

Christ the Way, the Truth, and the Life

Christ the Way, the Truth, and the Life

John Brown of Wamphray



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. . . for instruction in righteousness . . .

Christ the Way, the Truth, and the Life
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Publisher's Preface

John Brown of Wamphray was born in Kirkcudbrightshire in the south of Scotland, probably around the years 1609 or 1610.¹ In 1630, he graduated with an MA from Edinburgh. His mother was a friend of Samuel Rutherford (1600–1661), who served as the minister of Anwoth, Kirkcudbrightshire, from 1627 until his deprivation in 1636. In 1637, Rutherford wrote to Jean (or Jane) Brown about her son, “I had always (as I said often to you) a great love to dear Mr. John Brown, because I thought I saw Christ in him more than in his brethren.”² Some time afterward, Brown was ordained as a

1. Sources on John Brown's life are few. See Thomas Lockerby, *A Sketch of the Life of the Rev. John Brown, Sometime Minister of the Gospel in Wamphray* (Edinburgh: Thornton & Collie, 1839); Ian B. Doyle, “John Brown of Wamphray: A Study of His Life, Work, and Thought” (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 1956). Some biographical information on Brown may also be found in William Crookshank, *The History of the State and Sufferings of the Church of Scotland from the Restoration to the Revolution*, 2 vols. (Paisley: George Caldwell, 1789); Samuel Rutherford, *Letters of Samuel Rutherford* (London: Oliphants, [1904]); William Steven, *The History of the Scottish Church, Rotterdam* (Edinburgh: Waugh and Innes, 1833); Robert Wodrow, *History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland from the Restoration to the Revolution*, 4 vols. (Glasgow: Blackie & Son, 1835); Hew Scott, *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae: The Succession of Ministers in the Church of Scotland from the Reformation* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1917), 2:224–25. This preface is adapted from Joel R. Beeke, “John Calvin and John Brown of Wamphray on Justification,” in *Reformed Orthodoxy in Scotland: Essays on Scottish Theology, 1560–1775*, ed. Aaron C. Denlinger (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015), chapter 11.

2. Rutherford, *Letters*, 159.

minister of the Church of Scotland and settled in Wamphray, Dumfriesshire—a village of perhaps a few hundred people near the River Annan.

During Brown's ministry there, Scotland and England entered the Solemn League and Covenant (1643) to unify the kingdoms in Reformed religion. Brown would later write, "These lands did thus enter into covenant with the great God of heaven and earth."³ The Westminster Assembly put hands and feet on this pact by writing the Directory for the Public Worship of God, the Confession of Faith, and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms.

After the restoration of Charles II to the monarchy, Scottish Covenanters began to suffer for insisting that Britain hold to the Directory, Confession, and Catechisms to which its authorities had bound themselves by covenant.⁴ On November 6, 1662, Brown was imprisoned in the Tolbooth for calling some ministers "perjured knaves and villains" because they acknowledged the authority of Andrew Fairfoul, just installed as the first archbishop of Glasgow. William Crookshank writes, "Great were the hardships he underwent in prison, for he was denied even the necessaries of life," even to the point that "he was brought almost to the gates of death."⁵ On December 11, the authorities granted Brown's petition for release, but only on condition of banishment from Scotland.

Brown arrived in the Netherlands on March 12, 1663, where he spent the rest of his life. He assisted the minister of the Scottish church in Rotterdam and devoted himself to theological and historical writing for the Covenanters' cause.

3. John Brown, *An Apologetical Relation of the Particular Sufferings of the Faithful Ministers and Professours of the Church of Scotland, Since August. 1660* (n.p.: 1665), 63.

4. Brown, *Apologetical Relation*, 74.

5. Crookshank, *History*, 1:159.

His work evidently irritated the Scottish authorities, for in 1676 King Charles II wrote to the States-General of the United Netherlands requesting that they expel him from their territories. Brown, however, remained.

Brown was counted a blessing by many Reformed Christians among both Scots and Dutch. One of his fellow Scottish exiles in Rotterdam, Robert MacWard, said that his sermons had a “pure gospel texture, breathing nothing but faith in Christ and communion with him.”⁶ He was highly respected by Dutch Further Reformation divines such as Wilhelmus à Brakel and Jacobus Koelman.⁷ His writings supported the Covenanter view of church and state,⁸ defended the Puritan view of the Sabbath and the moral law, opposed the teachings of the Quakers and Richard Baxter, and promoted experiential, Christ-centered Christianity. Copies of his defense of the Sabbath were in the New England library of Thomas Prince (1687–1758), minister of the Old South Church in Boston, and in the library of Yale in 1808.⁹ The work was also cited by the eccentric English theological writer John Hutchinson (1674–1737)¹⁰ and Thomas Bell (1733–1802), minister in Glasgow, in a polemic against “popery.”¹¹

One of Brown's last public acts was the ordination of Richard Cameron in 1679, who perished back in Scotland a year

6. Lockerby, *Sketch of the Life of the Rev. John Brown*, 177.

7. Steven, *History of the Scottish Church, Rotterdam*, 72.

8. Iain B. Doyle, “The Doctrine of the Church in the Later Covenanting Period,” in *Reformation and Revolution*, ed. Duncan Shaw (Edinburgh: St. Andrews Press, 1967), 212–36.

9. *Catalogue of the Library of Rev. Thomas Prince* (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1846), 8; *Catalogue of Books in the Library of Yale-College, New-Haven* (New Haven: Oliver Steele, 1808), 52.

10. J[ohn] H[utchinson], *The Covenant in the Cherubim* (London: J. Hodges, 1749), 7:9.

11. Thomas Bell, *The Standard of the Spirit Lifted Up against the Enemy Coming in Like a Flood* (Glasgow: William Smith, 1780), 210.

later. Brown died in September 1679. His will indicated that one hundred guilders from the sale of his books should be donated to the church for the help of the poor.¹² Robert Wodrow (1679–1734) said in retrospect that Brown was “a man of very great learning, warm zeal, and remarkable piety.”¹³

John Brown of Wamphray is to be distinguished from several other theological authors named John Brown, including:

- John Brown of Priesthill (c. 1627–1685), a Covenanter victim who had a remarkable ministry among children.
- John Brown of Haddington (1722–1787), associate synod minister and theological writer, best known for his *The Self-Interpreting Bible* and *A Dictionary of the Holy Bible*, but also the able author of twenty-seven additional works.¹⁴
- John Brown of Whitburn (1754–1832), oldest son of John Brown of Haddington and a well-known devotional author of several books¹⁵ and editor of the *Select Remains* of his father.

