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The Pulpit of the Reformation;

No. 1, October 30, 1834.

Containing

The Last Judgment,

By John Welch.

The Day Of Judgment,

By Bishop Latimer.

No. 2, December 1, 1834.

Containing

The Parable Of The Householders,

And The

Parable Of The Tares,

By Bishop Latimer.

No. 3, January 1, 1835, and No. 4,

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A Sermon Preached Before Queen Mary

By John Knox

To Which Is Subjoined An Extract From Knox's Admonition  
To The People Of England.

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# The Last Judgment.

By The Rev. John Welch, A. D.  
1570-1622.

REV. xx. 11.—*And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and heaven fled away.*

The security of all flesh is wonderous great, for there is a fearful sleep fallen both upon the good and the evil. The foolish virgins are sound asleep, and the wise are asleep also. And suppose the Lord be at the door, and the hour of judgment at hand, and the seventh angel ready to blow the last trumpet, when time shall be no more; yet it is scarcely one of a thousand, yea, one of ten thousand, is to be found that is prepared, and busying themselves to meet the Lord, who is making speed to come in the clouds: and how soon that fire shall break forth, which shall kindle the heavens above your head, and the earth under your feet, and shall set all on fire; how soon the trumpet shall blow, and the shout shall cry, “Rise, Dead, and come to judgment,” is only known to God, and to no mortal man. Will ye not then be wakened till this trumpet waken you? And will none of you take pains to look over the leaves of your conscience, and read what sins are written there, since ye came into the world, before that day of doom come upon you? O that ye knew that eternity, and that terror of the day of the Lord, when the heavens above you, and the earth beneath you, shall not be able to stand before the face of him that sits on the throne! Therefore I hope the Lord has

made choice to me of this text, at this time, to give you warning before the judgment come. Ye know the watchman that the Lord takes from among the people, that he sets over the city or house to credit to them, "If ye see the sword and pestilence coming, and warn them not, the blood of them that perish under the judgment for lack of warning, will be required at his hand," that is, the watchman's; therefore it is time for me to be making warning to you, and, in the measure of strength that God will give me, I am to make warning not of a temporal judgment, but of an everlasting judgment that is coming on, (God waken you and warn you in time!) that when ye shall see the Judge sit on his throne, your hearts may not tremble at his awful countenance, having gotten your souls washed in his blood. But, to come to the purpose, there are many visions in this book, and there are many things done here, that the Son shews to his servant John. He shews him first the present state of the Church at that time in the world, under the name of seven stars, and he tells, "they are suffering, and had patience; and they laboured for his name's sake, and fainted not; but yet he had somewhat against them, because they had forsaken their first love." Some were in tribulation and poverty, but yet rich in God; some kept the name of Jesus, and denied not the faith, suppose they should had given their blood for it, as the faithful martyr Antipas did; but yet he had a few things against them, because they maintained the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing he hated. Some had love, service, faith, and patience, and their work was more at the last than at the first; but yet they suffered the false prophetess Jezebel to be among them, to whom he threatens he will cast her into a bed of affliction, and them that commit fornication with her, except they repent them of their works. There were some whose works were not found perfect before God; therefore he exhorts them to remember how they had heard, and received; he bids them hold fast and repent, otherwise, he tells, that he will come shortly against them. Some had a little strength, and

kept his word, and denied not his name; therefore he promises to deliver them in the hour of temptation that shall come upon all the world to try the whole earth. Some were neither cold nor hot; and therefore, because they were lukewarm, he tells them that it would come to pass, that he would spew them out of his mouth; they thought they were rich and increased in goods, and had need of nothing, but they know not that they were wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked; and then he counsels them to buy of him gold tried in the fire, that they might be rich, and white raiment, that they might be clothed, and eye-salve that they might see. So what is your case this day? Have ye not forsaken your first love? But as for tribulation, it is not yet come; for our days have been days of peace, of light, liberty, and glory; but as for tribulation it is not yet come; but as the Lord lives, the days of tribulation are not far off. As for false doctrine, God be praised, it is not among us yet, or, at least, if it be, it dare not be avowed yet; but I fear, that, who lives to see it, they shall see heresy and corruption in doctrine and religion creep in piece and piece, in this Church; and if our works be found perfect before God, or not, the Lord knows the contrary, and your own consciences bear witness to it; and if your life be answerable to your name, I leave it to your consciences to judge, if we have not a name that we are living, and yet are dead; and whether this be not the doleful state of the generation that is neither cold nor hot. It is clear, the zeal of the glory of God, being so worn out of the hearts of all, plainly declares the same. But I leave this. After he had shewed him the present state of the Church, at that time, then he tells him what shall be the state of the Church unto the end of the world.

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And *first*, in the vision of a sealed book, containing these acts concerning the Church, which none could open but the Lion of the tribe of Judah, for it was sealed with seven seals. Now, what was contained in these seven seals? This will take a larger time to declare than now is meet to ware upon it.

Mark always of these things spoken, there are three



consolations to the Church of God; howsoever it be that she be in tribulation, or poverty, and affliction; and albeit it come to pass, that the devil cast some of them in prison, that they may be tried, and some have tribulation ten days, which is but a short time; and howsoever it be that our adversary goes about continually like “a roaring lion, seeking whom to devour;” but yet, “he that rides on the white horse,” with the badge at his belt, and the arrows at his side, he shall get the victory at the end of the world; and to them that are faithful to the death, he shall give them a crown of life.

Mark *next*, suppose the sword, the famine, the pestilence, these temporal judgments, be common to the godly as well as to the wicked, yet there is consolation to the “souls of them that are slain for the testimony of Jesus, they are lying under the altar, and they cry with a loud voice, Lord, how long, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood upon them that dwell on the earth?” Then it was said unto them, “that they should rest for a little season, until their fellow-servants and brethren, that should be killed, as they were, should be fulfilled.”

Mark, *thirdly*, the sixth seal is opened, “and there was a great earthquake, and the sun was as black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon was like blood, and the stars of heaven fell to the earth, and heaven departed away as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places; and then the kings of the earth, and the great men, and rich men, and the captains, and the mighty men, and every bond man, and every free man, hid themselves in dens and rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the presence of him that sits on the throne, and from the face of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?” Then shall the Church of God be avenged on her enemies; then she shall have power over the nations, and shall rule them with a rod of iron, and as the vessels of a potter they shall be broken; then shall the saints [004]

of God be brought out of great tribulation, and have their long robes washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb; they shall be in the presence of the throne of God, and serve him both day and night in his temple; and he that sits on the throne shall live among them, and he that is in the midst of the throne shall govern them, and shall lead them to the lively fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. Now, I go forward. After this, he tells him, before this day the Gospel shall be wonderfully restrained; “And the bottomless pit shall be opened, and the smoke of that pit shall arise as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air shall be made dark with that smoke: and out of that smoke shall come locusts upon the earth, and they shall have power as the scorpions of the earth have, and the pain of them shall be as the pain of a scorpion, when he have stung a man. And in these days men shall seek death, and shall not find it, and shall desire to die, and death shall fly from them.” Then he tells two woes that shall come upon the earth, the one of the Antichrist, the other of the Turk, “who shall run through the world and slay the third part of men, and shall lead their great army of twenty times ten thousand horsemen of war, and there should be two witnesses raised up, and power should be given them to prophesy so many days clothed in sackcloth; and if any man should hurt them, fire should proceed out of their mouth and devour their enemies; and when they have fulfilled their testimonies, they should be slain by the beast that came out of the bottomless pit, but they should rise again; and the spirit of life coming up from God, should enter into them, and they should stand upon their feet, and great fear fell upon them that seized them, and then shall they ascend up to heaven in a cloud in the sight of their enemies.”

And at last, “The seventh angel shall blow his trumpet, and the dead shall rise, and every man shall receive according to his works.” This he does till he comes to the twelfth chapter, then he tells him, “The fights of the dragon with the woman, and her

seed that kept the commands of her God, and kept the testimony of Jesus Christ.” Then he tells him, “the two empires of the two beasts, Antichrist and the Turk, and the manner of every one of them.” Then he tells, “The noble company of the Lamb that stands in mount Zion, even the hundred and forty and four thousand, having their Father's name written on their fore-heads; [005] and how he heard a voice from heaven, like the sound of many waters, and as the sound of a great thunder; and he heard the noise of harpers harping with their harps; they sung, as it were, a new song before the throne, and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were brought from the earth.” He tells what they were, saying, “These are they which were not defiled with women, for they are virgins; these follow the Lamb wherever he goes, and these were redeemed from among men, being the first fruits to God, and to the Lamb: and in their mouth was found no guile; for they are without spot before the throne of God.” Then he tells, “That another angel flew in the midst of heaven, with the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them which dwell on the earth;” and that is the same Gospel which I preach unto you, even this, “Fear God, and give glory to him, for the hour of judgment is come; and worship him that made the heavens and the earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.” Then he tells, “that another angel cried, It is fallen, it is fallen, Babylon that great city, she made all the nations to drink of the wine of her fornication. Ay, Rome, thou shalt be taken and burnt in a furnace of fire, and a mill-stone shall be bound about thy neck, and thou shalt be cast into the midst of the sea, and shalt be drowned; there thou shalt fall, and thy fall shall make heaven and earth, and all the angels and saints to rejoice at thy fall. Ay, God shall put it into the hearts of the kings to do it; we know not what kings they are; and then the bride shall prepare her for the bridegroom's coming in the clouds.”

Next again, of *seven vials* he sets down again almost the same things that he prophesied before; and now here, last of all, he lets

him see the last judgment. Would you know then what is here? See ye yon great throne? Ye shall see the Judge standing on the throne; ye shall all see both heaven and earth flee away from his face, ye shall all see the dead, great and small, and yourselves among the rest, standing before God; and ye shall all see the books opened, and the dead judged according to their works, and death and hell cast into the lake of fire, even those that had their hands in his heart's blood, and those that pierced his side with a spear, and those that rivetted him with nails, both hands and feet, they shall see it also. The elect shall see it, as Job says, "For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the last day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet I shall see God in my flesh: whom myself shall see, and my eyes shall behold, and not another, though my reins were consumed in me." And this was his consolation; even so those very eyes of yours, and no other, shall see with terror or with joy, either to your endless comfort, or to your endless condemnation. Now, what sees he? First, he sees a throne; ye know a throne is set for a judge to sit on; so he sees a throne whereon the Judge of the whole earth is to sit on; therefore he shall come to be a Judge. He came before, at his first coming, not to sit on a throne, nor to be a Judge, but to be judged before thrones and tribunals of men; for John says, "That he sent not his Son that he should condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." Christ himself says, "Man, who made me a judge, or a divider over you?" And in another place, "The Son of man came not to judge, but be judged himself." In his first coming, he comes from high majesty to baseness and humility; he came from his Father's glory to shame and ignominy; he came from a palace to a crib; from the seat of his majesty to a tree; he came like a Lamb to be slain, and as a Saviour to save sinners: as the Apostle says, it was a true saying, "That Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the chief;" Christ himself says, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance;" and therefore that

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is the name that the angel gives him, when he appears to Joseph in a dream, saying, and “thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins; and they shall call his name Emmanuel, that is, God with us,” our God made flesh, our God manifested in the flesh. So I say, in his first testimony, he comes as a Saviour and Mediator between God and man; but in his last coming, he shall not come as a Lamb, but as a Judge, convoyed with all his angels and saints in heaven; he shall come in flaming fire, kindling the heavens before him, in melting the elements and earth beneath him; he shall come with a blast of the trumpet, with the archangel, to gather all people from the four corners of the earth; and he shall come with a peremptory sentence, from the which there shall be no appellation, and of which there shall be no revocation, ever again or again calling; and he shall come with his reward in his hand, to every man according to his works which he has done in this world, be they evil, be they good. Now, ye see he has a throne, he has a throne of grace; as the Apostle to the Hebrews says, “Let us go boldly to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and find grace in time of need.” Now he is sitting on a throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and find grace in time of need; and now he holds the door of mercy open, and lets in every penitent sinner that comes; therefore I testify unto you, if ye will flee from your sins, if ye will cast away the works of darkness, if ye will hate and detest all sort of iniquity, and if thou wilt run to the throne of grace now, I will assure thee thou shalt find mercy, and grace in the time of need; so now is the throne of grace and mercy, but afterwards [007] thou shalt see the throne of glory and justice. Now is the good Shepherd seeking his lost sheep, and finding them, to drink of the wells of the water of life, and to eat of the fat things of his own house; but afterwards, such as would not be gathered of him, he shall bind them hand and foot, and cast them into outer darkness. Now he pities them that will not come home, as he said to Jerusalem, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how oft would I have

gathered thee, as a hen doth her birds under her wings, but thou wouldst not: behold, your habitation shall be made desolate.” So wo to the souls that repine and refuse to be fetched within the sweet and loving arms of the Son of God, even those bloody arms which were stretched out upon a tree. Now, discern, I pray you, betwixt his first coming and his last coming; for now is the time of grace, and now is the spirit of grace offered, and now is the throne of grace set up, and now is the rainbow, which is the sign of the covenant of life, round about the throne, and now the twelve ports of that new Jerusalem are standing open, that all may come in; therefore, wo to the soul that shall sit till this time of grace pass over, and will not come in in time.

But I will go forward. Now, ye see two things in that throne, the one is a *great* throne, the other is a *white* throne. Let kings keep silence of their thrones, and speak of this throne. O ye kings, will ye look to the heavens above you, and see that white cloud, and upon the cloud one standing like the Son of man, having upon his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle, who thrusts his sharp sickle in the earth, and cuts down the vine of the vineyards of the earth, and casts them into the great wine-press of the wrath of God; so he calls it a *great* throne. Solomon's throne was great which he made of ivory, and had six steps, and twelve lions, two on every step, and the queen of the South was astonished when she saw it; and it is said in the Canticles, “Come forth, O daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his marriage, and in the day of the gladness of his heart.” But will ye come out, ye daughters of Zion, and see here another throne nor Solomon's, another crown nor his crown? It is a *great* throne, so that all the monarchs' thrones under heaven, what are they in comparison with this throne? Nothing. Therefore no wonder that the twenty-four elders take their own crowns, and cast them down before his throne; and it is no wonder that they fall down before him that sits on the throne, and worship him that lives

for evermore, saying, “Thou art worthy to receive glory, honour, and power, for thou hast created all things, and for thy will's sake they are created.” O that the men of the world saw this throne! [008] And, O that ye did see the greatness of the majesty of his throne!

Now he calls it *great*, because of him that sits on it; *great*, because of them that stand about it; *great*, because of them that shall be judged there; and last of all, *great*, because of the judgment itself. Now, who sits on it? O! the Judge of the whole world, God himself, that infinite Essence that men and angels have borrowed their being from, even he whose glorious face the seraphims and cherubims cannot behold for the brightness thereof; and therefore they have wings to cover their faces, because they cannot bear to see him, much less so then can any mortal man see his face and live; he that rides on his white horse, and tramples under foot all his enemies, and treads them in the wine-press of his wrath without the city; therefore rejoice, all ye whose garments are made white in the blood of the Lamb, for his throne shall not terrify you, because of the Judge that sits thereon: for he is thy brother, thy Advocate, and thy Saviour. O blessed for evermore is the soul of the righteous, and of such as are reconciled with the great God, before he come to sit on this throne.

Now, I said, it was *great* in respect of him that sits thereon; *next*, in respect of them that stand about it. Ye see a judge has his assizers that sit in judgment with him, and consent to his sentence; so this great Judge has his assizers, for there is not one of his angels shall be left in heaven, but all shall stand about this throne, and all the saints on earth shall be caught up in the air, and they shall all have thrones set about his throne. O the fairest parliament that ever was in the world! O! behold the King crowned with many crowns, standing in the midst, and all the King's servants with their crowns on their heads, and also the saints with palms in their hands, sitting on thrones about that throne.

*Thirdly*, Great is this throne, because great is the number of persons that shall be there. All men and women in the world must be judged here; there is never a reprobate that ever took life, but he shall be judged here, and all the elect and saints of God shall be judged here also, (so fair is this parliament,) six thousand years' generations shall all stand there, waiting to receive an eternal and final judgment.

