Purpose, since so few did either Believe or Worship him as they ought, he answers, that it was for this End -- *Εἰς τὸ εἶδ) αὐτοῦ ἀναπλογήτας, Rom. 1. 20.* That they might have nothing to Pleade, no quirke nor Apology left to Excuse their Atheisme and Idolatry.

And *if our Gospell be hid,* saith he, *it is Hid to those which are lost;* 2 Cor. 4. 3. discovered to them, but hid in them, because they do not take paines, as they should, to search out its Inward and Spirituall meaning.

So we are, saith he, *εὐωδία θεῷ, a sweet smelling Sacrifice to God,* 2 Cor. 11. 13. both *ἐν τοῖς Σωζομένοις,* and *ἐν τοῖς Ἀπλλυμένοις,* *in the saved and in the lost.* i. e. We do God good and acceptable Service, when we preach the Word; whether it serves to Save or to Condemne; for in the one Gods Mercy, in the other Gods Justice is manifested. Those that come in will find mercy, for thereto they were appointed: those that stand out, shall be sure of Justice, because when they were summoned as well as others, yet they would nor, because they would nor. They did voluntarily contemne the Word of Life, and therefore can blame none but themselves, if at last they find it a Word of Death.

If any think this *Harsh* and *Severe,* I cannot deny but it is so, and thus the Apostle thought it *Rom. 9. 22.* when

he sayes, that God herein did manifest *εργων* his Anger as well as his Power. Nay, he goes somewhat farther, and speaking of the same Decree, *Rom. I 1. 22.* he calls it *ἄκρατον θεῶν*, the Extreme Rigor and sharp Severity of God, but from thence he doth not take occasion to enveigh against it, as our Bold and Blasphemous disputers doe, but concludes as it were in a Rapture, *v. 33.* Ωλάδδ --- Oh the Depth &c.

As for those many Expressions wherein God is said to declare his willingnesse that *All* should be saved, (as *1 Tim. 2. 4.* &c.) they may either be Interpreted of Gods will as declared by the Preachers of it, which is Indefinite to All that Believe and Repent: or else, they may be understood *Ἀποπροσθεως*, and spoken after the manner of men, in the same sense that God is said to have Eies and Eares and other Bodily Parts, whereby he is pleased to render himselfe Intelligible by us. For if God did indeed Will the Salvation of *All*, then it is Certaine that All would be saved, for *God can do whatever he wills*: but since it is manifest that *All* are not Saved, it is evident likewise that God did not will *All* should be saved, for *who hath resisted his Will?*

As for that *Velleity*, i.e. a kind of Longing, Wishing, or Woulding disposition in God, which some rashly bring in to salve their *Phenomena* by, since it is Ineffectuall and consequently Imperfect, it is altogether unfit to be ascribed to God, for it is nothing else but Infirmitie and Want of Power in Man.

So much for the First Observation.

D. 2. The second Observation was this, that the Reason why one man believes, i.e. embraces the meanes of Salvation, and another doth not, is finally to be resolved into Gods eternall Election of the one, and Reprobation of the other: or more briefly thus, that *onely those who are ordain'd unto eternall Life, either do or can believe.*

And

And the Reason is briefly this, because *onely those who are designed to the End, shall be made effectuell Partakers of the Meanes which leads unto it.*

Thus our Saviour *Math. 13.* rendring a Reason why some did not understand his Doctrine, he gives this, because *to them it was not given:* and the Apostle calls the Gospell a *Savour of Life*, onely *Σωζουμενος* to the Saved. *1 Cor. 1* (i. e.) Actually designed to Salvation. And the same Apostle exhorting the *Thessalians* to Faith and Love, he gives this as a Motive, *1 Thes. 9.* because they were not appointed to Wrath, but to obtaine Salvation by *Jesus Christ.* Where by the way, we may take notice, that a Certaine Knowledge of our Eternall Election is so far from hindering any in the Practise of Godlinesse, that it is by the Apostle used as an Argument to quicken their Endeavour; as if he had said, because God hath Appointed you unto Eternall Life, therefore labour after the Meanes which leads unto it.

There is a serled Chaine and Connexion of Causes, which do immutably inferre one another: To be saved presupposes Obedience, That, Faith; That, the Gift of God, and that runs up to the Highest Link, which is the Grace and Favour of God to every poor believer. It is certaine that *ὅτι πάντες οὐκ ἔχουσιν*, all have not the Grace, because they want the Gift of Faith: that being not thrown at Randome on all, but reserved as a Peculiar Blessing for Gods chosen ones; and them he calls, while he leaves others to their Naturall Hardnesse and Impenitence.