12. Lockerby, *Sketch of the Life of the Rev. John Brown*, 181.

13. Wodrow, *History*, 1:304.

14. John Brown of Haddington wrote *An Essay towards an Easy... Explication of the Assembly's Shorter Catechism; A Compendious View of Natural and Revealed Religion; A Compendious History of the British Churches in England, Scotland, Ireland, and America; A Concordance to the Holy Scriptures; A Harmony of Scripture Prophecies, and History of Their Fulfilment; The Christian, the Student, and Pastor; Practical Piety Exemplified; Sacred Tropology; The Christian Journal, or Common Incidents, Spiritual Instructors; Six Letters on Gospel Preaching; Ten Letters on the Exemplary Behaviour of Ministers; The Young Christian, or the Pleasantness of Early Piety*; and two catechisms for children (*Big Brown* and *Little Brown*).

15. John Brown of Whitburn wrote *Gospel Truth; Memoirs of James Herve; Memoir of Thomas Bradbury; Religious Letters; Christian Experience, Evangelical Beauties of Hugh Binning; Evangelical Beauties of Archbishop of Leighton*; and *Memorials of the Nonconformist Ministers of the Seventeenth Century*.

- John Brown of Edinburgh (1784–1858), son of John Brown of Whitburn and grandson of John Brown of Haddington, minister in the United Presbyterian Church, Professor of Exegetical Theology, and well-known author of expository works on Psalm 18, Isaiah 53, John 17, Romans, 1 Corinthians 15, Galatians, Hebrews, 1 Peter, 2 Peter 1, and the Lord's Prayer, plus other books.¹⁶
- John Brown of Bedford (1830–1906), an English Congregationalist who pastored the Bunyan Church in Bedford for the last forty years of his active ministry and authored several works,¹⁷ as well as being editor of the works of John Bunyan.

Though John Brown of Wamphray is little known today, he held a prominent place in Scottish theology. James Walker wrote, "Brown of Wamphray was, without doubt, the most important theologian" in Scotland at the time.¹⁸ John Macleod considered Brown to be perhaps "our greatest divine between Rutherford and Halyburton," that is, in the latter part of seventeenth-century Scotland.¹⁹

Brown's blending of doctrinal truth and Christ-centered piety is most clearly displayed in his *Christ the Way, the Truth, and the Life*. First published in Rotterdam in 1677, this experiential

16. John Brown of Edinburgh wrote *Exposition of the Discourses and Sayings of Our Lord; The Christian Pastor's Manual; Discourses Suited to the Administration of the Lord's Supper; Christian Hope; The Mourner's Friend; Religion and the Means of Its Attainment; and Forgetfulness of God*.

17. John Brown of Bedford wrote *John Bunyan, His Life, Times, and Work; The Pilgrim Fathers of New England; and Puritan Preaching in England; Eras of Nonconformity*.

18. James Walker, *Theology and Theologians of Scotland, Chiefly of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, 2nd rev. ed. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1888), 107.

19. John Macleod, *Scottish Theology in Relation to Church History since the Reformation* (1946; repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), 148.

series of sermons on John 14:6 has been reprinted several times in Edinburgh from 1740 to 1839. The original subtitle is: *A Short Discourse, Pointing Forth the Way of Making Use of Christ for Justification, and Especially and More Particularly for Sanctification in All Its Parts, From John xiv. verse 6. Wherein Several Cases of Conscience Are Briefly Answered, Chiefly Touching Sanctification.* This volume richly deserves reprinting again. It is an insightful spiritual advisory on living the Christian life as it ought to be lived—centering on Christ, mortifying sin, loving the souls of others, and glorifying God. Here is biblical, Reformed, Puritan spirituality at its best.

Would you learn the art of continually fleeing by faith to Christ for your justification and sanctification? Read and reread this precious volume, filled with experiential truth about how to go to Christ continually for every spiritual need. Use it as a devotional gem and pray for the Holy Spirit to grant you a growing, daily making use of Christ by faith.

—Joel R. Beeke

Dedication

To the right honorable and religious lady, the Lady Strathnaver.

Madam,

Jesus Christ Himself, being the chief cornerstone in whom all the building [is] fitly framed together, grows to a holy temple in the Lord. As it ought to be the principal concern of all who have not [sat] down on this side of Jordan to satisfy their souls (once created for and in their own nature requiring in order to satisfaction, spiritual, immortal, and incorruptible substance) with husks prepared for beasts, to be built in and on this cornerstone for a habitation of God through the Spirit—so it ought to be the main design and work of such as would be approve[d] of God as faithful laborers and coworkers with God to be following the example of him who determined not to know anything among those he wrote to save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Oh! This noble, heart-ravishing, soul-satisfying, mysterious theme, Jesus Christ crucified, the short compend[ium] of that incontrovertibly great mystery of godliness—God manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached to the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory, in which are things the angels desire to look to or with vehement desire bend, as it were, their necks and bow down their heads to look and peep into (as the word used [in] 1 Peter 1:12 imports)—is a subject for angelical heads to pry into [and] for the most indefatigable

and industrious spirits to be occupied about. The searching into and studying of this one truth, in reference to a closing with it as our life, is an infallible mark of a soul divinely enlightened and endued with spiritual and heavenly wisdom. For though it be to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, yet to them who are called it is Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. Oh what depths of the manifold wisdom of God are there in this mystery! The more it is preached, known, and believed aright, the more it is understood to be beyond understanding and to be what it is—a mystery. Did ever any preacher or believer get a broad look of this boundless ocean in which infinite wisdom; love that passes all understanding; grace without all dimensions; justice that is admirable and tremendous; and God in His glorious properties, condescensions, high and noble designs, and in all His perfections and virtues flow over all banks? Or were they ever admitted to a prospect hereof in the face of Jesus Christ and were not made to cry out, “Oh the depth and height, the breadth and length! Oh the inconceivable and incomprehensible boundlessness of all infinitely transcendent perfections!”? Did ever any with serious diligence, as knowing their life lay in it, study this mysterious theme and were not in full conviction of soul, made to say, the more they promoted¹ in this study and the more they descended in their divings into this depth or soared upward in their mounting speculations in this height, [that] they found it the more an unsearchable mystery? The study of other themes (which, alas, many who think it below them to be happy are too much occupied in), when it has wasted the spirits, wearied the mind, worn the body, and rarified the brain to the next degree

1. *Promoved*: to move forward.