*Last* of all, *Great* is this throne, because great shall be the judgment that shall come forth from this throne. Lords of the Session think their judgments great; but come out here, and see to whom the new city Jerusalem in heaven shall be given, and who shall be cast into the lake of fire. Now, compare all these together, and see if this throne be not great; great is he that sits on the throne, even the Prince of life, and God of glory, and the Judge of all the world; great is his synod, even all the elect angels and saints, from the beginning of the world to the end of the world; for ye that are in Christ shall be glorified in the clouds, and the sight of your glory shall aggravate the torment of the reprobates, because they might have had it, and would not take it; and then you shall rule them with a rod of iron, and as a potter's vessel they shall be broken; and great is the number of them that shall be judged; for let all flesh prepare them for it, even kings and emperors, those that wore many crowns on the earth, must appear naked before the throne. Alexander, thou worest many crowns, conquered many nations, but yet thou must stand up naked as thou was born, and thou must render a reckoning of thy conquests.

But I leave this. Again, you see this throne is *white*. What means this whiteness? It is innocency or righteousness, and full of shining brightness, of an unspeakable joy. Innocent and righteous; how so? Because the Judge is white, innocent, and righteous; all his assizers that shall sit round about him, they are white, innocent, white and righteous; all his citations, summonses and convictions, sentences and executions, are innocent and



righteous; so all is white, the Judge, the unspotted innocent and undefiled Lamb of God, sitting on his throne of justice, and ordained deputy of his Father, to judge both the quick and the dead, he in whose heart was never found guile; therefore Abraham said, "Shall not the Judge of the world judge righteously?" So this Judge is white, innocent, and he is bright and glorious. Peter, James, and John, saw him white on the mount Tabor, when he was transfigured, "and his face shined as the sun, and his raiment white as the light; and when Peter said, Master, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." Matth. xvii. 1, 2, 3. Ay, Peter, but this shall be a whiter appearing, and thou shalt think it better to be with him here. Ay, Lord, it is true, *white* wast thou upon mount Tabor, but whiter shalt thou be in the clouds.

He is *white* again, in respect of his citations. O that our hearts were ravished with the consideration of thy righteous and just citing and summoning of all men, when thou shalt cause the earth, grave, hell, and the sea, and all places, thrust out of them all their dead; just shalt thou be in glorifying the souls and bodies of them that glorify thee on earth; and just shalt thou be in glorifying thyself, by tormenting the souls and bodies of them that dishonoured thee on earth.

He is *white* in respect of his accusations, for there shall be nothing read in thy ditty, but that which shall be found written either in one leaf of thy conscience or other; there the sins of thy conception, there the sins of thy youth, there the sins of thy ignorance, there the sins against the light of thy conscience, and there the sins against the law, and there the sins against the gospel, and all shall be presented to thy conscience. O! well is the soul and conscience that dare lift up the head with rejoicing, and can say, "Thou Lamb of God, thou takest away the sins of the world," thou tookest away my sins when thou wast on the tree. And can any body tell how ye will compear before this throne that were never cleansed with the blood of Jesus? O! that [010]

blackness and darkness, which is abiding that soul which never yet ran to the blood of the Lamb, to make itself white in it; so the raising of all, the comparing of all, the accusation of all, the conviction of all, shall be just, and God shall be glorified in all.

There is also the absolution of the righteous, and the condemnation of the wicked; and therefore the throne is called white, because of the innocency and righteousness of the Judge. Now, brethren, I will go no further at this time than this that follows or remains to be spoken of, the majesty and terror of the Judge sitting on his throne, "and him that sat on it." Many shall sit on thrones in that day, but one shall sit above all the rest, for the saints shall be caught up in the air, and shall all sit on thrones, and give out sentence both of absolution and condemnation, and they shall say, "Hallelujah, salvation, and glory, and power, be to the Lord our God, for true and righteous are his judgments." I could never yet rightly consider the majesty of this Judge. O heavens! what aileth thee to flee from the face of this Judge. O earth! what aileth thee to flee, and why art thou chased away, and never seen again? What ails thee, O heavens, that never sinned, and, O earth, that never sinned neither, for they had never understanding to be capable of a law, nor to be subject to keep a law. What means this? O but I must leave this! for who can but wonder at this! Yet I will tell you the cause. You and I, and the generations before that this firmament has seen, and this earth seen or born, since the first day that God made the earth, and established this heaven and earth, and since that day that Adam eat of the forbidden tree, since that day heaven and earth have been eye-witnesses of our sins, and subject to vanity, and since that day they have been defiled with our iniquities, and since that time they have been subject to bondage and corruption, and therefore they groan with us also, and travail with pain together until this present; and therefore, in that great day, they cannot abide the face of the Judge.

Now, what is the fruit ye should make of this? I thank my

God that I preach unto you so sure a gospel, even the oracles of the eternal God; the earth and the heavens shall pass away, but this word and oracles shall never pass away; therefore it is not a doubtful message that I carry unto you, for it is surer than the heavens, and surer than the earth; and these eyes of yours, that have seen both the truth of this spoken here. O that the Lord would fill my heart, with this verity, that I might eat it and drink it, and feed upon it continually, and that he would fill me with the spirit of exhortation, that I might exhort you to meditate on this truth, both day and night, that the remembrance of that day might never go out of your hearts. O that you would do it, even for his sake that left you his heart's blood to slacken that fire which will burn both the heavens and the earth: therefore hear, hear! What should you hear? things of the last importance. Is hell, is heaven, is the terror of that day of any importance? And this is not the blessing of mount Gerizim, but that everlasting blessing which the Judge of all the world shall pronounce out of his mouth, saying, "Ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world." And it is nothing to the curse of the mount Ebal, but it is that everlasting curse and malediction which the Son of God shall pronounce, saying, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." (And what shall I say to you?) This day is coming, and the Lord is preparing himself to come down through the clouds, to sit on a great white throne, and the archangel is putting the trumpet to his mouth, and he is near to the blowing of it, and the rest of the angels are but waiting when they shall give the last shout, "Rise, dead, and come to judgment," the Bridegroom is coming, and the heaven and the earth are waiting when the Lord shall come in his glory, in flaming fire, to burn them up.

Now, brethren, what should ye do then? It is but this one thing that I will charge you with, hear what I am to say to you, I bear the message of God, and I preach the Gospel that shall

judge you; and I am here sent of God to tell you what is his will towards you; therefore I charge you all before God, and his Son Christ Jesus, every man and woman, let this be your occupation this day, turn over the leaves of your conscience, and see there what is the ditty that thou hast pinned up against thyself, since the day that thou wast born, and look on thy sins before the Lord, and come and spread them before the Judge, and crave pardon of them, now in the day of grace; for he is ready to forgive thee and thy sins, were they never so great; for aye the redder that thy soul has been, the virtue of his blood shall appear the greater in cleansing thee from thy sins; therefore let none of you scare at the greatness of your sins; for here I testify unto you, that if any of you be condemned, it shall not be for your sins, but it shall be for contempt of that blood which shall condemn you. O God! full of mercy and goodness, and of fatherly care and providence, and never a greater providence found I in my lifetime, than I found this last time in my journey, I thank my God for it; and here I avow, if this blood of mine should go for it, it was acceptable service to God we did that day; I know there were many that sent up their prayers to God for the maintenance of his liberty, I am sure the Lord heard you; for I say to you, the room was never that I came to, but I found the Lord meeting me there, and confirming me that all was well and acceptable to him; so that I never found sweeter providence since I was born; I see the Lord's hand is not shortened. O Scotland! O that thou wouldst repent, and mourn for the contempt of this so great a light that has shined in thee; then thou shouldst see as glorious a day on God's poor Church within this land, as ever was seen in any church before from the beginning; then the Lord should be strong, and glorious, and wonderful in all the hearts of his own. What is it to him to run sixteen or eighteen score of miles to London, and then run to the hearts of kings, princes, and nobles of the land, and humble them, and subject them to the crown and kingdom of Jesus Christ; but, let them think of it what they will, I know who has approven of

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us, for it is the running of the Gospel through the whole land, and it is that the net of Christ may be spread over all, that if it were possible we may gather in a world in it, that they might not perish; it is that which we seek, and when I look to the eternity of wrath that is abiding the wicked of this world, then I may say, who would not pity a world of sinners? But I leave this, and I will give God the praise of his own glory, that he can begin and he can perfect his own work in you: therefore this is my petition to God, that ye may all be presented blameless before him in that great day. Therefore I beseech you all, for Christ's sake, that every one of you would come in time, by speedy repentance, and that you would take up Christ in the arms of your souls, and that ye would take a fill of his flesh and blood, that ye may never hunger and thirst any more; and, in like manner, he may know you in that great day to be his own sheep, marked with his own blood. Will ye have any pleasure at his coming, when ye have eaten and drunken, and taken your pleasure here, and then shall be flung into hell hereafter? So I would beseech you, in all lenity and meekness of mind, for Christ's cause, ye would not delay at least to mint at repentance; and if ye cannot get your hearts melted as ye would, yet run to God, and say, "Father have mercy upon me; Father, forgive me," and cause me to repent; Father, send down thy Spirit to soften my heart. Now, if ye would do this, ye should be welcome to him; for I assure you he delights to shew mercy on poor penitent sinners, that would "repent, and hunger, and thirst for righteousness." Now, I say no more now, but I commend you all to him that is able to give you repentance and remission of sins in the blood of his Son Jesus Christ: to Father and with the Holy Ghost, be all honour, Amen.

# The Day Of Judgment.

## Extracted From A Sermon By Hugh Latimer, Bishop Of Worcester, And Martyr, 1555.<sup>1</sup>

LUKE XXI.<sup>2</sup>

As we die so we shall rise again. If we die in the state of damnation, we shall rise in that same state. Again, if we die in the state of salvation, we shall rise again in that state, and come to everlasting felicity, both of soul and body. For if we die now in the state of salvation, then at the last general day of judgment we shall hear this joyful sentence, proceeding out of the mouth of our Saviour Christ, when he will say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess that kingdom which is prepared for you from the beginning of the world." (Matt. xxv.) And though we have much misery here in this world, though it goeth hard with us, though we must bite on the bridle, yet for all that, we must be content, for we shall be sure of our deliverance, we shall be sure that our

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<sup>1</sup> The Editor may here state, what cannot be unknown to many of his readers, that there are some of the sermons of our early Divines, which, from various circumstances, are not, as entire discourses, available for a publication like the present. From such, however, as also from works which do not come under the appellation of Pulpit discourses, striking and useful passages will be given from time to time, when they can be inserted without interfering with those complete discourses which will form the body of this work.

<sup>2</sup> The Sermon is founded on the whole Chapter, which was the lesson for the day, in the Church of England service.

salvation is not far off. And no doubt they that will wrestle with sin, and strive and fight with it, shall have the assistance of God; he will help them, he will not forsake them, he will strengthen them, so that they shall be able to live uprightly; and though they shall not be able to fulfil the law of God to the uttermost, yet for all that, God will take their doings in good part, for Christ his Son's sake, in whose name all faithful people do their good works, and so for his sake they are acceptable unto God, and in the end they shall be delivered out of all miseries and troubles, and come to the bliss of everlasting joy and felicity.

I pray God, that we may be of the number of those who shall hear this joyful and most comfortable voice of Christ our Saviour, when he will say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom which is prepared for you before the foundation of the world was laid." There are a great number amongst the Christian people, who in the Lord's prayer, when they pray, "Thy kingdom come," pray that this day may come; but yet, for all that, they are drowned in the world, they say the words with their lips, but they cannot tell what is the meaning of it; they speak it only with their tongue: which saying indeed is to no purpose. But the man or woman that saith these words, "Thy kingdom come," with a faithful heart, no doubt he or she desires in very deed that God will come to judgment, and amend all things in this world, to pull down satan that old serpent under our feet. [014]

But there are a great number of us who are not ready. Some have lived in this world fifty years, some sixty, but yet for all that they are not prepared for his coming; they ever think he will not come yet. But I tell you, that though his general coming be not yet, yet for all that he will come one day, and take us out of this world: and, no doubt, as he finds us, so we shall have; if he find us ready, and in the state of salvation, no doubt we shall be saved for ever, world without end. But, if he find us in the state of damnation, we shall be damned, world without end, there is no remedy after we are once past this world; no penance will

help then, nor anything that man is able to do for us.

“And then shall they see the Son of man come in a cloud with power and great glory.” St. Paul to the Thessalonians setteth out the coming of Christ and our resurrection; but he speaks in the same place only of the rising of the good and faithful that shall be saved. But the Holy Scripture in other places witnesses, that the wicked shall rise too, and shall receive their sentence from Christ, and so go to hell, where they shall be punished world without end. Now, St. Paul's words are these, “This say we unto you in the word of the Lord: that we which shall live and shall remain to the coming of the Lord, shall not come before them which sleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, and the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall arise first: then we which shall live, even we which shall remain, shall be caught up with them also in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord; wherefore comfort one another with these words.” 1 Thess. iv.

By these words of St. Paul it appears, that they which died in the beginning of the world shall be by Christ as soon saved, as they who shall be alive here at the time of his coming. I would have you to note well the manner of speaking which St. Paul uses; he speaks as if the last day should have come in his time. Now, when St. Paul thought that this day should have come in his time, how much more shall we think that it shall be in our time? For no doubt it will come, and it is not long thereunto; as it appears by all the scriptures which make mention of this day; it will come, but it shall come suddenly, unawares, as a thief in the night. For a thief when he intends a robbery, to rob a man's house, to break up his chests, and take away his goods, gives him not warning, he lets not the good man of the house know at what time he intends to come, but rather he intends to spy such a time, that no man shall be aware of him. So, no doubt, this last day will come one day suddenly upon our heads, before we



are aware of it; like as the fire fell down from heaven upon the people of Sodom when unlooked for; they thought that all things were well, therefore they took their pleasures, till the time when fire fell down from heaven and burned them up all, with all their substance and goods.

“And he showed them a similitude, Behold the fig-tree and all the trees, when they shoot forth their buds, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is then near at hand.” So when you see the tokens which shall go before this fearful day, it is time to make ready. But here a man might ask a question, saying, I pray you wherein standeth this preparation? How shall I make ready? About this there has been great strife, for there have been an infinite number, and there are some yet at this time, who think that this readiness standeth in masses, in setting up candles, in going of pilgrimage; and in such things, they thought to be made ready for that day, and so to be made worthy to stand before the Son of man, that is, before our Saviour Christ. But I tell you, this was not the right way to make ready. Christ our Saviour showeth us how we shall make ourselves ready, saying, “Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcome with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this world, and so this day come upon you unawares; for as a snare shall it come upon all them that dwell upon the face of the whole world.”

“Watch and pray:” as if he had said, Be ye ever in readiness, lest you be taken unawares. But those sluggards who spend their time vainly in eating and drinking, and sleeping, please not God, for he commands us to watch, to be mindful, to take heed to ourselves, lest the devil, or the world, or our own flesh, get the victory over us. We are allowed to take our natural sleep, for it is as necessary for us as meat and drink, and we please God as well in that, as we please him when we take our food. But we must take heed, that we do it according as he has appointed us; for like as he has not ordained meat and drink that we should play the glutton with it, so likewise sleep is not ordained that we should

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give ourselves to sluggishness, or over-much sleeping; for no doubt when we do so, we shall displease God most highly. For Christ saith not in vain, "Watch and pray." He would have us to be watchers, to have at all times in remembrance his coming, and to give ourselves to prayer, that we may be able to stand before him at this great and fearful day. Meaning, that we should not trust in ourselves but call unto God, saying, "Lord God Almighty, thou hast promised to come and judge the quick and the dead; we beseech thee give us thy grace and Holy Ghost, that we may live according unto thy holy commandments, that when thou comest, thou have not cause to bestow thy fearful anger, but rather thy lovingkindness and mercy upon us."

So likewise when we go to bed, we should desire God that we sleep not the sleep of sin and wickedness, but rather that we may leave them, and follow his will and pleasure; that we be not led with the desires of this wicked world. Such an earnest mind we should have towards him, so watchful we should be. For I tell you it is not a trifling matter, it is not a money matter: for our eternal salvation and our damnation hang upon it. Our nature is to do all that is possible for us to get silver and gold; how much more then should we endeavour to make ourselves ready towards this day, when it shall not be a money matter, but a soul matter, for at that day it will appear most manifestly who they are that shall enjoy everlasting life, and who shall be thrust into hell. Now as long as we are in this world, we have all one baptism, we go all to the Lord's Supper, we all bear the name of Christians, but then it will appear who are the right Christians; and again, who are the hypocrites or dissemblers.