It is not in Vaine or Figuratively spoken onely *2 Cor. 5. 17.* that every Believer is *καὶ ἡ κτίσις*, said to be *new borne, againe created and Fashioned* &c. but these Phrases imply this Necessary Truth, that as none but those who are created men, can put forth the Acts of men, and such Creation they could not procure nor contribute to themselves, because as yet they were not; so none but those

who are Created unto Good Workes, can live in them, because Naturally they want a Principle, whereby they should understand or Relish them. And this is the Benefit of that Eternall Election, whereby *God workes in all that he loves all their workes both in them and for them*, Phil. 2. 13. that they might know and Confesse to the praise of his Glorious Grace, that *it is not in him that Wills, nor in him that Runs, but only in God that shewes Mercy*, Rom. 9. 16.

Before I make any Use, I must prevent an Objection, which every man Naturally is ready to Urge, and not to take Notice of it, were to prevaricate with the Truth. The Objection is this, *if it be so that Some, and that a Limited Number are Appointed to Life, and onely such can believe, then it follows that we may live as we list, for if we are Appointed to Life we shall be saved, God will in his good time Accomplish his Purpose concerning us, which all our Endeavour can neither Promote nor Alter.*

To this Objection which most Carnall Minds do not onely Reason but Live by, I may Answer as the Apostle did, when having asserted the Freeness of Grace, and how altogether undeserved it was on our part, he brings in a profane person asking this Question, *shall we continue in Sin, that Grace may Abound?* Rom. 6. i. e. what shall we put God to it, and Try if we can Out-sin the Riches of his Mercy? To this the Apostle replies only *Μη γένοιτε*, let it not be, or it may not be, such a Thought can never arise in any ones Heart, who does Truly understand what Mercy meanes.

So may I say here, if any who conceives himselfe Elected, shall draw this Conclusion from hence, because God hath chosen me, and I am sure of my Salvation, therefore I will run-on and provoke him daiely, and strive as it were, to blot out and Crosse his Decree: *Μη γένοιτε*, Thou canst not do it, thou canst not apprehend that God loved thee

thee with an everlasting loves, and singled thee out from the lump of mankind when so many millions were to be undone eternally, but it will worke upon thee, and melt all thy affections into a gratefull returne of service unto that God, to whom thou art obliged for so infinite and undeserved mercy.

But if any who hath a mind to live wickedly shall Argue-- If I am not designed to life I shall be damned, let me do what I can-- I answer

First, that *there is no possibility for any truth to be so cleare, but that evill men may abuse it to their own destruction:* and I believe every one sees how the making Gods decrees conditionall will lead a corrupt mind to the same Inference, For he may as well say--If God foresee, that I shall believe, I shall believe; and so in the meane while take his liberty; But

Secondly, Consider that *as Gods decree of Election hath no influence to Necessitate the will of any*, but he that believes though ordained to it, yet believes freely and willingly; so the Decree of Reprobation hath no influence at all to the Damning of any: because though those who are Reprobated shall certainly be damned, yet sentence shall not passe upon them according to the act of Gods Reprobation, but according to the merit of their works. Gods decree is made by power, but it's executed by Law; and therefore while thy damnation is yet uncertaine, doe not dispute thy selfe into such a state, as to endeavour to make it just.

Lastly, *The Rule of our Obedience is not Gods decree but Gods command.* Moses when he had given the Law, exhorts them to walke according to it, and to check their Inquisitivenesse, tells them that they were *not to Ascend into Heaven*, there to pry and search into Gods Decree concerning themselves, *but the word was nigh them, in their hearts that they might do it,* Deut. 11. 12.

And the reason is bottomed upon that eternall and unanswerable truth--*Secret things belong to God, but things revealed to us--* that they may be our rule to walke by.

So that in short we are so to ascribe all Power & Praise to God,

as to looke upon and acknowledge him the great and supreme disposer of all things--but yet we are so to live in our obedience and submission to his command, as if nothing was at all decreed concerning us, but that we were wholly left to the counsell and power of our own will.

For if we conclude against our selves, and live like reprobates, we are sure to perish.

But if with hearty and zealous endeavour we strive to doe the will of God, and leave the event unto his mercifull providence, against such, I dare boldly affirme it, there is no condemnation, and the world shall sooner perish then such a soule miscarry.