to a distraction, what satisfaction can it give as to what is attained or encouragement as to future attainments? And when, as to both these, something is had, and the poor soul puffed up with an airy and fanciful apprehension of having obtained some great thing, but in truth a great nothing, or a nothing pregnant with vanity and vexation of spirit, foolish twins causing no gladness to the father, for “he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow” (Eccl. 1:18)—what peace can all yield to a soul reflecting on posting away time, now near the last point and looking forward to endless eternity? Oh the thoughts of time wasted with and fair opportunities of good lost by the vehement pursuings and huntings after shadows and vanities—[this] will torment the soul by assaulting it with piercing convictions of madness and folly in forsaking all to overtake nothing with dreadful and soul-terrifying discourses of the saddest of disappointments and with the horror of an everlasting and irrecoverable loss. And what has the laborious spirit then reaped of all the travail of his soul when he has lost it? But, on the other hand, oh, [with] what calmness of mind, serenity of soul, and peace of conscience, because of the peace of God which passes all understanding, will that poor soul look back, when standing on the border of eternity, on the bygone days or hours it spent in seeking after, praying, and using all appointed means for some saving acquaintance with and interest in this only soul up-making and soul-satisfying mystery, and on its yielding up itself, through the efficacious operations of the Spirit of grace, wholly, without disputing, to the powerful workings of this mystery within, and in becoming crucified with Christ and living through a crucified Christ living in it by His Spirit and power. And with what rejoicing of heart and glorious singing of soul will it look forward to eternity and its everlasting abode in the prepared mansions, remembering that there its begun study will be everlastingly

continued, its capacity to understand that unsearchable mystery will be inconceivably greater, and the spiritual, heavenly, and glorious joy which it will have in that practical reading its divinity without book of ordinances will be its life and felicity forever! And what peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, what inward inexpressible quiet and contentment of mind will the soul enjoy in dwelling on these thoughts when it will have in addition the inward and well-grounded persuasion of its right through Christ to the full possession of that all which now it cannot conceive, let be² comprehend? The foretastes of this fills it with joy unspeakable and full of glory and the hope of shortly landing there, where it will see and enjoy and wonder and praise and rest in this endless and felicitating work, making it to sing while passing through the valley and shadow of death. Oh if this were believed! Oh that we were not drunk to a distraction and madness, with the adulterous love of vain and airy speculations, to the postponing, if not utter neglecting, of this main and only up-making work of getting real acquaintance with and a begun possession of this mystery in our souls—Christ, the grand mystery, formed within us, living and working within us by His Spirit and working us up into a conformity to and a heart-closing with God manifested in the flesh, [so] that we may find in experience, or at least in truth and reality, have a true transumpt³ of that gospel mystery in our souls! Oh, when will we take pleasure in pursuing after this happiness that will not flee from us but is rather pursuing us! When will we receive with joy and triumph this King of glory that is courting us daily and is seeking access and entry into our souls! Oh, why cry we not out in the height of the passion of spiritual longing and desire, “Oh come Lord Jesus,

2. *Let be.* let alone.

3. *Transumpt.* copy.

King of glory, with Thine own key, and open the door and enlarge and dilate the chambers of the soul that Thou may enter and be entertained as the King of glory, with all Thy glorious retinue, to the ennobling of my soul and satisfying of all the desires of that immortal spark"? Why do we not covet after this knowledge which has a true and firm con[nect]ion with all the best and truly divine gifts. Oh happy soul that is wasted and worn to a shadow, if that could be, in this study and exercise, which at length will enliven and, as it were, bring in a new heavenly and spiritual soul into the soul, so that it will look no more like a dead, dispirited thing out of its native soil and element but as a free, elevated, and spiritualized spirit, expatiating itself and flying abroad in the open air of its own element and country. Oh happy day, oh happy hour that is really and effectually spent in this employment! What would souls, swimming in this ocean of pleasures and delights, care for? Indeed, with what abhorrency would they look on the bewitching allurements of the purest kind of carnal delights, which flow from the mind's satisfaction in feeding on the poor apprehensions and groundlessly expected comprehensions of objects, suited to its natural genius and capacity? Oh what a more hyperbolical, exceeding, and glorious satisfaction has a soul in its very pursuings after (when it misses and cannot reach) that which is truly desirable! How does the least glimpse through the smallest cranny of this glorious and glorifying knowledge of God in Christ, apprehended by faith, raise up the soul to that pitch of joy and satisfaction which the knowledge of natural things, in its purest perfection, will never be able to cause. And to what a surmounting measure of this joy and contentation⁴ will the experiencing and feeling, by spiritual sense, the sweet and relish of this captivating and

4. *Contentation*: contentment.

transcendently excellent knowledge raise the soul to? Oh, must not this be the very suburbs of heaven to the soul! When the soul thus sees and apprehends God in Christ, and that as its own God through Christ (for as all saving knowledge draws out the soul to an embracing and closing with the object, so it brings in the object to the making up of the reciprocal union and in-being), it cannot but admire with exultation and exult with admiration at that condescendence of free grace that has made it, in any measure, capable of this begun glory and will further make it meet, by this begun glory, to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. And what will a soul that has tasted of the pure delights of this river of gospel manifestations and has seen, with soul-ravishing delights, in some measure the manifold wisdom of God wrapped up in it, and the complete and perfect symmetry of all the parts of that noble contexture, and also the pure design of that contrivance to abase man and to extol the riches of the free grace of God, so that the sinner, when possessed of all designed for him and effectuated in him by this, may know who alone should wear the crown and have all the glory—what, I say, will such a soul see in another gospel (calculated to the meridian of the natural, crooked, and corrupt temper of proud man, who is soon made vain of nothing, which, instead of bringing a sinner, fallen from God through pride, back again to the enjoyment of Him through a mediator, does but foster that innate plague and rebellion which procured his first excommunication from the favor and banishment out of the paradise of God) that will attract its heart to it and move it to a compliance with it? When the poor sinner that has been made to pant after a savior and has been pursued to the very ports of the city of refuge by the avenger of blood, the justice of God, has tasted and seen how good God is and felt the sweetness of free love in a crucified Christ and seen the beauty and glory of