Well, I pray God grant us such hearts, that we may look diligently about us, and make ready against his fearful and joyful coming—fearful to them that delight in sin and wickedness, and will not leave them; and joyful unto those who repent, forsake their sins, and believe in him; who, no doubt, will come in great honour and glory, and will make all his faithful like unto him,

and will say unto them that are chosen to everlasting life, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess that kingdom which is prepared for you from the beginning of the world.” But, to the wicked who will not live according unto his will and pleasure, but follow their own appetites, he will say, “Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.” O what a horrible thing will this be, to depart from him who is the fountain of all goodness and mercy, without whom is no consolation, comfort, nor rest, but eternal sorrow and everlasting death! For God's sake I require you let us consider this, that we may be amongst those who shall hear, “Come to me;” that we may be amongst those who shall enjoy eternal life.

# The Parable Of The Householder.

## A Sermon, By Bishop Latimer.

MATTHEW XX.—*The kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that was an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard.*

This parable is written by the evangelist Matthew in the twentieth chapter, and is very dark and hard to be understood; yea, there is no harder piece of scripture written by any evangelist. Therefore it may well be called hard meat; not meat for mowers nor ignorant people, who are not exercised in the word of God. And yet there is no other diversity between this scripture and any other. For though many scriptures have diverse expositions, (as is well to be allowed of, so long as they keep in the tenour of the catholic faith,<sup>3</sup>) yet they pertain all to one end and effect, and they are all alike. Therefore although this parable is harder to understand than the others at the first hearing or reading, yet when we well advise and consider the same, we shall find it agreeable unto all the others.

Now to the principal cause, and to which our Saviour had respect in this parable, and that is, he teaches us hereby that all Christian people are equal in all things appertaining to the kingdom of Christ. So that we have one Christ, one Redeemer, one baptism, and one gospel, one Supper of the Lord, and one kingdom of heaven. So that the poorest man and most miserable

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<sup>3</sup> Universal faith.

that is in the world, may call God his Father, and Christ his Redeemer, as well as the greatest king or emperor in the world. And this is the scope of this parable, wherein Christ teacheth us this equality. And if this is considered, the whole parable will be easily and soon understood.<sup>4</sup>

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Here is declared unto us that some laboured the whole day, which are hired for a penny, that is of our money ten pence: for like as we have a piece of money which we call a shilling, and is in value twelve pence, so the Jews had a piece that they called *denarium*, and that was in value ten of our pence. The first company wrought twelve hours, and the others wrought, some nine hours, some six hours, some three hours, and some but one hour. Now when evening was come, and the time of payment drew on, the householder said to his steward, Go, and give to every man alike, and begin at those that came last. And when the others that came early in the morning perceived that they should have no more than those that had wrought but one hour, they murmured against the householder, saying, “Shall they which have laboured but one hour, have as much as we that have wrought the whole day?” The householder, perceiving their discontented mind, said to one of them, “Friend, wherefore grudgest thou? Is it not lawful for me to do with mine own what pleaseth me? Have I not given thee what I promised thee? Content thyself therefore, and go thy way, for it hath pleased me to give unto this man which hath wrought but one hour as much as unto thee.” This is the sum of this parable, which Christ concludes with this sentence, “The first shall be the last, and the last first.”

First consider who are these murmurers? The merit-mongers, who esteem their own works so much, that they think heaven scarcely sufficient to recompense their good deeds; namely, for putting themselves to pain with saying of our lady's psalter,

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<sup>4</sup> It should be observed that other commentators have taken other views of the meaning of this parable.

and gadding on pilgrimage, and such like trifles. These are the murmurers; for they think themselves holier than all the world, and therefore worthy to receive a greater reward than all other men. But such men are much deceived and are in a false opinion, and if they abide and continue therein, it shall bring them to the fire of hell. For man's salvation cannot be gotten by any work: because the Scripture saith, "Life everlasting is the gift of God." (Rom. vi.) True it is, that God requires good works of us, and commands us to avoid all wickedness. But for all that, we may not do our good works that we should get heaven withal; but rather to show ourselves thankful for what Christ hath done for us, who with his sufferings hath opened heaven to all believers, that is, to all those that put their hope and trust, not in their deeds, but in his death and suffering, and study to live well and godly; and yet not to make merits of their own works, as though they should have everlasting life for them; as our monks and friars, and all our religious persons were wont to do, and therefore may rightly be called murmurers; for they thought they had so great a store of merits, that they sold some of them unto other men. And many men spend a great part of their substance to buy their merits, and to be a brother of their houses, or to obtain one of their coats or cowls to be buried in.

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But there is a great difference between the judgment of God, and the judgment of this world. In this world they were accounted most holy above all men, and so most worthy to be first; but before God they shall be last, when their hypocrisy and wickedness shall be opened. And thus much I thought to say of murmurers.

Now I will not apply all the parts of this parable; for, as I said before, it is enough for us if we know the chief point and scope of the parable, which is, that there shall be an equality in all the things that appertain to Christ: insomuch, that the ruler of this realm hath no better a God, no better sacraments, and no better a gospel, than the poorest in the world; yea, the poorest man hath

as good right to Christ and his benefits, as the greatest man in this world.

This is comfortable to every one, and especially to such as are in misery, poverty, or other calamities; which, if it were well considered, would not make us so desirous to come aloft, and to get riches, honour, and dignities in this world, as we now are, nor yet so malicious one against another as we are. For then we should ever make this reckoning with ourselves, each man in his vocation; the servant would think thus with himself, I am a poor servant, and must live after the pleasure of my master, I may not have my free will; but what then? I am sure that I have as good a God as my master hath; and I am sure that my service and business pleases God as much, when I do it with a good faith, as the preachers and curates, in preaching or saying of service. For we must understand that God esteems not the diversity of the works, but he hath respect unto the faith; for a poor man who does his duty in faith, is as acceptable unto God, and hath as good right to the death and merits of Christ, as the greatest man in the world.

So go through all states of men, whosoever applieth to his business with faith, considering that God willeth him so to do, surely the same is most beloved of God. If this were well considered and printed in our hearts, all ambition and desire of promotion, all covetousness and other vices, would depart out of our hearts. For it is the greatest comfort that may be unto poor people, especially such as are nothing regarded in this world—if they consider that God loves them as well as the richest in the world—it must needs be a great comfort unto them.

But there are some that say, that this sentence, “The first shall be last,” is the very substance of the parable. And here you shall understand, that our Saviour Christ took occasion to put forth this parable, when there came a young man demanding of him, “What shall I do to come to everlasting life?” Our Saviour, after he had taught him the commandments of God, bade him,

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“Go, and sell all that he had, and give to the poor; and come and follow him.” He hearing this, went away heavily, for his heart was cold. And then our Saviour spake very terribly against rich men, saying, “It is more easy for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven:”—a camel, or as some think, a great cable of a ship, which is more likely than the beast that is called a camel. The disciples hearing this, said, “Who then can be saved?” He made them answer, saying, “God is almighty, and that which is impossible to men, is possible with God;” signifying, that he condemns not all rich men, but only those who set their heart upon riches, who care not how they get them, and when they have them, who abuse them to the satisfying of their own carnal appetites and fleshly delights and pleasures, and use them not to the honour of God.

And again, such riches as are justly, rightly, and godly gotten, those are the good creatures of God, when rightly used to the glory of God, and comfort of their neighbours; not hoarding nor heaping them up, to make treasures of them. For riches are not evil of themselves; but they are made evil, when our hearts is set upon them, and we put hope in them; for that is an abominable thing before the face of God. Now after these words spoken by our Saviour Christ, Peter came forth, saying, “Lo, we have forsaken all that we had, what shall be our reward?” Peter had forsaken all that he had, which was but little in substance, but yet it was a great matter to him, for he had no more than that little: like the widow who cast into the treasury two mites, yet our Saviour praised the gift above all that gave before her. Here thou learnest, that when thou hast but little, yet give of the same little; for it is as acceptable unto God, as though it were a greater thing.

So Peter, in forsaking his old boat and net, was approved as much before God, as if he had forsaken all the riches in the world; therefore he shall have a great reward for his old boat;



for Christ saith, that he shall be one of them that shall sit and judge the twelve tribes of Israel; and to signify them to be more than others, he giveth them the name of judges; meaning, that they shall condemn the world: like as God speaketh of the queen of Sheba, that in the last day she shall arise and condemn the Jews who would not hear Christ, and she came so great a journey to hear the wisdom of Solomon. Then he answered and said, “Whosoever leaveth father, or mother, or brethren, for my sake, shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall inherit everlasting life.” Now what is this, to leave father and mother? When my father or mother would hinder me in any goodness, or would persuade me from the honouring of God and faith in Christ, then I must forsake and rather lose the favour and good-will of my father and mother, than forsake God and his holy word. [021]

And now Christ saith, “The first shall be last, and the last shall be first,” alluding to St. Peter's saying, which sounded as though Peter looked for a reward for his deeds; and that is it, which is the let of altogether,<sup>5</sup> if a man come to the Gospel and hears the same, and afterwards looks for a reward, such a man shall be “the last.” If these sayings were well considered by us, surely we should not have such a number of vain gospellers as we now have, who seek nothing but their own advantage under the name and colour of the Gospel. Moreover, he teaches us to be meek and lowly, and not to think much of ourselves; for those that are greatly esteemed in their own eyes, are the least before God: “For he that humbleth himself shall be exalted;” according to the scripture, which saith, “God resisteth the proud, and advanceth the humble and meek.” And this is what he saith, “The first shall be the last,” teaching us to be careful and not to stand in our own conceit, but ever to mistrust ourselves; as St. Paul teacheth, saying, “Whosoever standeth let him take heed he fall not; and therefore we may not put trust in ourselves, but rather in God.”

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<sup>5</sup> Greatest or entire hinderance.

Further, in this saying of our Saviour is comprehended a great comfort; for those that are accounted by the world to be the vilest slaves and most abject, may by this saying have a hope to be made the first and the principal; for although they are ever so low, yet they may rise again, and become the highest. And so this is to us a comfortable sentence, which strengthens our faith, and keeps us from desperation and falling from God. And at the end he saith, "Many are called, but few are chosen." These words of our Saviour are very hard to understand, and therefore it is not good to be too curious in them, as some vain fellows, who seeking carnal liberty, pervert, toss and turn the word of God, after their own mind and purpose. Such, I say, when they read these words, make their reckoning thus; saying, "What need I to mortify my body with abstaining from all sin and wickedness? I perceive God hath chosen some, and some are rejected. Now if I be in the number of the chosen, I cannot be damned; but if I be accounted among the condemned number, then I cannot be saved: for God's judgments are immutable." Such foolish and wicked reasons some have; which bring them either to desperation, or else to carnal liberty. Therefore, it is as needful to beware of such reasons, or expositions of the scripture, as it is to beware of the devil himself.

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But if thou art desirous to know whether thou art chosen to everlasting life, thou mayest not begin with God: for God is too high, thou canst not comprehend him; the judgments of God are unknown to man; therefore thou mayest not begin there: but begin with Christ, and learn to know Christ, and wherefore he came; namely, that he came to save sinners, and made himself subject to the law, and a fulfiller of the same, to deliver us from the wrath and danger thereof, and therefore was crucified for our sins, and rose again to show and teach us the way to heaven, and by his resurrection to teach us to arise from sin: so also his resurrection teaches and admonishes us of the general resurrection. He sitteth at the right hand of God and maketh

intercession for us, and gives us the Holy Ghost, that comforts and strengthens our faith, and daily assures us of our salvation.

Consider, I say, Christ and his coming; and then begin to try thyself whether thou art in the book of life or not. If thou findest thyself in Christ, then thou art sure of everlasting life. If thou be without him, then thou art in an evil case. For it is written, “No man cometh unto the Father but through me.” Therefore if thou knowest Christ, then thou mayest know further of thy election. But when we are about this matter, and are troubled within ourselves, whether we are elected or no; we must ever have this maxim, or principal rule before our eyes; namely, that God beareth a good-will towards us; God loveth us; God beareth a fatherly heart towards us.

But you will say, “How shall I know that? Or how shall I believe that?” We may know God's will towards us through Christ: God hath opened himself unto us by his Son Christ; for so saith John the Evangelist, “The Son which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath revealed.” (John i.)

Therefore we may perceive his good-will and love towards us; he hath sent his Son into this world, who suffered a most painful death for us. Shall I now think that God hates me? Or shall I doubt of his love towards me? Here you see how you shall avoid the scrupulous and most dangerous question of the predestination of God. For if thou wilt inquire his counsels, and enter into his consistory, thy wit will deceive thee; for thou shalt not be able to search the counsels of God. But if thou begin with Christ, and consider his coming into the world, and dost believe that God hath sent him for thy sake, to suffer for thee, and deliver thee from sin, death, the devil, and hell; then when thou art so armed with the knowledge of Christ, then, I say, this simple question cannot hurt thee; for thou art in the book of life, which is Christ himself.

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Also we learn by this sentence, “Many are called,” that the preaching of the gospel is universal; that it pertains to all

mankind; that it is written, "Through the whole earth their sound is heard." Now seeing that the gospel is universal, it appears that he would have all mankind saved, and that the fault is not in him if we are damned. For it is written thus, "God would have all men to be saved:" his salvation is sufficient to save all mankind, but we are so wicked of ourselves that we refuse the same, for we will not take it when it is offered unto us; and therefore he saith, "Few are chosen;" that is, few have pleasure and delight in it; for the most part are weary of it, they cannot abide it. And there are some that hear it, but they will not abide any danger for it, they love their riches and possessions more than the word of God. And therefore few are elected, there are but a few that stick heartily unto it, and can find in their hearts to forgo this world for God's sake and his holy word.

There are some now-a-days that will not be reprehended by the gospel; they think themselves better than it. Some again are so stubborn, that they will rather forswear themselves, than confess their sins and wickedness. Such men are the cause of their own damnation; for God would have them saved, but they refuse it; like as did Judas the traitor, whom Christ would have had to be saved, but he refused his salvation; he refused to follow the doctrine of his master Christ. And so, whosoever heareth the word of God, and follows it, the same is elect by him. And again, whosoever refuses to hear the word of God, and to follow the same, is damned. So that our election is sure if we follow the word of God.

Here is now taught you how to try out your election, namely, in Christ, for Christ is the accounting book and register of God; even in the same book, that is, Christ, are written all the names of the elect. Therefore we cannot find our election in ourselves, neither yet in the high counsel of God; for "Secret things belong to the most High." (Deut. xxix.) Where then shall I find my election? In the counting book of God, which is Christ; for thus it is written, "God hath so entirely loved the world, that he gave his

only begotten Son, to that end, that all that believe in him should not perish, but have life everlasting.” Whereby appears most plainly that Christ is the book of life, and that all that believe in him are in the same book, and so are chosen to everlasting life; for only those are ordained which believe.

Therefore when thou hast faith in Christ, then thou art in the book of life, and so art thou sure of thine election. And again, if thou art without Christ, and have no faith in him, neither art sorry for thy wickedness, nor have a mind and purpose to leave and forsake sin, but rather exercise and use the same, then thou art not in the book of life as long as thou art in such a case; and therefore shalt thou go into everlasting fire, namely, if thou die in thy wickedness and sin, without repentance. [024]

But there are none so wicked but he may have a remedy. What is that? Enter into thine own heart, and search the secrets of the same. Consider thine own life, and how thou hast spent thy days. And if thou find in thyself all manner of uncleanness and abominable sins, and so seest thy damnation before thine eyes, what shalt thou then do? Confess the same unto the Lord thy God. Be sorry that thou hast offended so loving a Father, and ask mercy of him in the name of Christ, and believe steadfastly that he will be merciful unto thee in respect of his only Son, who suffered death for thee; and then have a good purpose to leave all sin and wickedness, and to withstand and resist the affections of thine own flesh, which ever fight against the Spirit; and to live uprightly and godly, after the will and commandment of thy heavenly Father. If thou go thus to work, surely thou shalt be heard. Thy sins shall be forgiven thee; God will show himself true in his promise, for to that end he sent his only Son into this world, that he might save sinners. Consider therefore, I say, wherefore Christ came into this world; consider also the great hatred and wrath that God beareth against sin; and again consider his great love, showed unto thee, in that he sent his only Son to suffer most cruel death, rather than that thou shouldst be damned

everlastingly.