Therefore the Use I shall make of this discourse, so necessary for these cavilling times, is to exhort us all *that we would leave off disputing and fall to practise.*

Since it is certaine that the *foundation of God standeth sure* which is this, *that God knoweth who are his*, --i. knoweth them definitely, we may vex and distemper our selves by wrangling, but we shall not be able to shake or alter that.

All the while we are disputing we are like *Abrahams Ram* caught by the hornes in the Thicket, when we should be offered up in sacrifice, we are vainly struggling to entangle and snare our selves with our own Dilemmas.

It would be counted madnesse in a Traveller, who has a great way to goe, and but a little time to performe his Journies in, if he should leave his road, and needlessly run into a wood, where, besides the troublesomenesse of the passage, he is sure to loose his time, if not himselfe, and in the end sit down to lament his folly.

No lesse unwise are we if we leave the safe and known path of Gods Commandments, to wander in the endlesse maze and Labyrinth of Gods decrees.

If in worship, when a man strives to serve God more strictly or in a more specious manner then the rule warrants him, his whole devotion is slighted with a *Quis Requisivit hac?* who bad you

you trouble your *selfe* with these things? how much more severely shall he be reprov'd, who ventures upon a forbidden as well as undon'g curiosity?

In short all the while we are arguing, we are out of Gods way; and in the way onely of our own inventions; and till we get out of it, we may justly feare that the issue will be, confusion, amazement, doubting, and at last despaire.

If men would but once *αποσινείστωσαν* be sober in their reasonings, it would appeare but a modest request, that God and his word alone should have the honour, above and beyond our private conceptions. For he will be found just, when he comes to Judgment, but woe be to that man who daire arraign him?

Whatever vaine men may anogate to themselves, and upon the confidence of superficial and empty Rhetorick, venture to entern edle with, and to passe their censure upon matters so infinitely above their reach, yet they will find at last, that obedience is better then knowledge, that selfe denyall is the onely Gospell-sacrifice, and of all Christians, the humblest Christian is the best. Therefore

Secondly, *Since there are certaine Number appointed unto Eternall Life, let us give our selves no rest, till we can comfortably pronounce to our selves that we are of that Number.*

Many are the signes by which a man may judge of his eternall condition, and one of them is expressed here in the Text--That *who were Ordained unto Eternall life believed--i.* Believed the word of the Lord, concerning salvation by Christ.

So that goe presently and aske your selves this question, do I believe? *i.* Am I willing to receive Christ, and Salvation? Yes, perhaps you will say, I am willing.

Then go on farther and aske, but am I willing to receive Christ upon his owne Termes, to acknowledge my owne wretchednesse without him, to fly to him, as I would to Shore out of a Tempest? Do I see my selfe in so Undone and lost a Condition, that nothing but his satisfaction can relieve me? then goe to
Christ,

Christ, he calls thee, he calls thee as effectually, as if thou heardst a voyce from Heaven saying Come: *Come unto me thou weary and laden Soule and I will give thee rest*, *Mat: 2. 28*. Come with all thy Sins, nay with all thy Feares upon thee; and I will take thy Burden, I will settle thy Distractions, and speake to thy soule in the midst of its Disquiets, Soule be at peace, I can make up all thy Wants, and am able to save to the uttermost.

If after this thou canst be content with nothing but *Christ*, if thou art willing to quit all for him, and to count the world only as a stage, where either thy Faith or Patience must be daily exercised: if thou dost find that sweetnesse in the Face of a Reconciled God, as no earthly enjoyment could bribe thee to a willing commision of any knowne sin against him, then goe and enter into thy Rest, and take an earnest of thy future joy. For if the case be thus with thee, and thou perseverest in it, Heaven and Happinesse are as surely thine as if thou wert already there: and even while thou livest, thou art placed in so high a sphere of Felicity and content, as all the laboured and perishing comforts of this world, cannot amount to fill up one minute of thy entire satisfaction.

This deserves to be more particularly insisted upon, and some motives likewise might be used to presse all unto this duty of examining their future state.

But certainly they who know what *Eternity* is, and how neare they are to it, how every minute, for ought they know, may waft them thither, they will not long put off or deferre the enquiry: for all the while they doe so, they evince to themselves that they have no lot nor portion in the Heavenly Inheritance. For though both Grace and Glory are bestowed Freely, yet wee may sadly conclude, that they are not designed for those who looke not after them.

FINIS.