the mystery of His free grace, suitably answering and overcoming the mystery of its sin and misery—oh, what a complacency has he in this and in the way of gospel salvation in which free grace is seen to overflow all banks, to the eternal praise of the God of all grace. How saltless and unsavory will the most cunningly devised and patched-together mode of salvation be, that men, studying the perversion of the gospel and seeking the ruin of souls with all their skill, industry, and learning, are setting off with forced rhetoric and the artifice of words of man's wisdom and with the plausible advantages of a pretended sanctity and of strong grounds and motives to diligence and painfulness, to a very denying and renouncing [of] Christian liberty, when once it is observed how it entrenches on and darkens luster or diminishes the glory of free grace and has the least tendency to the setting of the crown on the creature's head, in whole or in part. The least perception that by this the sinner's song (ascribing blessing, honor, glory, and power to Him that was slain and has redeemed them to God by His blood, out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation, and has made them to their God kings and priests) will be marred—[this] will be enough to render that device detestable and convince the soul that it is not the gospel of the grace of God and of Christ but rather the mystery of iniquity. What a peculiar savoriness does the humbled believer find in the doctrine of the true gospel grace, and the more that he be by this made nothing, and Christ made all; that he in his highest attainments be debased and Christ exalted; that his most lovely peacock feathers be laid, and the crown flourish on Christ's head; that he be laid flat, without one foot to stand on, and Christ the only supporter and carrier of him to glory; that he be as dead without life, and Christ live in him—[then] the more lovely, the more beautiful, the more desirable and acceptable is it to him. Oh what a complacency has the graced

soul in that contrivance of infinite wisdom in which the mystery of the grace of God is so displayed that nothing appears from the lowest foundation stone to the uppermost copestone⁵ but grace, grace, free grace making up all the materials, and free grace with infinite wisdom cementing all? The gracious soul can be warm under no other covering but what is made of that web, in which grace, and only grace, is both woof and warp. And the reason [for this] is manifest, for such a one has the clearest sight and discovery of his own condition and sees that nothing suits him and his case but free grace. Nothing can make up his wants but free grace. Nothing can cover his deformities but free grace. Nothing can help his weaknesses, shortcomings, faintings, sins, and miscarriages but free grace. Therefore is free grace all his salvation and all his desire. It is his glory to be free grace's debtor forevermore. The crown of glory will have a far more exceeding and eternal weight and be of a hyperbolically hyperbolic⁶ and eternal weight, and yet easily carried and worn, when he sees how free grace and love has lined it, and free grace and free love sets it on and keeps it on forever. This makes the glorified saint wear it with ease by casting it down at the feet of the gracious and loving purchaser and bestower. His exaltation is the saint's glory, and by free grace, the saints receiving and holding all of free grace, is He exalted. Oh, what a glory is it to the saint to set the crown of glorious free grace with his own hands on the head of such a savior and to say, "Not unto me, not unto me, but unto Thee, even unto Thee alone, be the glory forever and ever." With what delight, satisfaction, and complacency will the glorified saint, on this account, sing the redeemed and ransomed their song? And if the result and effect of free grace will give such a

5. *Copestone*: capstone.

6. *Hyperbolically hyperbolic*: probably (roughly), "exceedingly exceeding."

sweet sound there and make the glorified's heaven, in some respects, another thing, or at least, in some respect, a more excellent heaven than Adam's heaven would have been—for Adam could not have sung the song of the redeemed; Adam's heaven would not have been the purchase of the blood of God; nor would Adam have [sat] with Christ Redeemer on His throne; nor would there have been in his heaven such rich hangings of free grace nor such mansions prepared by that gracious and loving husband Christ, who will come and bring His bought bride home with Him. Seeing, I say, heaven, even on the account of free grace, will have such a special, lovely, desirable, and glorious luster, oh how should grace be prized by us now! How should the gospel of the grace of God be prized by us! What an antipathy to glory, as now prepared and dressed up for sinful man, must they show whose whole wits and parts are busied to darken the glory of that grace which God would have shining in the gospel and who are at so much pains and labor to dress up another gospel (though the apostle has told us [Gal. 1:7] that there is not another) in which gospel grace must stand by and law grace take the throne, that so man may sacrifice to his own net and burn incense to his own drag and may, at most, be grace's debtor in part. And yet no way may the saved man account himself more grace's debtor than the man was who willfully destroyed himself in not performing of the conditions, for grace, as the new gossellers, or rather gospel-spillers mean and say, did equally to both frame the conditions, make known to the contrivance, and tender the conditional peace and salvation. But as to the difference between Paul and Judas, it was Paul that made himself to differ, and not the free grace of God determining the heart of Paul by grace to a closing with and accepting of the bargain. It was not grace that wrought in him both to will and to do. It was he, and not the grace of God in him—what is

more contradictory to the gospel of the grace of God? And yet vain man will not condescend to the free grace of God. Pelagianism and Arminianism needs not put a man to much study and to the reading of many books to the end it may be learned (though the patrons hereof labor hot in the very fires to make their notions hang together and to give them such a luster of unsanctified and corrupt reason as may be taking with such as know no other conduct in the matters of God), for naturally we all are born Pelagians and Arminians. These tenets are deeply engrave[d] in the heart of every son of fallen Adam. What serious servant of God finds not this in his dealing with souls whom he is laboring to bring into the way of the gospel? Indeed, what Christian is there who has acquaintance with his own heart and is observing its biases and corrupt inclinations that is not made to cry out, "Oh wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from these dregs of Pelagianism, Arminianism, and Jesuitism, which I find yet within my soul?" Hence, it may seem no wonderful or strange thing (though, after so much clear light, it may be astonishing to think that now in this age so many are so openly and avowedly appearing for this dangerous and deadly error) to us to hear and see this infection spreading and gaining ground so fast, there needs few arguments or motives to work up carnal hearts to an embracing of it and to a cheerful acquiescing in it. Little labor will make a spark of fire work on gunpowder. And, methinks, if nothing else will, this one thing should convince us all of the error of this way that nature so quickly and readily complies with it. For who that has an eye on or regard of such things sees not what a world of carnal reasonings, objections, prejudices, and scruples natural men have in readiness against the gospel of Christ, and with what satisfaction, peace, and delight they reason and plead themselves out of the very reach of free grace, and what work there is to get a poor soul in any measure [a]wakened

and convinced of its lost condition, wrought up to a compliance with the gospel way of salvation? How many other designs, projects, and essays does it follow with a piece of natural vehemency and seriousness, without wearying, were it even to the wasting of its body and spirits, let be its substance and riches, before it be brought to a closing with a crucified mediator and to an accounting of all its former workings, attainments, and painful laborings and gain as loss for Christ, and for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, and as dung that it may win Christ and be found in Him, not having its own righteousness which is of the law but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith (Phil. 3:7–9). And may it not seem strange that now, after so many have found, through the grace of God, the sweet experience of the gracious workings of the gospel grace of God on their hearts, and so are in case, as having this witness within them, to give verdict against those assertions, indeed, more, and many more than were in several ages before—[that] yet Satan should become so bold as to vent these desperate opinions so diametrically opposite to the grace of God declared in the gospel and engrave[d] in the hearts of many hundreds by the finger of God, confirming, in the most undoubted manner, the truth of the gospel doctrines. This would seem to say that there are such clear sunshine days of the gospel and of the Son of Man a-coming (and who can tell how soon this night will be at an end?) that all these doctrines of nature will receive a more conspicuous and shameful dash than they have received for these many ages. Until this time when Satan raised up and sent forth his qualified instruments for this desperate work, God always prepared carpenters to fright these horns, and thus gospel truth came forth as gold out of a furnace, more clear and shining. And who can tell but there may be a dispensation of the pure grace of God in opposition to these

perverting ways of Satan yet to come that, as to the measure of light and power, will excel whatever has been since the apostles' days. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