Consider therefore this great love of God the Father, amend thy life, fly all occasions of sin and wickedness, and be loath to displease him. And in doing this thou mayest be assured that though thou hadst done all the sins of the world, they shall neither hurt nor condemn thee; for the mercy of God is greater than all the sins of the world. But we sometimes are in such a case that we think we have no faith at all, or if we have any, it is very feeble and weak. And therefore these are two things; to have faith and to have the feeling of faith. For some men would fain have the feeling of faith, but they cannot attain unto it; and yet they may not despair, but go forward in calling upon God, and it will come at length: God will open their hearts, and let them feel his goodness.

And thus may you see who are in the book of life, and who are not. For all those that are obstinate sinners, are without Christ, and so not elect to everlasting life, if they remain in their wickedness. There are none of us all but we may be saved by Christ, and therefore let us stick hard unto it, and be content to forego all the pleasures and riches of this world for his sake, who for our sake forsook all the heavenly pleasures, and came down into this miserable and wretched world, and here suffered all manner of afflictions for our sake. And therefore it is right that we should do somewhat for his sake, to show ourselves thankful unto him; and so we may assuredly be found among the first, and not among the last; that is to say, among the elect and chosen of God, that are written in the counting book of God, who are those that believe in Christ Jesus; to whom, with God the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, world without end.—Amen.

# The Parable Of The Tares,

## By Bishop Latimer, Preached On The 7th Of February, 1553.

MATTHEW XIII.—*The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way, &c.*

This is a parable or similitude wherein our Saviour compared the kingdom of God, that is, the preaching of his word, wherein consisteth the salvation of mankind, unto a husbandman who sowed good seed in his field.

But before we come unto the matter, you shall first learn to understand what this word parable, which is a Greek word, and used in the Latin and English tongue, means; that is to say, “A parable is a comparison of two things that are unlike outwardly;” while in effect they signify but one thing, for they appertain to one end; as in this place, Christ compared the word of God unto seed: which two things are unlike, but yet they teach one thing; for like as the seed is sown in the earth, so is the word of God sown in our hearts: and thus much of this word parable.

The sum of this gospel is, first he speaks of a husbandman that sowed good seed; after that he mentions an enemy that sowed evil seed. And these two manner of seeds, that is, the husbandman's seed that was good, and the enemy's seed which was naught, came up both together: so that the enemy was as busy as the other

in sowing his evil seed. And while he was busy in sowing it, it was unknown. And at the first springing up, it all seemed to be good seed, but at length the servant of the husbandman perceived the evil seed sown amongst the good; therefore he came and told his master, showing him all the matter, and required leave to gather the evil seed from amongst the other. The husbandman himself said, "Our enemy hath done this. But for all that, let it alone until the harvest, and then will I separate the good from the evil." This is the sum of this gospel.

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First, note that he saith, "When everybody was asleep, then he came and sowed his seed." Who are these sleepers? The bishops and prelates, the slothful and careless curates and ministers; they with their negligence give the devil leave to sow his seed, for they sow not their seed. That is, they preach not the word of God, they instruct not the people with wholesome doctrine, and so they give place to the devil to sow his seed. For when the devil cometh, and findeth the heart of man not weaponed nor garnished with the word of God, he forthwith possesses the same, and so getteth victory through the slothfulness of the spirituality, which they shall one day grievously repent. For the whole scripture, that is to say, both the Old and New Testament, is full of threatenings against such negligent and slothful pastors; and they shall make a heavy and grievous account one day, when no excuse shall serve, but extreme punishment shall follow, for a reward of their slothfulness.

This gospel gives occasion to speak of many things: for our Saviour himself expounded this parable unto his disciples after the people were gone from him, and he was come into the house. For the disciples were not so bold as to ask him of the meaning of this parable in the presence of the people; whereby we may learn good manners, to use in everything a good and convenient time. Also we may here learn to search and inquire earnestly, and with great diligence, for the true understanding of God's word. And when you hear a sermon and are in doubt of something, inquire



about it, and be desirous to learn; for it is written, “Whosoever hath, unto him shall be given; and he shall have abundance.” (Matt. xiii.) What means this saying?—When we hear the word of God, and have tasted somewhat thereof, and are afterwards desirous to go forward more and more, then shall we have further knowledge; for God will give us his grace to come to further understanding. And so the saying of our Saviour shall be fulfilled in us.

Now when our Saviour heard the request of his disciples, he performs their desire, and begins to expound unto them the parable, saying, “I am he that soweth good seed: the adversary, the devil, is he who soweth evil seed.” Here our Saviour, good people, makes known that he goeth about to do us good; but the devil doth quite the contrary, and he seeks to spoil and destroy us with his filthy and naughty seeds of false doctrine. The field here is the whole world. The harvest is the end of the world. The reapers are the angels of God, who are his servants: for as every lord or master has his servants to wait upon him, and to do his commandments, so the angels of God wait upon Him to do his commandments. The angels at the time of the harvest shall gather first all such as have been evil and have given occasion of wickedness, and go forward in the same without repentance or amendment of their lives. All such, I say, shall be gathered together and cast into the furnace of fire, “where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” For in the end of this wicked world, all such as have lived in the delights and pleasures of the same, and have not fought with the lusts and pleasures of their flesh, but are proud and stubborn, or bear hatred and malice unto their neighbours, or are covetous persons; also all naughty servants that do not their duties, and all those that use falsehood in buying and selling, and care not for their neighbours, but sell unto them false wares, or otherwise deceive them; all these are called “the offenders of this world,” and all such shall be cast into the furnace where shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.

In like manner, all idle persons that will not work for their living, but go about loitering and are chargeable unto others; and also drunken persons that abuse the benefits of God in dishonouring themselves, so that they lose the use of reason, and their natural wits wherewith God has endued them, and make themselves like swine and beasts; also those who break wedlock, and despise matrimony, which is instituted of God himself. Hereunto add all swearers, all usurers, all liars, and deceivers; all these are called the seed of the devil; and so they are the devil's creatures through their own wickedness.

But yet it is true that wicked men have their souls and bodies of God, for he is their Creator and Maker: but they themselves, in forsaking God and his laws, and following the devil and his instructions, make themselves members of the devil, and become his seed; therefore in the last day they shall be cast out into everlasting fire, when the trumpet shall blow, and the angels shall come and gather all those that offend from among the elect of God.

The form of judgment shall be in this manner: Christ our Saviour at the day of judgment, being appointed of God, shall come down with great triumph and honour, accompanied with all his angels and saints that departed in faith out of this world before time: they shall come with him then, and all the elect shall be gathered to him, and there they shall see the judgment; but they themselves shall not be judged, but shall be like as judges with him. After the elect are separated from the wicked, he shall give a most horrible and dreadful sentence unto the wicked, commanding his angels to cast them into everlasting fire, where they shall have such torments as no tongue can express.

Therefore our Saviour, desirous to set out the pains of hell unto us, and to make us afraid thereof, calls it fire, yea, a burning and unquenchable fire. For as there is no pain so grievous to a man as fire is, so the pains of hell pass all the pains that may be imagined by any man. There shall be sobbing and sighing,

weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, which are the tokens of unspeakable pains and griefs that shall come upon those that die in the state of damnation. For you must understand that there are but two places appointed by Almighty God, for all mankind, that is, heaven and hell. And in what state soever a man dieth, in the same he shall rise again, for there shall be no alteration or change. Those who die repentant and are sorry for their sins—who cry to God for mercy, are ashamed of their wickedness, and believe with all their hearts that God will be merciful unto them through the passion of our Saviour Christ; those who die in such a faith, shall come into everlasting life and felicity, and shall rise in the last day in a state of salvation. For look—as you die, so shall you arise. Whosoever departeth out of this world without a repentant heart, and has been a malicious and envious man, and a hater of the word of God, and so continues, and will not repent and be sorry, and call upon God with a good faith, or has no faith at all; that man shall come to everlasting damnation; and so he shall arise again at the last day. For there is nothing that can help a soul when departed out of its damnation, or hinder it of its salvation.

For when a man dies without faith in Christ, all the masses in the whole world are not able to relieve him; and so to conclude, all the travails that we have had in time past by seeking of remedy by purgatory, and all the great costs and expenses that may be bestowed upon any soul lying in the state of damnation, can avail nothing, neither can it do any good. For as I said before, the judgments of God are immutable, that is—as you die, so shall you rise. If you die in the state of salvation, you shall rise so again, and receive your body, and remain in salvation. Again, if you die in damnation, you shall rise in the same state, and receive your body, and return again to the same state, and be punished world without end, with unspeakable pains and torments. For our natural fire, in comparison to hell-fire, is like a fire painted on a wall; but that shall be so extreme, that no man is able to express

the terrible horror and grief thereof.

O what a pitiful thing is it, that man will not consider this, and leave the sin and pleasure of this world, and live godly; but is so blind and mad, that he will rather have a momentary, and a very short and small pleasure, than hearken to the will and pleasure of Almighty God; who can take away everlasting pain and woe, and give unto him everlasting felicity! That a great many of us are damned, the fault is not in God, for "God would have all men be saved." But the fault is in ourselves, and in our own madness, who had rather have damnation than salvation. Therefore, good people, consider these terrible pains in your minds, which are prepared for the wicked and ungodly, avoid all wickedness and sin: set before your eyes the wonderful joy and felicity, and the innumerable treasures which God hath laid up for you that fear and love him, and live after his will and commandments; for no tongue can express, no eye hath seen, no heart can comprehend, nor conceive the great felicity that God hath prepared for his elect and chosen, as St. Paul witnesses. Consider, therefore, I say, these most excellent treasures, and exert yourselves to obtain the fruition of the same. Continue not, neither abide nor wallow too long in your sins, like as swine lieth in the mire. Make no delay to repent of your sin, and to amend your life, for you are not so sure to have repentance in the end. It is a common saying, "Late repentance is seldom sincere." Therefore consider this thing with yourself betimes, and study to amend your life: for what avails it to have all the pleasures of the world for a while, and after that to have everlasting pain and infelicity?

Therefore let every one examine his own conscience when he finds himself unready. For all such as through the goodness of God have received faith, and then wrestling with sin, consent not unto it, but are sorry for it when they fall, and do not abide nor dwell in the same, but rise up again forthwith, and call for forgiveness thereof, through the merits of our Saviour Jesus Christ—all such are called just: that is to say, all that die with

a repentant heart, and are sorry that they have sinned, and are minded if God give them longer time to live, to amend all faults, and lead a new life; then are they just; but not through their own merits or good works. For if God should enter into judgment with us, none are able to stand before his face; neither may any of his saints be found just; neither St. John Baptist, St. Peter, nor St. Paul; no nor is the mother of our Saviour Christ herself just, if she should be judged after the rigour of the law. For all are and must be justified by the justification of our Saviour Christ, and so we must be justified, and not by our own well-doing, but our justice standeth in this, that our righteousness is forgiven us through the righteousness of Christ, for if we believe in him, then are we made righteous. For he fulfilled the law, and afterwards granted the same to be ours, if we believe that his fulfilling is our fulfilling; for the apostle Saint Paul saith, "He hath not spared his own Son, but hath given him up for us; and how then may it be, but that we should have all things with him?"

Therefore it must needs follow, that when he gave us his only Son, he gave us also his righteousness, and his fulfilling of the law. So that we are justified by God's free gift, and not of ourselves, nor by our merits: but the righteousness of Christ is accounted to be our righteousness, and through the same we obtain everlasting life, and not through our own doings; for, as I said before, if God should enter into judgment with us, we should be damned. [030]

Therefore take heed and be not proud, and be humble and low, and trust not too much in yourselves; but put your only trust in Christ our Saviour. And yet you may not utterly set aside the doing of good works; but especially look that you have always oil in readiness for your lamps, or else you may not come to the wedding, but shall be shut out, and thrust into everlasting darkness. This oil is faith in Christ, which if you lack, then all things are unsavoury before the face of God: but a great many people are much deceived, for they think themselves to have

faith when indeed they have it not. Some peradventure will say, How shall I know whether I have faith or not? Truly you shall find this in you, if you have no mind to leave sin; then sin grieves you not, but you are content to go forward in the same, and you delight in it, and hate it not, neither do you feel what sin is: when you are in such a case, then you have no faith, and therefore are like to perish everlastingly. For that man who is sore sick, and yet feels not his sickness, he is in great danger, for he has lost all his senses; so that man who has gone so far in sin, that he feels his sin no more, is like to be damned, for he is without faith.

Again, that man is in good case, who can be content to fight and strive with sin, and to withstand the devil, and his temptations, and calls for the help of God, and believes that God will help him, and make him strong to fight. That man shall not be overcome by the devil. And whosoever feels this in his heart, and so wrestles with sin, may be sure that he has faith, and is in the favour of God.

But if you will have a trial of your faith, then do this—Examine yourself concerning your enemy; he does you harm, he slanders you, or takes away your living from you. How shall you conduct yourself towards such a man? If you can find in your heart to pray for him, to love him with all your heart, and forgive him with a good-will all that he has sinned against you—if you can find this readiness in your heart, then you are one of those who have faith, if you would have him to be saved as well as yourself. And if you can do this you may argue that your sin is forgiven, and that you are none of those that shall be cast out, but shall be received and placed among the number of the godly, and shall enjoy with them everlasting life. For St. Paul saith, “Those that are just,” that is, those that are justified by faith, and exercise faith in their living and conversation, “they shall shine like unto the sun in the kingdom of God;” that is to say, they shall be in exceeding great honour and glory. For like as the sun exceeds in brightness all other works of God, and is beautiful in the eyes of

every man; so shall all the faithful be beautiful and endued with honour and glory: although in this world they are but outcasts, and accounted as “The dross and filth of the world;” but in the other world, when the angels shall gather together the wicked, and cast them into the fire, then shall the elect shine as the sun in the kingdom of God. For no man can express the honour and glory that they shall have, who will be content to suffer all things for God's sake, and reform themselves after his will; or are content to be told of their faults, and glad to amend the same, and humble themselves under the mighty hand of God.

Also the householder said unto his servants, “Let them alone until harvest.” Here you may learn that the preachers and ministers of the word of God, have not authority to compel the people with violence to goodness, although they are wicked. But they should admonish them only with the word of God, not pull the wicked out by the throat; for that is not their duty. All things must be done according as God has appointed. God has appointed the magistrates to punish the wicked; for so he saith, “Thou shalt take away the evil from amongst the people, thou shalt have no pity of him.” If he be a thief, an adulterer, or a whore-monger, away with him. But when our Saviour saith, “Let them grow;” he speaks not of the civil magistrates, for it is their duty to pull them out; but he signifies that there will be such wickedness in spite of the magistrates, and teaches that the ecclesiastical power is ordained, not to pull out the wicked with the sword, but only to admonish them with the word of God, which is called “The sword of the Spirit.” So did John Baptist, saying, “Who hath taught you to flee from the wrath of God that is at hand?”

So did Peter in the Acts of the Apostles; “Whom you have crucified,” he said unto the Jews. What follows? “They were pricked in their hearts;” contrition and repentance followed as soon as the word was preached unto them. Therefore they said, “Brethren, what shall we do? How shall we be made clean from

our sins, that we may be saved?" Then he sends them to Christ. So that it appears in this gospel, and by these examples, that the preacher has no other sword, but the sword of the word of God: with that sword he may strike them. He may rebuke their wicked living, and further he ought not to go. But kings and magistrates have power to punish with the sword the obstinate and vicious livers, and to put them to due punishment.

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Now to make an end, with this one lesson, which is, If you dwell in a town where are some wicked men that will not be reformed, nor in anywise amend their lives, as there are commonly some in every town; run not therefore out of the town, but tarry there still, and exercise patience amongst them, exhort them, whensoever occasion serves, to amendment. And do not as the fondness of the monkery first did, for they at the first made so great account of the holiness of their good life, that they could not be content to live and abide in cities and towns where sinners and wicked doers were, but thought to amend the matter; and therefore ran out into the wilderness, where they fell into great inconveniences. For some despised the communion of the body and blood of our Saviour Christ, and so fell into other errors, so God punished them for their foolishness and uncharitableness. We are born into this world, not for our own sakes only, but for every Christian's sake. They forgetting this commandment of love and charity, ran away from their neighbours, like beasts and wild horses, that cannot abide the company of men. So there have been some in our time who follow their example, separating themselves from the company of other men, and therefore God gave them a perverted judgment. Therefore when you dwell in any evil town or parish, follow not these examples; but remember that Lot, dwelling in the midst of Sodom, was nevertheless preserved from the wrath of God, and such will be preserved in the midst of the wicked. But for all that, you must not flatter them in their evil doings and naughty livings, but rebuke their sins and wickedness, and in nowise



consent unto them. Then it will be well with you here in this world, and in the world to come you shall have life everlasting: which grant both to you and me, God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.—Amen.