However, madam, the grace of God will be what it is to all the chosen and ransomed ones. They will find in it which will make whatever comes in competition with it or would darken it contemptible in their eyes. And happy [are] they of whom in this day in which darkness covers the earth and gross darkness the people it may be said [that] the Lord has arisen on them, and His glory has been seen on them. For whatever others whose understanding is yet darkened and they alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them because of the blindness of their hearts imagine of the gospel grace, and however they discern nothing of the heavenly and spiritual glory of the grace of God, yet they, being delivered or cast into the form and mold of the doctrine of the gospel which they have obeyed from the heart through the powerful and irresistible efficacy of the mighty grace of God, have seen such an alluring excellency in that gracious contrivance of infinite wisdom to set forth the unparallelableness of the pure grace of God and are daily seeing more and more of the graciousness and wisdom of that heavenly invention in its adequate suitableness to all their necessities, that as they cannot but admire and commend the riches of that grace that interlines every sentence of the gospel and the greatness of that love that has made such a completely broad plaster to cover all their sores and wounds. So the longer they live, and the more they drink of this pure fountain of heavenly nectar, and the more their necessities press them to a taking on of new obligations because of new supplies from this ocean of grace, the more they are made to admire the wisdom and goodness of the author. And the more they are made to fall in love with, to delight and lose themselves in the thoughts of

this incomprehensible grace of God, indeed, and to long to be there where they will be in better case to contemplate and have more wit to wonder at and better dexterity to prize and a stronger head to muse upon and a more enlarged heart to praise for this boundless and endless treasure of the grace of God, with which they are enriched through Jesus Christ. Sure[ly], if we be not thus enamored and ravished with it, it is because we are yet standing without or, at most, on the threshold and border of this grace. Were we once got within the jurisdiction of grace and had yielded up ourselves to the power thereof and were living and breathing in this air—oh, how sweet a life might we have! What a kindly element would grace be to us! As sin had reigned to death, even so grace should reign through righteousness to eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 5:21). Grace reigning within us through righteousness would frame and fit our souls for that eternal life that is insured to all who come once under the commanding, enlivening, strengthening, confirming, corroborating, and perfecting power of grace. And seeking grace for grace, and so living and walking and spending on grace's costs and charges—oh how lively and thriving proficient might we be! The more we spend of grace (if it could be spent), the richer should we be in grace. Oh what an enriching trade must it be to trade with free grace, where there is no loss and all is gain, the stock, and gain, and all is insured. Indeed, more, laboring in grace's field would bring us in Isaac's blessing a hundredfold. But, alas, it is one thing to talk of grace, but a far other thing to trade with grace. When we are so great strangers to the life of grace through not breathing in the air of grace, how can the name of the Lord Jesus be glorified in us and we in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thess. 1:12)? Consider we what an affront and indignity it is to the Lord dispensator of grace, that we look so lean and

ill-favored, as if there were not enough of the fattening bread of the grace of God in our Father's house, or as if the great steward, who is full of grace and truth, were unwilling to bestow it on us or grudged us of our allowance, when the fault is in ourselves. We will not follow the course that wise grace and gracious wisdom has prescribed. We will not open our mouth wide that He might fill us nor go to Him with our narrowed or closed mouths that grace might make way for grace and widen the mouth for receiving of more grace, but [rather we] lie by in our leanness and weakness. And, alas, we love too well to be so. Oh, but grace be ill-ward⁷ on us who carry so unworthily with it as we do. Yet it is well with the gracious soul that he is under grace's tutory and care, for grace will care for him when he cares not much for it nor yet sees well to his own welfare. Grace can and will prevent—indeed, must prevent afterward as well as at the first—that grace may be grace and appear to be grace and continue unchangeably to be grace, and so free grace. Well is it with the believer whom grace has once taken by the heart and brought within the bond of the covenant of grace. Its deadliest condition is not desperate. When corruption prevails to such a height that the man is given over for dead, there being no sense, no motion, no warmth, no breath almost to be observed; yet grace, when violently constrained by that strong distemper to retire to a secret corner of the soul and there to lurk and lie quiet, will yet at length, through the receiving influences of grace promised in the covenant and granted in the Lord's good time, come out of its prison, take the fields, and recover the empire of the soul. And then the dry and withered stocks, when the God of all grace will be as dew to Israel, will blossom and grow as the lily and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches

7. *Ill-ward*: poorly laid out.

will spread, and his beauty will be as the olive tree, and his smell, as Lebanon. It is a happy thing either for church or particular soul to be planted in grace's sappy soil. They lie open to the warm beams of the Sun of Righteousness, and the winter blasts may be sharp and long. Clouds may intercept the heat, and nipping frosts may cause a sad decay, and all the sap may return and lie, as it were, dormant in the root. Yet the winter will pass, the rain will be over and gone, and the flowers will appear on the earth. The time of singing of birds will come, and the voice of the turtle will be heard in the land. Then will even the wilderness and solitary place be glad, and the desert will rejoice and blossom as the rose. It will blossom abundantly and rejoice even with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon will be given to it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon. They will see the glory of the Lord and the excellency of our God. We wonder that 'tis not always hot summer days, a flourishing and fruitful season, with souls and with churches. But know we the thoughts of the Lord? See we to the bottom of the deep contrivance of infinite wisdom? Know we the usefulness, indeed, necessity of long winter nights, stormy blasts, rain, hail, snow, and frost? Consider we that our state and condition, while here, calls for those vicissitudes and requires the blowing of the north as well as of the south winds? If we considered how grace had ordered all things for our best and most for the glory and exaltation of grace, we would sit down and sing under the saddest of dispensations; and, living by faith and hope, we would rejoice in the confident expectation of a gracious outgate.⁸ For as long as grace predominates (and that will be until glory take the empire), all will run in the channel of grace. And though now sense (which is often faith's unfaithful friend) will be always suggesting false tales of

8. *Outgate*: escape.

God and of His grace to unbelief and raising by this discontent, doubts, fears, jealousies, and many distempers in the soul to its prejudice and hurt, yet in [the] end, grace will be seen to be grace. And the faithful will get such a full sight of this manifold grace, as ordering, tempering, timing, shortening, or continuing of all the sad and dismal days and seasons that have passed over their own or their mother's head, that they will see that grace did order all, indeed, every circumstance of all the various tossings, changes, ups and downs that they did meet with. And oh, what a satisfying sight will that be when the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are in-rolled in heaven, and every individual saint will come together and take a view of all their experience, the result of which will be grace began; grace carried on; and grace has perfected all. Grace was at the bottom of all. What shoutings, grace, grace to it, will be there, when the headstone will be brought forth? What soul-satisfying complacency in and admiration at all that is past will a back-look at this yield, when everyone will be made to say, "Grace has done all well. Not a pin of all the work of grace in and about me might have been wanted. Now I see that the work of God is perfect. Grace was glorious grace, and wise grace, whatever I thought of it then. Oh what a fool have I been in quarrelling at and in not being fully satisfied with all that grace was doing with me?" Oh, how little is this believed now!

In conscience, madam, that your ladyship (to me no ways known but by a savory report) will accept of this bold address, I recommend your ladyship, my very noble lord your husband, and offspring, to the word of His grace and subscribe myself, madam,

Your and their servant in the gospel
and the grace of God,

John Brown

The Author to the Reader

Christian reader,

After the foregoing address, I need not put you to much more trouble. Only I will say that he must needs be a great stranger in our Israel or sadly smitten with that epidemic plague of indifferency, which has infected many of this generation to a benumbing of them and rendering them insensible and unconcerned in the matters of God and of their own souls and sunk deep in the gulf of dreadful inconsideration, who sees not or takes no notice of nor is troubled at the manifest and terrible appearances of the inexpressibly great hazard [that] our all, as Christians in this life, is this day exposed into. I mean the mystery of the gospel of the grace of God in which the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus has been shown. We have enjoyed for a considerable time a clear and powerful dispensation of this in great purity and plenty. But, alas, is it not manifest to all that will not willfully shut their eyes that this mercy and goodness of God has been wickedly abused and the pure administration of His grace and love perfidiously sinned away by this apostate generation? Are our spots this day the spots of His children? Are their fruits answerable to the Lord's pains and labor about us to be seen even among the greatest of professors? Is there that gospel holiness, tenderness, watchfulness, growing in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, that growing up in

Christ, in all things that heavenly-mindedness, that fellowship with the Father and with His Son Christ Jesus, and that conversation in heaven, that the dispensation of grace we have been favored with beyond many and have been long living under did call for at our hands? Alas! Our grapes are but wild and stinking. Wherefore (and who can think it strange, if it be so?) the Lord seems to be about to contend with us by covering our horizon with Egyptian darkness—many who would not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved, being already given up to strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, and many more in hazard to be drawn aside to crooked paths by men of corrupt minds, who have been and are still busy to vent and spread abroad, with no little petulancy and confidence, damnable doctrines, to the perverting of the doctrine of the gospel of Jesus Christ and to the subverting and overturning of the very foundations of our hope and assurance, and that in such a way and by such means and stratagems as seem to have wrath written on them in legible letters. For the more plausible and taking a corrupt doctrine be, it is the more dangerous and judgment-like, and more are by this in hazard to be deluded and drawn away.

Indeed (which is yet more terrible and dreadful), it is to be feared that the jealous God, in His holy and righteous judgment, has given a providential commission (to speak so)¹ to the seducing spirit to persuade and prevail. For is not this the clear language of the present holy and righteous dispensations of God and of the stupendously indifferent frame and disposition of the generality of men called Christians, not only provoking God to spew them out of His mouth but disposing them also to a receiving of whatever men, lying in wait to deceive, will propose and obtrude?

1. *To speak so*: so to speak.

Alas! The clouds are not now a-gathering, but our horizon is covered over with blackness, and great drops are a-falling that presage² a terrible overflowing deluge of error and apostacy from the truth and profession of the gospel of Jesus Christ to be at hand, if the Lord wonderfully prevent it not. And behold (oh wonderful!) the generality of professors are sleeping in security, apprehending no danger. Satan is more cunning now than to drive men to popery by rage and cruelty (and yet what he may be permitted to do after this manner, who can tell?) or by openly pleading in his emissaries for this abomination (and yet even thus is he already prevailing with not a few) or to send forth his agents for Arminianism and Socinianism (though even this way too he is too much prevailing). But his main work now seems to be to bring in another gospel (and yet there is not another) or rather an anti-evangelic and anti-Christian delusory dream, overturning at once the whole gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And for this end he employs the Quakers, on the one hand, men of desperate and anti-evangelic principles, the very sink of all abominations, old and late (as I will show, if the Lord will continue health and strength, in an examination of their doctrine and principles, lately emitted by one Robert Barclay), and, on the other hand, men (or moralists, if you will call them so) pleading for and crying up an anti-evangelic holiness, a mere shadow without substance or reality, and that in place of Christ Himself. And in order to the carrying on of this desperate design, the old dragon is employing men of seeming different principles and ways, whom, though their faces seem to look to contrary airths,³ yet he holds despite this fast tied by their tails (as Samson's foxes were), that by this, if the Lord permit it, he may, by the

2. *Presage*: to foreshadow.

3. *Airths*: directions.

fire of enmity to the pure gospel of the grace of God burning in their tails, cause a conflagration of that truth, in which lies all our hope. For this new model of religion that many are so busied about is such as Pelagians, Arminians, Papists, Socinians, Quakers, indeed Turks, and moral heathens—indeed, and all who are enemies to and not reconcilable with the true grace of God held forth in the gospel—will willingly admit of and harmoniously agree in. [It is] a way which complies so well with proud self and with the corrupt nature of man that it is little wonder, if it have many abettors and admirers. I will say no more of this, but only infer:

That sure the consideration of this should move all in whom is anything of the zeal of God and love to souls, their own and others', to appear in the defense of the gospel of our salvation by all means incumbent to them and possible for them. For if this citadel and stronghold in which our all and the all of pure and true religion lies be blown up, [then] we are gone. And indeed, no less is intended by this anti-Christian and anti-evangelic enemy than the utter subversion of true Christian religion. Who would not then be by this alarmed and on their guard when matters are at this pass? Should not all who have any love to their own souls; any zeal for the glory of Christ, anointed of the Father to be our prophet, priest, and king; any desire to see the crown flourishing on His head and to have the gospel preserved pure and uncorrupted be pleading with God by prayer in the behalf of His Son's kingdom, crown, and glory? And [should they not be] wrestling with Him till He were pleased to dispel these clouds and prevent this black day? Especially should they not be laboring to be acquainted, in truth and reality, with the gospel of Jesus Christ, that, having the mysterious truths of it imprinted on their souls and their hearts cast into its mold, they may be preserved from the hurt of this deadly poison? For this, with a constant dependence on

and use-making of Christ in all His offices, will prove the best preservative against this infection.