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# A Sermon On Isaiah XXVI.

By John Knox.

[In the Prospectus of our Publication it was stated, that one discourse, at least, would be given in each number. A strict adherence to this arrangement, however, it is found, would exclude from our pages some of the most talented discourses of our early Divines; and it is therefore deemed expedient to depart from it as occasion may require. The following Sermon will occupy two numbers, and we hope, that from its intrinsic value, its historical interest, and the illustrious name of its author, it will prove generally acceptable to our readers. For the information of those who may not be acquainted with the circumstances attending its delivery, we subjoin the following extract from a late edition of the select works of Knox:—

“Henry Darnley (king of Scotland by his marriage with queen Mary,) went sometimes to mass with the queen, and sometimes attended the protestant sermons. To silence the rumours then circulated of his having forsaken the reformed religion, he, on the 19th of August, 1565, attended service at St. Giles's church, sitting on a throne which had been prepared for him. Knox preached that day on Isaiah xxvi. 13, 14, and happened to prolong the service beyond the usual time. In one part of the sermon, he quoted these words of scripture, ‘I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them: children are their oppressors, and women rule over them.’ In another part he referred to God's displeasure against Ahab, because he did not correct his idolatrous wife Jezebel. No particular application

of these passages was made by Knox, but the king considered them as reflecting upon the queen and himself, and returned to the palace in great wrath. He refused to dine, and went out to hawking.

That same afternoon Knox was summoned from his bed to appear before the council. He went accompanied by several respectable inhabitants of the city. The secretary informed him of the king's displeasure at his sermon, and desired that he would abstain from preaching for fifteen or twenty days. Knox answered, that he had spoken nothing but according to his text, and if the church would command him either to preach or abstain, he would obey so far as the word of God would permit him. The king and queen left Edinburgh during the week following, and it does not appear that Knox was actually suspended from preaching.”

The following are Knox's reasons for the publication of this Sermon, extracted from his preface to the first edition.

“If any will ask, To what purpose this sermon is set forth? I answer, To let such as satan has not altogether blinded, see upon how small occasions great offence is now conceived. This sermon is it, for which, from my bed, I was called before the council; and after long reasoning, I was by some forbidden to preach in Edinburgh, so long as the king and queen were in town. This sermon is it, that so offends such as would please the court, and will not appear to be enemies to the truth; yet they dare affirm, that I exceeded the bounds of God's messenger. I have therefore faithfully committed unto writing whatsoever I could remember might have been offensive in that sermon; to the end, that the enemies of God's truth, as well as the professors of the same, may either note unto me wherein I have offended, or at the least cease to condemn me before they have convinced me by God's manifest word.”]

A SERMON ON ISAIAH XXVI.

ISAIAH XXXVI. 13, 14, 15, 16, &c.—*O Lord our God, other lords besides thee have had dominion over us; but by thee only will we make mention of thy name.*

*They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise; therefore hast thou visited and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish.*

*Thou hast increased the nation, O Lord, thou hast increased the nation, thou art glorified; thou hast removed it far unto the ends of the earth.*

*Lord, in trouble have they visited thee, they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them, &c.*

As the skilful mariner (being master,) having his ship tossed with a vehement tempest, and contrary winds, is compelled oft to traverse, lest that, either by too much resisting to the violence of the waves, his vessel might be overwhelmed; or by too much liberty granted, might be carried whither the fury of the tempest would, so that his ship should be driven upon the shore, and make shipwreck; even so doth our prophet Isaiah in this text, which now you have heard read. For he, foreseeing the great desolation that was decreed in the council of the Eternal, against Jerusalem and Judah, namely, that the whole people, that bare the name of God, should be dispersed; that the holy city should be destroyed; the temple wherein was the ark of the covenant, and where God had promised to give his own presence, should be burnt with fire; and the king taken, his sons in his own presence murdered, his own eyes immediately after be put out; the nobility, some cruelly murdered, some shamefully led away captives; and finally, the whole seed of Abraham rased, as it were, from the face of the earth. The prophet, I say, fearing these horrible calamities, doth, as it were, sometimes suffer himself, and the people committed to his charge, to be carried away with the violence of the tempest, without further resistance than by pouring forth his and their dolorous complaints before the majesty of God, as in the 13th, 17th, and 18th verses of this

present text we may read. At other times he valiantly resists the desperate tempest, and pronounces the fearful destruction of all such as trouble the church of God; which he pronounces that God will multiply, even when it appears utterly to be exterminated. But because there is no final rest to the whole body till the Head return to judgment, he exhorts the afflicted to patience, and promises a visitation whereby the wickedness of the wicked shall be disclosed, and finally recompensed in their own bosoms. [035]

These are the chief points of which, by the grace of God, we intend more largely at this present to speak;

*First*, The prophet saith, “O Lord our God, other lords besides thee have ruled us.”

This, no doubt, is the beginning of the dolorous complaint, in which he complains of the unjust tyranny that the poor afflicted Israelites sustained during the time of their captivity. True it is, that the prophet was gathered to his fathers in peace, before this came upon the people: for a hundred years after his decease the people were not led away captive; yet he, foreseeing the assurance of the calamity, did before-hand indite and dictate unto them the complaint, which afterward they should make. But at the first sight it appears, that the complaint has but small weight; for what new thing was it, that other lords than God in his own person ruled them, seeing that such had been their government from the beginning? For who knows not, that Moses, Aaron, and Joshua, the judges, Samuel, David, and other godly rulers, were men, and not God; and so other lords than God ruled them in their greatest prosperity.

For the better understanding of this complaint, and of the mind of the prophet, we must, *first*, observe from whence all authority flows; and, *secondly*, to what end powers are appointed by God: which two points being discussed, we shall better understand, what lords and what authority rule beside God, and who they are in whom God and his merciful presence rules.

The *first* is resolved to us by the words of the apostle, saying,

“There is no power but of God.” David brings in the eternal God speaking to judges and rulers, saying, “I have said, ye are gods, and sons of the Most High.” (Psal. lxxxii.) And Solomon, in the person of God, affirmeth the same, saying, “By me kings reign, and princes discern the things that are just.” From which place it is evident, that it is neither birth, influence of stars, election of people, force of arms, nor finally, whatsoever can be comprehended under the power of nature, that makes the distinction betwixt the superior power and the inferior, or that establishes the royal throne of kings; but it is the only and perfect ordinance of God, who willeth his terror, power, and majesty, partly to shine in the thrones of kings, and in the faces of judges, and that for the profit and comfort of man. So that whosoever would study to deface the order of government that God has established, and allowed by his holy word, and bring in such a confusion, that no difference should be betwixt the upper powers and the subjects, does nothing but avert and turn upside down the very throne of God, which he wills to be fixed here upon earth; as in the end and cause of this ordinance more plainly shall appear: which is the *second* point we have to observe, for the better understanding of the prophet's words and mind.

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The end and cause then, why God imprints in the weak and feeble flesh of man this image of his own power and majesty, is not to puff up flesh in opinion of itself; neither yet that the heart of him, that is exalted above others, should be lifted up by presumption and pride, and so despise others; but that he should consider he is appointed lieutenant to One, whose eyes continually watch upon him, to see and examine how he behaves himself in his office. St. Paul, in few words, declares the end wherefore the sword is committed to the powers, saying, “It is to the punishment of the wicked doers, and unto the praise of such as do well.” Rom. xiii.

Of which words it is evident, that the sword of God is not committed to the hand of man, to use as it pleases him, but only

to punish vice and maintain virtue, that men may live in such society as is acceptable before God. And this is the true and only cause why God has appointed powers in this earth.

For such is the furious rage of man's corrupt nature, that, unless severe punishment were appointed and put in execution upon malefactors, better it were that man should live among brutes and wild beasts than among men. But at this present I dare not enter into the description of this common-place; for so should I not satisfy the text, which by God's grace I purpose to explain. This only by the way—I would that such as are placed in authority should consider, whether they reign and rule by God, so that God rules them; or if they rule without, besides, and against God, of whom our prophet here complains.

If any desire to take trial of this point, it is not hard; for Moses, in the election of judges, and of a king, describes not only what persons shall be chosen to that honour, but also gives to him that is elected and chosen, the rule by which he shall try himself, whether God reign in him or not, saying, “When he shall sit upon the throne of his kingdom, he shall write to himself an exemplar of this law, in a book by the priests and Levites; it shall be with him, and he shall lead therein, all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, and to keep all the words of his law, and these statutes, that he may do them; that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left.” Deut. xvii. [037]

The same is repeated to Joshua, in his inauguration to the government of the people, by God himself, saying, “Let not the book of this law depart from thy mouth, but meditate in it day and night, that thou mayest keep it, and do according to all that which is written in it. For then shall thy way be prosperous, and thou shall do prudently.” Josh. i.

The *first* thing then that God requires of him, who is called to the honour of a king, is, The knowledge of his will revealed in his word.

The *second* is, An upright and willing mind, to put in execution such things as God commands in his law, without declining to the right, or to the left hand.

Kings then have not an absolute power, to do in their government what pleases them, but their power is limited by God's word; so that if they strike where God has not commanded, they are but murderers; and if they spare where God has commanded to strike, they and their throne are criminal and guilty of the wickedness which abounds upon the face of the earth, for lack of punishment.

O that kings and princes would consider what account shall be craved of them, as well of their ignorance and misknowledge of God's will, as for the neglecting of their office! But now, to return to the words of the prophet. In the person of the whole people he complains unto God, that the Babylonians (whom he calls, "other lords besides God," both because of their ignorance of God, and by reason of their cruelty and inhumanity,) had long ruled over them in great rigour, without pity or compassion upon the ancient men, and famous matrons: for they, being mortal enemies to the people of God, sought by all means to aggravate their yoke, yea, utterly to exterminate the memory of them, and of their religion, from the face of the earth.

After the first part of this dolorous complaint, the prophet declares the protestation of the people, saying, "Nevertheless in thee shall we remember thy name," (others read it, But we will remember thee only, and thy name;) but in the Hebrew there is no conjunction copulative in that sentence. The mind of the prophet is plain, namely, that notwithstanding the long sustained affliction, the people of God declined not to a false and vain religion, but remembered God, who sometime appeared to them in his merciful presence; which although they saw not then, yet they would still remember his name—that is, they would call to mind the doctrine and promise, which formerly they heard, although in their prosperity they did not sufficiently glorify God,



who so mercifully ruled in the midst of them. The temptation, no doubt, of the Israelites was great in those days; they were carried captives from the land of Canaan, which was to them the gage and pledge of God's favour towards them: for it was the inheritance that God promised to Abraham, and to his seed for ever. The league and covenant of God's protection appeared to have been broken—they lamentably complain that they saw not their accustomed signs of God's merciful presence. The true prophets were few, and the abominations used in Babylon were exceedingly many: and so it might have appeared to them, that in vain it was that they were called the posterity of Abraham, or that ever they had received the law, or form of right religion from God. That we may the better feel it in ourselves, the temptation, I say, was even such, as if God should utterly destroy all order and policy that this day is within his church—that the true preaching of the word should be suppressed—the right use of sacraments abolished—idolatry and papistical abomination erected up again; and therewith, that our bodies should be taken prisoners by Turks, or other manifest enemies of God, and of all godliness. Such, I say, was their temptation; how notable then is this their confession that in bondage they make, namely, That they will remember God only; although he has appeared to turn his face from them, they will remember his name, and will call to mind the deliverance promised!

Hereof have we to consider, what is our duty, if God bring us to the like extremity, as for our offences and unthankfulness justly he may. This confession is not the fair flattering words of hypocrites, lying and bathing in their pleasures; but it is the mighty operation of the Spirit of God, who leaves not his own destitute of some comfort, in their most desperate calamities. This then is our duty, not only to confess our God in time of peace and quietness, but he chiefly craves, that we avow him in the midst of his and our enemies; and this is not in us to do, but it behoves that the Spirit of God work in us, above all power

of nature; and thus we ought earnestly to meditate before the battle rise more vehement, which appears not to be far off. But now must we somewhat more deeply consider these judgments of God.

This people dealt with thus, as we have heard, were the only people upon the face of the earth to whom God was rightly known; among them only were his laws, statutes, ordinances, and sacrifices, used and put in practice; they only invoked his name; and to them alone had he promised his protection and assistance. What then should be the cause, that he should give them over unto this great reproach; and bring them into such extremity that his own name, in them, should be blasphemed? The prophet Ezekiel, who saw this horrible destruction, forespoken by Isaiah, put into just execution, gives an answer in these words, "I gave unto them laws that were good, in the which whosoever should walk, should live in them; but they would not walk in my ways, but rebelled against me; and therefore, I have given unto them laws that are not good, and judgments, in the which they shall not live." (Ezek. xx.) The writers of the books of Kings and Chronicles declare this in more plain words, saying, "The Lord sent unto them his prophets, rising early, desiring of them to return unto the Lord, and to amend their wicked ways, for he would have spared his people, and his tabernacle; but they mocked his servants, and would not return unto the Lord their God to walk in his ways." (2 Kings xvii.) Yea, Judah itself kept not the precepts of the Lord God, but walked in the manners and ordinances of Israel; that is, of such as then had declined to idolatry from the days of Jeroboam; and therefore, the Lord God abhorred the whole seed of Israel, that is, the whole body of the people; he punished them, and gave them into the hands of those that spoiled them, and so he cast them out from his presence.

Hereof it is evident, that their disobedience unto God, and unto the voices of his prophets, was the cause of their destruction. Now have we to take heed how we should use the good laws of

God; that is, his will revealed unto us in his word; and that order of justice, which by him, for the comfort of man, is established amongst men. There is no doubt but that obedience is the most acceptable sacrifice unto God, and that which above all things he requires; so that when he manifests himself by his word, men should follow according to their vocation and commandment. Now so it is, that God, by that great Pastor our Lord Jesus, now manifestly in his word calls us from all impiety, as well of body as of mind, to holiness of life, and to his spiritual service; and for this purpose he has erected the throne of his mercy among us, the true preaching of his word, together with the right administration of his sacraments: but what our obedience is, let every man examine his own conscience, and consider what statutes and laws we would have to be given unto us.

Wouldst thou, O Scotland! have a king to reign over thee in justice, equity, and mercy? Subject thou thyself to the Lord thy God, obey his commandments, and magnify thou the word that calleth unto thee, "This is the way, walk in it;" (Isa. xxx.) and if thou wilt not, flatter not thyself; the same justice remains this day in God to punish thee, Scotland, and thee Edinburgh especially, which before punished the land of Judah, and the city of Jerusalem. Every realm or nation, saith the prophet Jeremiah, that likewise offendeth, shall be likewise punished. (Jer. ix.) But if thou shalt see impiety placed in the seat of justice above thee, so that in the throne of God (as Solomon complains, Eccles. iii.) reigns nothing but fraud and violence, accuse thine own ingratitude and rebellion against God; for that is the only cause why God takes away "the strong man and the man of war, the judge and the prophet, the prudent and the aged, the captain and the honourable, the counsellor and the cunning artificer; and I will appoint, saith the Lord, children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them. Children are extortioners of my people, and women have rule over them." Isa. iii.

If these calamities, I say, apprehend us, so that we see nothing

but the oppression of good men, and of all godliness, and that wicked men without God reign above us; let us accuse and condemn ourselves, as the only cause of our own miseries. For if we had heard the voice of the Lord our God, and given upright obedience unto the same, God would have multiplied our peace, and would have rewarded our obedience before the eyes of the world. But now let us hear what the prophet saith further: "The dead shall not live," saith he, "neither shall the tyrants, nor the dead arise, because thou hast visited and scattered them, and destroyed all their memory," verse 14.

From this 14th verse, unto the end of the 19th, it appears, that the prophet observes no order; yea, that he speaks things directly repugning<sup>6</sup> one to another; for, *first*, he saith, "The dead shall not live:" afterwards, he affirms, "Thy dead men shall live." *Secondly*, he saith, "Thou hast visited and scattered them, and destroyed all their memory." Immediately after, he saith, "Thou hast increased thy nation, O Lord, thou hast increased thy nation. They have visited thee, and have poured forth a prayer before thee."