The persuasion of this did induce me to publish the following heads of some sermons, after they have been translated into Dutch and published here, knowing that they might be of no less use to the people of God in Britain and Ireland. I know not a more effectual mean[s] to unstable souls from siding with and embracing every new notion and from being carried about with every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive than to put them on the real exercise of gospel godliness and to the daily practice of the main and fundamental gospel work of living by faith in Jesus Christ and of growing up into Him in all things, who is the head from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted, by that which every joint supplies according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, makes increase of the body, to the edifying of itself in love. Such, I am sure, as have thus learned the truth as it is in Jesus and are practicing the same accordingly will have an antidote within them against the strongest poison of these seducers and a real answer to and confutation of all their subtile sophisms.⁴ The soul exercising itself into gospel godliness will find work enough to take it wholly up and find such a solid ground to stand on and see such a satisfying fullness, answering all its necessities and wants, and such a sure heart-quieting ground of peace, hope, and consolation in Jesus Christ as that it will have no leisure and small temptation to listen to seducing perverters and no inclination to seek after empty cisterns.

4. *Sophisms*: deceitful or fallacious arguments.

I know much may be desiderated⁵ in this following treatise, and many may have exceptions not without ground against it. Some may think it arrogancy and too great confidence in me to attempt the handling of such a mysterious and necessary part of Christian practice, in which few (if any, so far as I know) have gone before in direct handling of this matter, at least in this method and order—I mean that part which is about sanctification. Others may be displeased with the mean and low style: with my multiplying particulars, which might have been better and more handsomely couched under fewer heads, and with my unnecessary contracting of the whole into such a narrow bound, and other things of that kind. For which and many other failings of the like nature and import, which may without any diligent search be found in it, even by ordinary and unprejudiced readers, I will not industriously labor to apologize, knowing that my very apology in this case will need an apology. Only I will say this: that considering how the snare which the vigilant and active enemy of our salvation, the devil, was laying by an unholy morality did nearly concern all, and especially the meanest (for parts and experience) and less fixed Christians, I thought a discourse on such a subject as I judged most necessary at all times and especially in such a day of hazard should be framed to the capacity of one as well as another. The most understanding can receive benefit by that which is calculated to the capacity of children, when these can reap little edification by what is suited to the palate of those. And the less experienced or such as are of lower understanding will be less able to draw a general to a particular or to improve and so fully to comprehend one particular touched as to be able by this to understand and take in a like particular not mentioned, than such as have their senses more exer-

5. *Desiderated*: desired.

cised and are by this in case to make a better improvement of what is but compendiously declared, when those must have the bread broken to their hand, or they will receive but small edification by it. And yet, I suppose, the judicious will observe some variety, smaller or greater, even where particulars seem to be, at the first view, most unnecessarily multiplied. I know and willingly grant (for it is obvious enough) that a discourse of this subject and matter might have required a far larger volume; but then how should such have profited by it, whom poverty might possibly have scared from buying, or the necessary affairs of their ordinary callings would have kept from a diligent perusal of it? And I thought that neither of these should have been overlooked in this special or general design which I had before my eyes.

One thing, as my answer to all, I will but add: If by this others whom the Lord has more enabled with all necessaries for such a work will be by this either instigated or encouraged to write on this subject (I mean mainly the last part of it, touching the use-making of Christ in sanctification, for, blessed be the Lord, many have been employed of the Lord to speak soundly and edifyingly to the use-making of Christ as to righteousness and justification) a full, plain, edifying, and satisfying discovery of this necessary and important truth (namely, Christ made of God to us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption) and, in addition, point out plainly and particularly the way how believers in all their particular and various exigencies may and should so make use of and apply that all fullness which is treasured up in the head for the benefit and advantage of the members of the mystical body—as they may not only theoretically see but practically also experience this truth that in Him they are complete, and so they may be helped to understand how through the necessary and constant use-making of Him as all in all they may

grow up in Him in all things—if this be, I say, done by any to better purpose, I will think this my adventure not altogether fruitless and in part at least excusable.

As for you, O Christian, whose instruction, edification, and confirmation in the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the faith which was once delivered to the saints, I mainly intended in this undertaking, I have a few things to add:

Know then that there are certain men (as the apostle Jude speaks) crept in unawares, who were of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness and denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ. For in these last days we see that these perilous times are come (of which Paul advertised Timothy, 2 Tim. 3:1, etc.), in which men will be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce breakers, false accusers (or make bates⁶), incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady,⁷ high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, having the form of godliness but denying the power of it—for of this sort are they which creep into houses and lead captive silly women, laden with sins, led away with diverse lusts, ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. And because it is so, he exhorts to give diligence to make your calling and election sure by giving all diligence to add to faith, virtue; to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if you do these things, you will never fall, as the apostle Peter assures us (2 Peter 1:5–10). For it is the elect who

6. *Make bates*: someone who stirs up strife.

7. *Heady*: rash or violent.

are secured from full and final defection and apostacy (Matt. 24:24, 31; Mark 12:22; 13:27; Rom. 8:33; 9:11; 11:5–6). And the promise of salvation is made to such as will endure to the end. The crown is for the overcomers and such as are faithful to the death (Matt. 10:22; 24:13; Mark 13:13; Rev. 2:10–11, 17, 26–28; 3:5, 12, 21). All which, and the like, are set down that by this His people might be rationally moved to a constant seriousness in the working out of their own salvation in fear and trembling. And the forewarnings [are] given of the great difficulty of the reaching the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls, because of the many active, vigilant, indefatigable, subtile, and insinuating adversaries, who by good words and fair speeches will readily deceive the hearts of the simple. And [they are] to awaken the more His people to be sober and vigilant, because their adversary the devil (who acts and moves his under agents⁸ in their several modes, methods, and motions, so as he may best, according to the various tempers, present dispositions, advantages, or disadvantages of such as he intends to seduce—which he carefully studies and plies for this end—obtain his designed end: their ruin and destruction) as a roaring lion, walking about seeking whom he may devour. And this calls them to haste[n] out [of] their slumber and security who will be loath to miss his opportunity, surprise them to their great loss and disadvantage.