Who, I say, would not think, that these are things not only spoken without good order and purpose, but also manifestly repugning one to another? For to live, and not to live, to be so destroyed that no memorial remains, and to be so increased that the coasts of the earth shall be replenished, seems to import plain contradiction. For removing of this doubt, and for better understanding the prophet's mind, we must observe, that the prophet had to do with divers sorts of men; he had to do with the conjured<sup>7</sup> and manifest enemies of God's people, the Chaldeans or Babylonians; even so, such as profess Christ Jesus have to do with the Turks and Saracens. He had to do with the seed of Abraham, whereof there were three sorts. The ten tribes were all degenerated from the true worshipping of God, and corrupted

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<sup>6</sup> Opposing.

<sup>7</sup> Combined.

with idolatry, as this day are our pestilent papists in all realms [041] and nations; there rested only the tribe of Judah at Jerusalem, where the form of true religion was observed, the law taught, and the ordinances of God outwardly kept. But yet there were in that body, I mean, in the body of the visible church, a great number that were hypocrites, as this day yet are among us that profess the Lord Jesus, and have refused papistry; also not a few that were licentious livers; some that turned their back to God, that is, had forsaken all true religion; and some that lived a most abominable life, as Ezekiel saith in his vision; and yet there were some godly, as a few wheat-corns, oppressed<sup>8</sup> and hid among the multitude of chaff: now, according to this diversity, the prophet keeps divers purposes, and yet in most perfect order.

And first, after the first part of the complaint of the afflicted as we have heard, in vehemency of spirit he bursts forth against all the proud enemies of God's people, against all such as trouble them, and against all such as mock and forsake God, and saith, "The dead shall not live, the proud giants shall not rise; thou hast scattered them, and destroyed their memorial." In which words he contends against the present temptation and dolorous state of God's people, and against the insolent pride of such as oppressed them; as if the prophet should say, O ye troublers of God's people! howsoever it appears to you in this your bloody rage, that God regards not your cruelty, nor considers what violence you do to his poor afflicted, yet shall you be visited, yea, your carcasses shall fall and lie as stinking carrion upon the face of the earth, you shall fall without hope of life, or of a blessed resurrection; yea, howsoever you gather your substance, and augment your families, you shall be so scattered, that you shall leave no memorial of you to the posterities to come, but that which shall be execrable and odious.

Hereof the tyrants have their admonition, and the afflicted

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<sup>8</sup> Covered over, weighed down.

church inestimable comfort: the tyrants that oppress, shall receive the same end which they did who have passed before; that is, they shall die and fall with shame, without hope of resurrection, as is aforesaid. Not that they shall not arise to their own confusion and just condemnation; but that they shall not recover power, to trouble the servants of God; neither yet shall the wicked arise, as David saith, in the counsel of the just. Now the wicked have their councils, their thrones, and finally handle<sup>9</sup> (for the most part) all things that are upon the face of the earth; but the poor servants of God are reputed unworthy of men's presence, envied and mocked; yea, they are more vile before these proud tyrants, than is the very dirt and mire which is trodden under foot. But in that glorious resurrection, this state shall be changed; for then shall such as now, by their abominable living and cruelty, destroy the earth, and molest God's children, see Him whom they have pierced; they shall see the glory of such as now they persecute, to their terror and everlasting confusion. The remembrance hereof ought to make us patient in the days of affliction, and so to comfort us, that when we see tyrants in their blind rage tread under foot the saints of God, we despair not utterly, as if there were neither wisdom, justice, nor power above in the heavens, to repress such tyrants, and to redress the dolours of the unjustly afflicted. No, brethren, let us be assured, that the right hand of the Lord will change the state of things that are most desperate. In our God there is wisdom and power, in a moment to change the joy and mirth of our enemies into everlasting mourning, and our sorrows into joy and gladness that shall have no end.

Therefore, in these apparent calamities, (and marvel not that I say *apparent* calamities, for he that sees not a fire is begun, that shall burn more than we look for, unless God of his mercy quench it,<sup>10</sup> is more than blind,) let us not be discouraged, but with unfeigned repentance let us return to the Lord our

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<sup>9</sup> Manage.

<sup>10</sup> Alluding to the political troubles of that day.

God; let us accuse and condemn our former negligence, and steadfastly depend upon his promised deliverance; so shall our temporal sorrows be converted into everlasting joy. The doubt that might be moved concerning the destruction of those whom God exalteth, shall be discussed, if time will suffer, after we have passed throughout the text. The prophet, now proceeds, and saith, "Thou hast increased the nations, O Lord, thou hast increased the nations; thou art made glorious, thou hast enlarged all the coasts of the earth. Lord, in trouble," &c. verses 15, 16.

In these words the prophet gives consolation to the afflicted, assuring them, that how horrible soever the desolation should be, yet should the seed of Abraham be so multiplied, that it should replenish the coasts of the earth; yea, that God should be more glorified in their affliction, than he was during the time of their prosperity. This promise, no doubt, was incredible when it was made; for who could have been persuaded, that the destruction of Jerusalem should have been the means whereby the nation of the Jews should have been increased? seeing that much rather it appeared, that the overthrow of Jerusalem should have been the very abolishing of the seed of Abraham: but we must consider, to what end it was that God revealed himself to Abraham, and what is contained in the promise of the multiplication of his seed, and the benediction promised thereto.

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First, God revealed himself to Abraham, to let all flesh understand, by the means of his word, that God first called man, and revealed himself unto him; that flesh can do nothing but rebel against God; for Abraham, no doubt, was an idolater, before God called him from Ur of the Chaldees. The promise was made, that the seed of Abraham should be multiplied as the stars of heaven, and as the sand of the sea; which is not simply to be understood of his natural seed, although it was sometimes greatly increased; but rather of such as should become the spiritual seed of Abraham, as the apostle speaks. Now, if we be able to prove, that the right knowledge of God, his wisdom, justice, mercy, and

power, were more amply declared in their captivity, than at any time before, then we cannot deny, but that God, even when to man's judgment he had utterly rased them from the face of the earth, did increase the nation of the Jews, so that he was glorified in them, and extended the coasts of the earth for their habitation. And, for the better understanding hereof, let us shortly try the histories from their captivity to their deliverance; and after the same, to the coming of the Messiah.

No doubt satan intended, by the dispersion of the Jews, so to have profaned the whole seed of Abraham, that among them neither should have remained the true knowledge of God, nor yet the spirit of sanctification, but that all should have come to a like contempt of God. For, I pray you, for what purpose was it, that Daniel and his fellows were taken into the king's court, were commanded to be fed at the king's table, and were put to the schools of their diviners, soothsayers, and astrologers? It may be thought that it proceeded of the king's humanity, and of a zeal which he had, that they should be brought up in virtue and good learning; and I doubt not but it was so understood by a great number of the Jews. But the secret practice of the devil was understood by Daniel, when he refused to defile himself with the king's meat, which was forbidden to the seed of Abraham in the law of their God. Well, God began shortly after to show himself mindful of his promise made by his prophet, and to trouble Nebuchadnezzar himself, by showing to him a vision in his dream; which the more troubled him, because he could not forget the terror of it, neither yet could he remember what the vision and the parts thereof were. Whereupon were called all the diviners, interpreters of dreams, and soothsayers, of whom the king demanded, if they could let him understand what he had dreamed: but while they answered, that such a question used not to be demanded of any soothsayer or magician, for the resolution thereof only appertained to the gods, whose habitation was not with men, the charge was given, that they all should be slain:



and amongst the rest, Daniel, whose innocence the devil envied, was sought to have suffered the same judgment. He claimed, and asked time to disclose that secret; (I only touch the history, to let you see by what means God increased his knowledge) which being granted, the vision was revealed unto him; he shewed the same unto the king, with the true interpretation of it; adding, that the knowledge thereof came not from the stars, but only from the God of Abraham, who alone was and is the true God. Which being understood, the king burst forth in his confession, saying, "Of a truth your God is the most excellent of all gods, and he is Lord of kings, and only he that revealeth secrets, seeing that thou couldst open this secret." And when Nebuchadnezzar after that, being puffed up with pride by the counsel of his wicked nobility, would make an image, before which he would that all tongues and nations subject to him should make adoration; and when Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, would not obey his unjust commandment, and so were cast into the flaming furnace of fire; and yet by God's angels were so preserved, that no smell of fire remained on their persons or garments; this same king gave a more notable confession, saying, "The Lord God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, is to be praised, who hath sent his angels, and delivered his worshippers that put trust in him, who have done against the king's commandment; who have rather given their own bodies to torment, than that they would worship another god, except their own God. By me therefore is there made a decree, that whosoever shall blaspheme the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, he shall be cut in pieces, and his house shall be made detestable." Dan. iii. [044]

Thus we see how God began, even almost in the beginning of their captivity, to notify his name, to multiply his knowledge, and set forth as well his power as his wisdom, and true worshipping, by those that were taken prisoners, yea, that were despised, and of all men contemned; so that the name and fear of the God of Abraham was never before notified to so many realms and

nations. This wondrous work of God proceeded from one empire to another; for Daniel being promoted to great honour by Darius king of the Persians and Medes, fell into a desperate danger; for he was committed to prison among lions, because he was found breaking the king's injunction; not that the king desired the destruction of God's servants, but because the corrupt idolaters, who in hatred of Daniel had procured that law to be made, urged the king against his nature; but God, by his angel, stopped the lions' mouths, and so preserved his servant; which being considered, with the sudden destruction of Daniel's enemies by the same lions, king Darius, besides his own confession, wrote to all people, tongues, and nations, after this form; “It is decreed by me, That in all the dominions of my kingdom, men shall fear and reverence the God of Daniel, because he is the Living God, abiding for ever, whose kingdom shall not be destroyed, and his dominion remaineth; who saveth and delivereth, and sheweth signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the lions.”

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This knowledge was yet further increased in the days of Cyrus, who giving freedom to the captives to return to their own native country, gave this confession; “Thus saith Cyrus the king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord God of heaven given unto me, and hath commanded me, that a house be built to him in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whosoever therefore of you, that are of his people, let the Lord his God be with him, and let him pass up to Jerusalem, and let him build the house of the Lord God of Israel; for he only is God that is in Jerusalem.” (Ezra i.) Time will not suffer me to treat the points of this confession, neither yet did I for that purpose adduce the history; but only to let us see, how constantly God kept his promise in increasing his people, and in augmenting his true knowledge beyond men's expectation, when both they that were the seed of Abraham, and the religion which they professed, appeared utterly to have been extinguished. I say, he

brought freedom out of bondage, light out of darkness, and life out of death. I am not ignorant, that the building of the temple, and the reparation of the walls of Jerusalem, were long stayed, so that the work had many enemies; but the hand of God so prevailed in the end, that a decree was made by Darius, (by him I suppose that succeeded to Cambyses,) not only that all things necessary for the building of the temple, and for the sacrifices that were to be burnt there, should be ministered upon the king's charges; but also, that "whosoever should hinder that work, or change that decree, that a tree should be taken out of his house, and that he should be hanged thereupon; yea, that his house should be made a dunghill," (Ezra vi.); and thereto he added a prayer, saying, "The God of heaven, who hath placed his name there, root out every king and people, (O that kings and nations would understand!) that shall put his hand, either to change or to hurt this house of God that is in Jerusalem." And so, in despite of satan, was the temple built, the walls repaired, and the city inhabited; and in the most desperate dangers it was preserved, until the promised Messiah, the glory of the second temple, came, manifested himself to the world, suffered and rose again, according to the scriptures; and so, by sending forth his gospel from Jerusalem, replenished the earth with the true knowledge of God; and so did God in perfection increase the nation, and the spiritual seed of Abraham.

Wherefore, dear brethren, we have no small consolation, if the state of all things be this day rightly considered. We see in what fury and rage the world, for the most part, is now raised, against the poor church of Jesus Christ, unto which he has proclaimed liberty, after the fearful bondage of that spiritual Babylon, in which we have been holden captives longer space than Israel was prisoner in Babylon itself: for if we shall consider, upon the one part, the multitude of those that live wholly without Christ; and, upon the other part, the blind rage of the pestilent papists; what shall we think of the small number of them that profess Christ

Jesus, but that they are as a poor sheep, already seized in the claws of the lion; yea, that they, and the true religion which they profess, shall in a moment be utterly consumed?

But against this fearful temptation, let us be armed with the promise of God, namely, that he will be the protector of his church; yea, that he will multiply it, even when to man's judgment it appears utterly to be exterminated. This promise has our God performed, in the multiplication of Abraham's seed, in the preservation of it when satan laboured utterly to have destroyed it, and in deliverance of the same, as we have heard, from Babylon. He hath sent his Son Christ Jesus, clad in our flesh, who hath tasted of all our infirmities, (sin excepted,) who hath promised to be with us to the end of the world; he hath further kept promise in the publication, yea, in the restitution of his glorious gospel. Shall we then think that he will leave his church destitute in this most dangerous age? Only let us cleave to his truth, and study to conform our lives to the same, and he shall multiply his knowledge, and increase his people. But now let us hear what the prophet saith more:

“Lord, in trouble have they visited thee, they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them,” verse 16.

The prophet means, that such as in the time of quietness did not rightly regard God nor his judgments, were compelled, by sharp corrections, to seek God; yea, by cries and dolorous complaints to visit him. True it is, that such obedience deserves small praise before men; for who can praise, or accept that in good part, which comes as it were of mere compulsion? And yet it is rare, that any of God's children do give unfeigned obedience, until the hand of God turn them. For if quietness and prosperity make them not utterly to forget their duty, both towards God and man, as David for a season, yet it makes them careless, insolent, and in many things unmindful of those things that God chiefly craves of them; which imperfection being espied, and the danger that thereof might ensue, our heavenly Father visits the sins of

his children, but with the rod of his mercy, by which they are moved to return to their God, to accuse their former negligence, and to promise better obedience in all times hereafter; as David [047] confessed, saying, "Before I fell in affliction I went astray, but now will I keep thy statutes."

But yet, for the better understanding of the prophet's mind, we may consider how God doth visit man, and how man doth visit God; and what difference there is betwixt the visitation of God upon the reprobate, and his visitation upon the chosen.

God sometimes visits the reprobate in his hot displeasure, pouring upon them his plagues for their long rebellion; as we have heard before, that he visited the proud, and destroyed their memory. At other times God is said to visit his people, being in affliction, to whom he sends comfort or promise of deliverance, as he visited the seed of Abraham, when oppressed in Egypt. And Zacharias said, that God had visited his people, and sent unto them hope of deliverance, when John the Baptist was born. But of none of these visitations our prophet here speaks, but of that only which we have already touched; namely, when God layeth his correction upon his own children, to call them from the venomous breasts of this corrupt world, that they suck not in over great abundance the poison thereof; and he doth, as it were, wean them from their mother's breasts, that they may learn to receive other nourishment. True it is, that this weaning (or speaning, as we term it) from worldly pleasure, is a thing strange to the flesh. And yet it is a thing so necessary to God's children, that, unless they are weaned from the pleasures of the world, they can never feed upon that delectable milk of God's eternal verity; for the corruption of the one either hinders the other from being received, or else so troubles the whole powers of man, that the soul can never so digest the truth of God as he ought to do.

Although this appears hard, yet it is most evident; for what can we receive from the world, but that which is in the world? What that is, the apostle John teaches; saying, "Whatsoever is in

the world, is either the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, or the pride of life." (1 John ii.) Now, seeing that these are not of the Father, but of the world, how can it be, that our souls can feed upon chastity, temperance, and humility, so long as our stomachs are replenished with the corruption of these vices?

Now so it is, that flesh can never willingly refuse these fore-named, but rather still delights itself in every one of them; yea, in them all, as the examples are but too evident.

[048] It behoves therefore, that God himself shall violently pull his children from these venomous breasts, that when they lack the liquor and poison of the world, they may visit him, and learn to be nourished of him. Oh if the eyes of worldly princes should be opened, that they might see with what humour and liquor their souls are fed, while their whole delight consists in pride, ambition, and the lusts of the corrupt flesh! We understand then how God doth visit men, as well by his severe judgments, as by his merciful visitation of deliverance from troubles, or by bringing trouble upon his chosen for their humiliation; and now it remains to understand how man visits God. Man doth visit God, when he appears in his presence, be it for the hearing of his word, or for the participation of his sacraments; as the people of Israel, besides the observation of their sabbaths and daily oblations, were commanded thrice a-year to present themselves before the presence of the tabernacle; and as we do, and us often as we present ourselves to the hearing of the word. For there is the footstool, yea, there is the face and throne of God himself, wheresoever the gospel of Jesus Christ is truly preached, and his sacraments rightly ministered.

But men may on this sort visit God hypocritically; for they may come for the fashion, they may hear with deaf ears; yea, they may understand, and yet never determine with themselves to obey that which God requires: and let such men be assured, that He who searches the secrets of hearts will be avenged of all such; for nothing can be more odious to God, than to mock him

in his own presence. Let every man therefore examine himself, with what mind, and what purpose, he comes to hear the word of God; yea, with what ear he hears it, and what testimony his heart gives unto him, when God commands virtue, and forbids impiety.

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Repinest thou when God requires obedience? Thou hearest to thine own condemnation. Mockest thou at God's threatenings? Thou shalt feel the weight and truth of them, albeit too late, when flesh and blood cannot deliver thee from his hand. But the visitation, whereof our prophet speaks, is only proper to the sons of God, who, in the time when God takes from them the pleasures of the world, or shows his angry countenance unto them, have recourse unto him, and, confessing their former negligence, with troubled hearts, cry for his mercy. This visitation is not proper to all the afflicted, but appertains only to God's children: for the reprobates can never have access to God's mercy in time of their tribulation, and that because they abuse his long patience, as well as the manifold benefits they receive from his hands; for as the same prophet heretofore saith, "Let the wicked obtain mercy, yet shall he never learn wisdom, but in the land of righteousness," that is, where the true knowledge of God abounds, "he will do wickedly." Which is a crime above all others abominable; for to what end is it that God erects his throne among us, but that we should fear him? Why does he reveal his holy will unto us, but that we should obey it? Why does he deliver us from trouble, but that we should be witnesses unto the world, that he is gracious and merciful?

Now, when men hearing their duty, and knowing what God requires of them, do malapertly fight against all equity and justice, what I pray you, do they else, but make manifest war against God? Yea, when they have received from God such deliverance, that they cannot deny but that God himself hath in his great mercy visited them, and yet they continue wicked as before; what deserve they but effectually to be given over unto a

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reprobate sense, that they may headlong run to ruin, both of body and soul? It is almost incredible that a man should be so enraged against God, that neither his plagues, nor yet his mercy showed, should move him to repentance; but because the Scriptures bear witness of the one and the other, let us cease to marvel, and let us firmly believe, that such things as have been, are even at present before our eyes, albeit many, blinded by affection, cannot see them.

Ahab, as it is written in the book of the Kings, received many notable benefits of the hand of God, who visited him in divers sorts, sometimes by his plagues, sometimes by his word, and sometimes by his merciful deliverance. He made him king, and, for the idolatry used by him and his wife, he plagued the whole of Israel by famine; he revealed to him his will, and true religion, by the prophet Elijah; he gave unto him sundry deliverances, but one most special, when proud Benhadad came to besiege Samaria, and was not content to receive Ahab's gold, silver, sons, daughters, and wives, but also required, that his servants should have at their pleasure whatsoever was delectable in Samaria. True it is, that his elders and people willed him not to hear the proud tyrant, but who made unto him the promise of deliverance? And who appointed and put his army in order? Who assured him of victory? The prophet of God only, who assured him, that by the servants of the princes of the provinces, who in number were only two hundred thirty-and-two, he should defeat the great army, in which there were two-and-thirty kings, with all their forces. And as the prophet of God promised, so it came to pass; victory was obtained, not once only, but twice, and that by the merciful visitation of the Lord.

But how did Ahab visit God again for his great benefit received? Did he remove his idolatry? Did he correct his idolatrous wife Jezebel? No, we find no such thing; but the one and the other we find to have continued and increased in their former impiety: but what was the end thereof? The last



visitation of God was, that dogs licked the blood of the one, and did eat the flesh of the other. In few words then we understand, what difference there is betwixt the visitation of God upon the reprobate, and his visitation upon his chosen. The reprobate are visited, but never truly humbled, nor yet amended; the chosen being visited, they sob, and they cry unto God for mercy; which being obtained, they magnify God's name, and afterwards manifest the fruits of repentance. Let us therefore that bear these judgments of our God, call for the assistance of his Holy Spirit, that howsoever it pleaseth him to visit us, we may stoop under his merciful hands, and unfeignedly cry to him when he corrects us; and so shall we know in experience, that our cries and complaints were not in vain. But let us hear what the prophet saith further: [051]

“Like as a woman with child, that draweth near her travail, is in sorrow, and crieth in her pains, so have we been in thy sight, O Lord; we have conceived, we have borne in vain, as though we should have brought forth the wind. Salvations were not made to the earth, neither did the inhabitants of the earth fall,” verses 17, 18.

This is the second part of the prophet's complaint, in which he, in the person of God's people, complains, that of their great affliction there appeared no end. This same similitude is used by our Master Jesus Christ; for when he speaks of the troubles of his church, he compares them to the pains of a woman travailing in child-birth. But it is to another end; for there he promises exceeding and permanent joy after a sort, though it appear trouble. But here is the trouble long and vehement, albeit the fruit of it was not suddenly espied. He speaks no doubt of that long and dolorous time of their captivity, in which they continually laboured for deliverance, but obtained it not before the complete end of seventy years. During which time, the earth, that is, the land of Judah, which sometimes was sanctified unto God, but was then given to be profaned by wicked people, got no help, nor perceived any deliverance: for the inhabitants of

the world fell not; that is, the tyrants and oppressors of God's people were not taken away, but still remained and continued blasphemers of God, and troublers of his church. But because I perceive the hours to pass more swiftly than they have seemed at other times, I must contract that which remains of this text into certain points.

The prophet first contends against the present despair; afterwards he introduces God himself calling upon his people; and, last of all, he assures his afflicted, that God will come, and require account of all the blood-thirsty tyrants of the earth.

First, Fighting against the present despair, he saith, "Thy dead shall live, even my body (or with my body) shall they arise; awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs," verse 19.

The prophet here pierces through all impediments that nature could object; and, by the victory of faith, he overcomes, not only the common enemies, but the great and last enemy of all, death itself; for this would he say, Lord, I see nothing for thy chosen, but misery to follow misery, and one affliction to succeed another; yea, in the end I see, that death shall devour thy dearest children. But yet, O Lord! I see thy promise to be true, and thy love to remain towards thy chosen, even when death appears to have devoured them: "For thy dead shall live, yea, not only shall they live, but my very dead carcass shall arise;" and so I see honour and glory to succeed this temporal shame, I see permanent joy to come after trouble, order to spring out of this terrible confusion; and, finally, I see that life shall devour death, so that death shall be destroyed, and so thy servants shall have life. This, I say, is the victory of faith, when to the midst of death, through the light of God's word, the afflicted see life. Hypocrites, in the time of quietness and prosperity, can generally confess, that God is true to his promises; but bring them to the extremity, and there the hypocrite ceases further to trust to God, than he seeth natural means, whereby God useth to work. But the true

faithful, when all hope of natural means fail, flee to God himself, and to the truth of his promise, who is above nature; yea, whose works are not so subject to the ordinary course of nature, that when nature fails, his power and promise fail also therewith.

Let us further observe, That the prophet here speaks not of all the dead in general, but saith, "Thy dead, O Lord, shall live:" in which words he makes a difference betwixt those that die in the Lord, and those that die in their natural corruption, and in the old Adam. Die in the Lord can none, except those that live in him, (I mean, of those that attain to the years of discretion;) and none live in him, but those that, with the apostle, can say, "I live, and yet not I, but Christ Jesus that dwelleth in me: the life that I now live, I have by the faith of the Son of God." (Gal. ii.) Not that I mean, that the faithful have at all hours such a sense of the life everlasting, that they fear not the death and the troubles of this life; no, not so; for the faith of God's children is weak, yea, and in many things imperfect. But I mean, that such as in death, and after death shall live, must communicate in this life with Jesus Christ, and must be regenerated by the seed of life; that is, by the word of the everlasting God, which whosoever despises, refuses life and joy everlasting.

The prophet transfers all the promises of God to himself, saying, "Even my dead body shall arise;" and immediately after, gives commandment and charge to the dwellers in the dust, that is, to the dead carcasses of those that were departed, (for the spirit and soul of man dwells not in the dust.) "That they should awake, that they should sing and rejoice;" for they should arise and spring up from the earth, even as the herbs do, after they have received the dew from above.

Time will not suffer that these particulars be so largely treated as ought, and as I gladly would do; therefore let us consider, that the prophet, in transferring the power and promise of God to himself, does not claim to himself any particular prerogative above the people of God, as that he alone should live and arise,

and not they also; but he does it, to let them understand that he taught a doctrine whereof he was certain; yea, and whereof they should have experience after his death. As if he should say, My words appear to you now to be incredible, but the day will come, that I shall be taken from you, my carcase shall be inclosed in the bosom of the earth; and you shall be led away captives to Babylon, where you shall remain many days and years, as it were buried in your sepulchres.

But then call to mind what I said unto you before hand, that my body shall arise; even so shall you rise from your graves out of Babylon, and be restored to your own country, and city of Jerusalem; this, I doubt not, is the true meaning of the prophet. The charge that he gives to the dwellers in the dust, is to express the power of God's word, whereby he not only gives life, where death apparently had prevailed; but also, by it, he calls things that are not, even as though they were. True it is, that the prophet Isaiah saw not the destruction of Jerusalem, much less could he see the restitution of it with his corporeal eyes; but he leaves this, as it were, in testament with them—that when they were in the extremity of all bondage, they should call to mind what the prophet of God had before spoken.

And lest that his doctrine, and this promise of God made unto them by his mouth, should have been forgotten, as we are ever prone and ready to forget God's promises when we are pressed with any sorrow, God raised up unto them, in the midst of their calamity, his prophet Ezekiel, unto whom, among many other visions, he gave this—The hand of the Lord first led him in a place, which was full of dry and dispersed bones. (Ezek. xxxvii.) The question was demanded of the prophet, If these bones, being wondrous dry, could live? The prophet answered, The knowledge thereof appertained unto God. Charge was given unto him, that he should speak unto the dry bones, and say, “Thus saith the Lord God to these bones, Behold, I will give you breath, and you shall live: I will give unto you sinews, flesh, and

skin, and you shall live.” And while the prophet spake as he was commanded, he heard a voice, and he saw every bone join its fellow; he saw them covered with flesh and skin, albeit there was no spirit of life in them. He was commanded again to speak, and to say, “Thus saith the Lord God, Come, O Spirit, from the four quarters, and blow on these that are slain, that they may live.” And as he prophesied, the spirit of life came; they lived, and stood upon their feet. Then the Lord interprets what this vision meant, saying “O son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, Our bones are dried, our hope is [054] perished, we are plainly cut off. But behold, saith the Lord, I will open your graves, I will bring you forth of them, ye shall live, and come unto the land of Israel, and ye shall know that I am the Lord.”

This vision, I say, given to the prophet, and by the prophet preached to the people, when they thought that God had utterly forgotten them, compelled them more diligently to advert to what the former prophets had spoken. It is no doubt but that they carried with them both the prophecy of Isaiah and Jeremiah, so that the prophet Ezekiel is a commentary to these words of Isaiah, where he saith, “Thy dead, O Lord, shall live, with my body they shall arise.” The prophet brings in this similitude of the dew, to answer unto that part of their fidelity, who can believe no further of God's promises than they are able to apprehend by natural judgment; as if he would say, Think ye this impossible, that God should give life unto you, and bring you to an estate of a commonwealth again, after that ye are dead, and as it were rased from the face of the earth? But why do you not consider what God worketh from year to year in the order of nature? Sometimes you see the face of the earth decked and beautified with herbs, flowers, grass, and fruits; again you see the same utterly taken away by storms, and the vehemence of the winter: what does God to replenish the earth again, and to restore the beauty thereof? He sends down his small and soft dew, the drops whereof, in their

descending, are neither great nor visible, and yet thereby are the pores and secret veins of the earth, which before by vehemence of frost and cold were shut up, opened again, and so does the earth produce again the like herbs, flowers, and fruits. Shall you then think, that the dew of God's heavenly grace will not be as effectual in you to whom he hath made his promise, as it is in the herbs and fruits which from year to year bud forth and decay? If you do so, the prophet would say your unbelief is inexcusable; because you neither rightly weigh the power, nor the promise of your God.

The like similitude the apostle Paul uses against such as called the resurrection in doubt, because by natural judgment they could not apprehend that flesh once putrified, and dissolved as it were into other substance, should rise again, and return again to the same substance and nature: "O fool," saith he, "that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die; and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare corn, as it falleth, of wheat, or some other, but God giveth it a body as it pleaseth him, even to every seed his own body." In which words and sentence, the apostle sharply rebukes the gross ignorance of the Corinthians, who began to call in doubt the chief article of our faith, the resurrection of the flesh after it was once dissolved, because that natural judgment, as he said, reclaimed thereto.<sup>11</sup> He reproveth, I say, their gross ignorance, because they might have seen and considered some proof and document thereof in the very order of nature; for albeit the wheat, or other corn, cast in the earth, appears to die or putrify, and so to be lost, yet we see that it is not perished, but that it fructifies according to God's will and ordinance.

Now, if the power of God be so manifest in raising up of the fruits of the earth, unto which no particular promise is made by God, what shall be his power and virtue in raising up our bodies,

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<sup>11</sup> Cried out against it.

seeing that thereto he is bound by the solemn promise of Jesus Christ his Eternal Wisdom, and the Verity itself that cannot lie? Yea, seeing that the members must once communicate with the glory of the Head, how shall our bodies, which are flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bones, lie still for ever in corruption, seeing that our Head, Jesus Christ, is now exalted in his glory? Neither yet is this power and good-will of God to be restrained unto the last and general resurrection only, but we ought to consider it in the marvellous preservation of his church, and in the raising up of the same from the very bottom of death, when by tyrants it has been oppressed from age to age.

Now, of the former words of the prophet, we have to gather this comfort; that if at any time we see the face of the church within this realm so defaced, as I think it shall be sooner than we look for—when we shall see, I say, virtue to be despised, vice to be maintained, the verity of God to be impugned, lies and men's inventions holden in authority—and finally, when we see the true religion of our God, and the zealous observers of the same, trodden under the feet of such as in their heart say, that “There is no God,” (Psal. xiv.); let us then call to mind what have been the wondrous works of our God from the beginning—that it is his proper office to bring light out of darkness, order out of confusion, life out of death: and finally, that this is He that calleth things that are not, even as if they were, as before we have heard. And if in the day of our temptation, which in my judgment approaches fast, we are thus armed, if our incredulity cannot utterly be removed, yet shall it so be corrected, that damnable despair oppress us not. But now let us hear how the prophet proceeds:—

“Come, thou my people, enter within thy chamber, shut thy door after thee, hide thyself a very little while, until the indignation pass over.”

Here the prophet brings in God, lovingly, calling upon his people to come to himself, and to rest with him, until such [056]

time as the fury and sharp plagues should be executed upon the wicked and disobedient. It may appear at the first sight, that all these words of the prophet, in the person of God, calling the people unto rest, are spoken in vain; for we neither find chambers, nor rest, more prepared for the dearest children of God, so far as man's judgment can discern, than for the rebellious and disobedient; for such as fell not by the edge of the sword, or died not of pestilence, or by hunger, were either carried captives unto Babylon, or else departed afterwards into Egypt, so that none of Abraham's seed had either chamber or quiet place to remain in within the land of Canaan. For the resolution hereof, we must understand, That albeit the chambers whereunto God called his chosen be not visible, yet notwithstanding they are certain, and offer unto God's children a quiet habitation in spirit, howsoever the flesh be travailed and tormented.

The chambers then are God's sure promises, unto which God's people are commanded to resort; yea, within which they are commanded to close themselves in the time of greatest adversity. The manner of speaking is borrowed from that judgment and foresight which God has printed in this our nature; for when men espy great tempests appearing to come, they will not willingly remain uncovered in the fields, but straightway they will draw them to their houses or holds, that they may escape the vehemence of the same; and if they fear any enemy pursues them, they will shut their doors, to the end that the enemy should not suddenly have entry.

After this manner God speaks to his people; as if he should say, The tempest that shall come upon this whole nation shall be so terrible, that nothing but extermination shall appear to come upon the whole body. But thou my people, that hearest my word, believest the same, and tremblest at the threatenings of my prophets, now, when the world does insolently resist—let such, I say, enter within the secret chamber of my promises, let them contain themselves quietly there; yea, let them shut the



door upon them, and suffer not infidelity, the mortal enemy of my truth, and of my people that depend thereupon, to have free entry to trouble them, yea, further to murder, in my promise; and so shall they perceive that my indignation shall pass, and that such as depend upon me shall be saved.

Thus we may perceive the meaning of the prophet; whereof we have first to observe, that God acknowledges them for his people who are in the greatest affliction; yea, such as are reputed unworthy of men's presence are yet admitted within the secret chamber of God. Let no man think that flesh and blood can suddenly attain to that comfort; and therefore most expedient it is, that we be frequently exercised in meditation of the same. [057] Easy it is, I grant, in time of prosperity, to say, and to think, that God is our God, and that we are his people; but when he has given us over into the hands of our enemies, and turned, as it were, his back unto us, then, I say, still to reclaim him to be our God, and to have this assurance, that we are his people, proceeds wholly from the Holy Spirit of God, as it is the greatest victory of faith, which overcomes the world; for increase whereof, we ought continually to pray.

This doctrine we shall not think strange, if we consider how suddenly our spirits are carried away from our God, and from believing his promise. So soon as any great temptation apprehends us, then we begin to doubt if ever we believed God's promise, if God will fulfil them to us, if we abide in his favour, if he regards and looks upon the violence and injury that is done unto us; and a multitude of such cogitations which before lurked quietly in our corrupted hearts, burst violently forth when we are oppressed with any desperate calamity. Against which this is the remedy—once to apprehend, and still to retain God to be our God, and firmly to believe, that we are his people whom he loves, and will defend, not only in affliction, but even in the midst of death itself.

Again, Let us observe, That the judgments of our God never

were, nor yet shall be so vehement upon the face of the earth, but that there has been, and shall be, some secret habitation prepared in the sanctuary of God, for some of his chosen, where they shall be preserved until the indignation pass by; and that God prepares a time, that they may glorify him again, before the face of the world, which once despised them. And this ought to be unto us no small comfort in these appearing dangers, namely, that we are surely persuaded, that how vehement soever the tempest shall be, it yet shall pass over, and some of us shall be preserved to glorify the name of our God, as is aforesaid.

Two vices lurk in this our nature: the one is, that we cannot tremble at God's threatenings, before the plagues apprehend us, albeit we see cause most just why his fierce wrath should burn as a devouring fire; the other is, that when calamities before pronounced, fall upon us, then we begin to sink down in despair, so that we never look for any comfortable end of the same.

To correct this our mortal infirmity, in time of quietness we ought to consider what is the justice of our God, and how odious sin is; and, above all, how odious idolatry is in His presence, who has forbidden it, and who has so severely punished it in all ages from the beginning: and in the time of our affliction we ought to consider, what have been the wondrous works of our God, in the preservation of his church when it hath been in uttermost extremity. For never shall we find the church humbled under the hands of traitors, and cruelly tormented by them, but we shall find God's just vengeance fall upon the cruel persecutors, and his merciful deliverance shewed to the afflicted. And, in taking of this trial, we should not only call to mind the histories of ancient times, but also we should diligently mark what notable works God hath wrought, even in this our age, as well upon the one as upon the other. We ought not to think, that our God bears less love to his church this day, than what he has done from the beginning; for as our God in his own nature is immutable, so his love towards his elect remains always unchangeable. For as in

Christ Jesus he hath chosen his church, before the beginning of all ages; so by him will he maintain and preserve the same unto the end. Yea, he will quiet the storms, and cause the earth to open her mouth, and receive the raging floods of violent waters, cast out by the dragon, to drown and carry away the woman, which is the spouse of Jesus Christ, unto whom God for his own name's sake will be the perpetual Protector. Rev. xiii.

This saw that notable servant of Jesus Christ, Athanasius, who being exiled from Alexandria by that blasphemous apostate Julian the emperor, said unto his flock, who bitterly wept for his envious banishment, "Weep not, but be of good comfort, for this little cloud will suddenly vanish." He called both the emperor himself and his cruel tyranny a little cloud; and albeit there was small appearance of any deliverance to the church of God, or of any punishment to have apprehended the proud tyrants, when the man of God pronounced these words, yet shortly after God did give witness, that those words did not proceed from flesh nor blood, but from God's very Spirit. For not long after, being in warfare, Julian received a deadly wound, whether by his own hand, or by one of his own soldiers, the writers clearly conclude not; but casting his own blood against the heaven, he said, "At last thou hast overcome, thou Galilean:" so in despite he termed the Lord Jesus. And so perished that tyrant in his own iniquity; the storm ceased, and the church of God received new comfort.

Such shall be the end of all cruel persecutors, their reign shall be short, their end miserable, and their name shall be left in execrations to God's people; and yet shall the church of God remain to God's glory, after all storms. But now shortly, let us come to the last point:

"For behold," saith the prophet, "the Lord will come out of his place, to visit the iniquity of the inhabitants of the earth upon them; and the earth shall disclose her blood, and shall no more hide her slain." (Verse 21.) Because that the final end of the troubles of God's chosen shall not be, before the Lord Jesus shall

return to restore all things to their full perfection.

The prophet brings forth the eternal God, as it were, from his own place and habitation, and therewith shows the cause of his coming to be, that he might take account of all such as have wrought wickedly; for that he means, where he saith, "He will visit the iniquity of the inhabitants of the earth upon them." And lest any should think the wrong doers are so many, that they cannot be called to an account, he gives unto the earth as it were an office and charge, to bear witness against all those that have wrought wickedly, and chiefly against those that have shed innocent blood from the beginning; and saith, "That the earth shall disclose her blood, and shall no more hide her slain men."

If tyrants of the earth, and such as delight in the shedding of blood, should be persuaded that this sentence is true, they would not so furiously come to their own destruction; for what man can be so enraged, that he would willingly do even before the eyes of God that which might provoke his Majesty to anger, yea, provoke him to become his enemy for ever, if he understood how fearful a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God?

The cause then of this blind fury of the world is the ignorance of God, and that men think that God is but an idol; and that there is no knowledge above, that beholds their tyranny; nor yet justice that will, nor power that can, repress their impiety. But the Spirit of truth witnesses the contrary, affirming, that as the eyes of the Lord are upon the just, and as his ears are ready to receive their sobbing and prayers, so is his visage angry against such as work iniquity; he hateth and holdeth in abomination every deceitful and blood-thirsty man, whereof he has given sufficient document from age to age, in preserving the one, or at least in avenging their cause, and in punishing the other.

Where it is said, "That the Lord will come from his place, and that he will visit the iniquity of the inhabitants of the earth upon them, and that the earth shall disclose her blood;" we have to consider, what most commonly has been, and what shall be, the

condition of the church of God, namely, that it is not only hated, mocked, and despised, but that it is exposed as a prey unto the fury of the wicked; so that the blood of the children of God is spilt like unto water upon the face of the earth.

The understanding whereof, albeit it is unpleasant to the flesh, yet to us it is most profitable, lest that we, seeing the cruel treatment of God's servants, begin to forsake the spouse of Jesus Christ, because she is not so dealt with in this unthankful world, as the just and upright dealings of God's children do deserve. But contrariwise, for mercy they receive cruelty, for doing good to many, of all the reprobate they receive evil; and this is decreed in God's eternal council, that the members may follow the trace of the Head; to the end that God in his just judgment should finally condemn the wicked. For how should he punish the inhabitants of the earth, if their iniquity deserve it not? How should the earth disclose our blood, if it should not be unjustly spilt? We must then commit ourselves into the hands of our God, and lay down our necks; yea, and patiently suffer our blood to be shed, that the righteous Judge may require account, as most assuredly he will, of all the blood that hath been shed, from the blood of Abel the just, till the day that the earth shall disclose the same. I say, every one that sheds, or consents to shed the blood of God's children, shall be guilty of the whole; so that all the blood of God's children shall cry vengeance, not only in general, but also in particular, upon every one that has shed the blood of any that unjustly suffered. [060]

And if any think it strange, that such as live this day can be guilty of the blood that was shed in the days of the apostles, let them consider, that the Verity itself pronounced, That all the blood that was shed from the days of Abel, unto the days of Zacharias, should come upon the unthankful generation that heard his doctrine and refused it. (Matt. xxiii.)

The reason is evident; for as there are two heads and captains that rule over the whole world, namely, Jesus Christ, the Prince

of justice and peace, and satan, called the prince of the world; so there are but two armies that have continued battle from the beginning, and shall fight unto the end. The quarrel which the army of Jesus Christ sustains, and which the reprobate persecute, is the same, namely, The eternal truth of the eternal God, and the image of Jesus Christ printed in his elect—so that whosoever in any age persecutes any one member of Jesus Christ for his truth's sake, subscribes, as it were with his hand, to the persecution of all that have passed before him.

And this ought the tyrants of this age deeply to consider; for they shall be guilty, not only of the blood shed by themselves, but of all, as is said, that has been shed for the cause of Jesus Christ from the beginning of the world.

Let the faithful not be discouraged, although they be appointed as sheep to the slaughter-house; for He, for whose sake they suffer, shall not forget to avenge their cause. I am not ignorant that flesh and blood will think that kind of support too late; for we had rather be preserved still alive, than have our blood avenged after our death. And truly, if our felicity stood in this life, or if temporal death should bring unto us any damage, our desire in that behalf were not to be disallowed or condemned: but seeing that death is common to all, and that this temporal life is nothing but misery, and that death fully joins us with our God, and gives unto us the possession of our inheritance, why should we think it strange to leave this world and go to our Head and sovereign Captain, Jesus Christ?

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Lastly, We have to observe this manner of speaking, where the prophet saith, that “the earth shall disclose her blood:” in which words the prophet would accuse the cruelty of those that dare so unmercifully and violently force, from the breasts of the earth, the dearest children of God, and cruelly cut their throats in her bosom, who is by God appointed the common mother of mankind, so that she unwillingly is compelled to open her mouth and receive their blood.

If such tyranny were used against any woman, as violently to pull her infant from her breasts, cut the throat of it in her own bosom, and compel her to receive the blood of her dear child in her own mouth, all nations would hold the act so abominable, that the like had never been done in the course of nature. No less wickedness commit they that shed the blood of God's children upon the face of their common mother, the earth, as I said before. But be of good courage, O little and despised flock of Christ Jesus! for He that seeth your grief, hath power to revenge it; he will not suffer one tear of yours to fall, but it shall be kept and reserved in his bottle, till the fulness thereof be poured down from heaven, upon those that caused you to weep and mourn. This your merciful God, I say, will not suffer your blood for ever to be covered with the earth; nay, the flaming fires that have licked up the blood of any of our brethren; the earth that has been defiled with it, I say, with the blood of God's children; for otherwise, to shed the blood of the cruel blood-shedders, is to purge the land from blood, and as it were to sanctify it: the earth, I say, shall purge herself of it, and show it before the face of God; yea, the beasts, fowls, and other creatures whatsoever, shall be compelled to render that which they have received, be it flesh, blood, or bones, that appertained to thy children, O Lord! which altogether thou shalt glorify, according to thy promise, made to us in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, thy well-beloved Son; to whom, with thee, and the Holy Ghost, be honour, praise, and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Let us now humble ourselves in the presence of our God, and from the bottom of our hearts let us desire him to assist us with the power of his Holy Spirit; that albeit, for our former negligence, God gives us over into the hands of others than such

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tyrants, as what reward he has laid in store for such as continue in his fear to the end. That it would further please him to assist, that albeit we see his church so diminished, that it appears to be brought, as it were, to utter extermination, we may be assured, that in our God there is great power and will, to increase the number of his chosen, until they are enlarged to the uttermost parts of the earth. Give us, O Lord! hearts to visit thee in time of affliction; and albeit we see no end of our dolours, yet our faith and hope may conduct us to the assured hope of that joyful resurrection, in which we shall possess the fruit of that for which we now labour. In the mean time, grant unto us, O Lord! to repose ourselves in the sanctuary of thy promise, that in thee we may find comfort, till this thy great indignation, begun amongst us, may pass over, and thou thyself appear to the comfort of thine afflicted, and to the terror of thine and our enemies.

*Let us pray with heart and mouth,*

Almighty God, and merciful Father, &c. Lord, into thy hands I commend my spirit; for the terrible roaring of guns,<sup>12</sup> and the noise of armour, do so pierce my heart, that my soul thirsteth to depart.

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*The last day of August, 1565, at four of the clock in the afternoon, written indigestedly, but yet truly so far as memory would serve, of those things that in public I spake on Sunday, August 19; for which I was discharged<sup>13</sup> to preach for a time.*

Be merciful to thy flock, O Lord! and at thy good pleasure put an end to my misery.

JOHN KNOX.

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<sup>12</sup> The cattle of Edinburgh was shooting against the exiled for Christ Jesus' sake.

<sup>13</sup> Forbidden.



# “It Is I, Be Not Afraid.”

## Extracted From Knox's Admonition To England.

“Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good comfort, it is I, be not afraid.” The natural man that cannot understand the power of God, would have desired some other present comfort in so great a danger; as, either to have had the heavens opened, to show unto them such light in that darkness, that Christ might have been fully known by his own face; or else, that the winds and raging waves of the seas suddenly should have ceased; or some other miracle which had been subject to all their senses, whereby they might have perfectly known that they were delivered from all danger. And truly, it had been the same to Christ Jesus to have done any of these, or any greater work, as to have said, “It is I, be not afraid:” but willing to teach us the dignity and effectual power of his most holy word, he uses no other instrument to pacify the great and horrible fear of his disciples but his comfortable word, and lively voice. And this is not done only at one time, but whensoever his church is in such a strait and perplexity, that nothing appears but extreme calamity, desolation, and ruin; then the first comfort that ever it receives, is by the means of his word and promise; as may appear in the troubles and temptations of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, and Paul.

To Abraham was given no other defence, after he had discomfited four kings, whose posterity and lineage, no doubt, he, being a stranger, greatly feared, but only this promise of God made to him by his holy word, “Fear not, Abraham, I am thy buckler;” that is, thy protection and defence.

The same we find of Isaac, who flying from the place of his accustomed habitation, compelled thereto by hunger, got no other comfort nor conduct but this promise only, "I will be with thee."

In all the journeys and temptations of Jacob the same is to be espied; as when he fled from his father's house for fear of his brother Esau; when he returned from Laban; and when he feared the inhabitants of the region of the Canaanites and Perizzites for the slaughter of the Shechemites committed by his sons; he received no other defence, but only God's word and promise.

And this is most evident in Moses, and in the afflicted church under him when Moses himself was in such despair, that he was bold to chide with God, saying, "Why hast thou sent me? For since that time I have come to Pharaoh, to speak in thy name, he hath oppressed this people; neither yet hast thou delivered thy people."

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This same expostulation of Moses declares how sorely he was tempted; yea, and what opinion he had conceived of God; that is, That God was either impotent, and could not deliver his people from such a tyrant's hand; or else, That he was mutable, and unjust in his promises. And this same, and sorer temptations, assaulted the people; for in anguish of heart, they both refused God and Moses. And what means did God use to comfort them in that great extremity? Did he straightway suddenly kill Pharaoh, the great tyrant?—No. Did he send them a legion of angels to defend and deliver them?—No such thing: but he only recites and beats into their ears his former promises to them, which oftentimes they had before: and yet the rehearsal of the same wrought so mightily in the heart of Moses, that not only was bitterness and despair removed away, but also he was inflamed with such boldness, that without fear he went in again to the presence of the king, after he had been threatened and repulsed by him.

This I write, beloved in the Lord, since you know the word of

God not only to be that whereby heaven and earth were created, but also to be the power of God to salvation to all that believe, the bright lantern to the feet of those who by nature walk in darkness, the life to those that by sin are dead, a comfort to such as are in tribulation, the tower of defence to such as are most feeble, the wisdom and great felicity of such as delight in the same. And, to be short, you know God's word to be of such efficacy and strength, that thereby sin is purged, death vanquished, tyrants suppressed; and, finally, the devil, the author of all mischief, overthrown and confounded. This, I say, I write, that you, knowing this of the holy word, and most blessed gospel and voice of God, which once you have heard, I trust to your comfort, may now, in this hour of darkness, and most raging tempest, thirst and pray, that you may hear yet once again this amiable voice of our Saviour Christ, "Be of good comfort, it is I, fear not." And also, that you may receive some consolation from that blessed gospel which before you have professed, assuredly knowing, that God shall be no less merciful unto you, than he has been to others afflicted for his name's sake before you; and albeit God speedily removes not this horrible darkness, neither suddenly pacifies this tempest, yet shall he not suffer his tossed ship to be drowned.



## Footnotes



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