It is, beloved, high time now to awake, to look about us, to consider where we are, on what ground we stand, whether the enemy or we have the advantage, how and in what posture we are to rencounter⁹ with deceivers that seek to cheat us out of all our souls and of the Lord our righteousness and draw us off the paths of life, that when we come to die (beside[s] the

8. *Under agents*: secret agents.

9. *Rencounter*: to meet by chance.

unspeakably great loss we would by this be at, even here, in missing the comfortable accesses to God through Jesus Christ the inflowings of grace and strength for spiritual duty through the Lord our strength, the sweet communications of peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, the shedding abroad of the love of God in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given to us, and the full assurance of hope through the Lord Jesus our hope), we might be frustrated of all our expectations and find that all that which men made us grip to, lay hold on, and lean to instead of Christ was but a mere shadow and a lie in our right hand to the unexpressible grief, vexation, and sorrow of soul when all should end in a dreadful and horrible disappointment.

But let us not think that our purposes, firm-like resolutions to adhere to the truth, and our present abhorrence at and detestation of errors now broached to the overturning the very foundations of true Christianity will sufficiently guard us from and make us proof against the shots and assaults of these crafty seducers. Nor think that our learning and knowledge in the theory of the truth nor our abilities to rencounter sophisters will secure us from a fall. Let us not think that the enemies are contemptible, and therefore we need be the less anxious. Nor yet [let us] think that former experiences and through-bearings,¹⁰ in the like cases, will be a pillow by which we may now lay ourselves down to sleep. If we do, we will certainly deceive ourselves if all our strength and standing be in ourselves and through ourselves. And if this be the ground of our hope, the righteous Lord in His holy justice may give us up to be a prey. Peter's instance should never be forgotten by us. And such as tempt the Lord have no ground to expect His last issue.

10. *Through-bearings*: a word for "perseverance."

Our strength must be in Christ. To the Rock of Ages must we fly. To our chambers in Him must we retire, and there must we hide ourselves. On Christ's lee-side¹¹ can we only ride safe[ly] and be free of the hazard of the storm. To Him therefore must our recourse be daily by new and fresh acts of faith in and through Him and His influences, communicated according to the tenor of the covenant of grace. Through faith, eyeing the promiser, the promise, with the price purchasing, and so drawing and sucking light, direction, strength, stability, and what our present exigent calls for must we think to stand. And happy [are] they who, conscious to themselves of their own weakness and convinced of the insufficiency of all things within them, in godly fear hide themselves under the wings of the Almighty and get into this stronghold, resolving there to abide and there to be secured from all their adversaries within or without. These humble fearers may expect a safe and noble outgate, when more strong-like and more confident adventurers will (being left to themselves, because trusting in themselves) shamefully fall and be triumphed over by the enemy, to the grief of the godly and for a snare to others.

The best way then to keep the faith of Christ, which many are now seeking to shake and to loose us from, is to be exercising the faith of Christ. The serious and upright practicing of the gospel is the only best mean[s] to keep you firm in the profession of the gospel, when the gospel with you is not a few fine notions in the brain but is heavenly and necessary truth sunk into the heart and living and acting there. It will keep you, and you will own it more firmly and steadfastly in a day of trial. Your walking in Christ and working and living by Him living in you will so root you in the gospel truth that enemies will pull in vain when seeking to overthrow you. The gospel

11. *Lee-side*: the side of shelter.

of the grace of God received and entertained in your soul in love and constant suitable improvement will fortify you and secure itself in you so that vehement blasts will but contribute to its more fixed abode and more fruitful actings in you. Live up then to the gospel, and so be sure of it, and be safe in it. I mean, let Christ live in you as your all and cast all your care and cumber¹² on Him. Lay all your difficulties before Him. Lean all your weight on Him. Draw all your necessities out of Him, and undertake all your duties in Him. Be strong in Him and in the power of His might. Let Him be your counsellor, conductor, leader, teacher, captain, commander, light, life, strength, and all, [and] so will you stand and have cause to glory, even in your infirmities, for you will find the power of Christ resting on you, and you will have cause to say, “Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong” [2 Cor. 12:10]. Remember that great word: “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Phil. 4:13).

It has been the usual and ordinary question of believers: How will we make use of Christ for sanctification? To this great and important question, I (though the meanest and most unfit for such a work of all that God has sent to feed His flock) have adventured, or endeavored at least, to give such as truly desire to cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God, some satisfaction in this, laying before them some plain directions framed to their capacities and suited to some of their most ordinary and usual causes. Some of which are more comprehensive, and others more particular, [which] may be looked on as exemplary instances, serving for other cases of the like

12. *Cumber*: hindrance.

nature. For hardly could every particular circumstantiate case be particularly spoken to, and some might judge that to be superfluous. If you, in the light and strength of Christ, will really practice what is here pointed forth, I may be confident to say [that] your labor will not be in vain in the Lord, and you will attain to another sort of holiness than that which proud pretenders boast of and will be far without the reach of that snare, which unstable souls are too readily entangled with—I mean, the plausible pretension of more than ordinary sanctity which yet is but forced, feigned, constrained, mostly external, and framed to cause admiration in beholders, whom they intend to make a prey of. This will be no temptation to you who by experience find a more safe, satisfying, full, free, easy, pleasant, and heartsome¹³ way of mortifying lusts, growing in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and so perfecting holiness by running immediately to Christ and by living in and on Him, who is made of God to us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. That the Lord may bless the same to you for this end will be and is the desire and prayer of him who is,

Your servant in the work of the gospel,
John Brown

13. *Heartsome*: to give heart.

Recommendation

Christian reader,

If you answer this designation and are really a partaker of the unction, which is the high import of that blessed and glorious name called upon you, [then] your eye must affect your heart, and a soul swelled with godly sorrow must at last burst and bleed forth at a weeping eye while you look on most of this licentious and loathsome generation arrived at that height of prodigious profanity as to glory in their shame and boast of bearing the badge and black mark of damnation. But, besides this swarm who savage it to hell and make such haste hither as they foam themselves into everlasting flames, carrying under the shape and visage of men, as devils in disguise, the face of the church is covered with a scum of such who are so immersed in the concerns of this life and are so intense in the pursuit of the pleasures, gain, and honors of it as their way does manifestly witness them to be sunk into the deep oblivion of God and desperate inconsideration of their precious and immortal souls. But, in the third place, besides these who are hurried into such a distraction with the cares of this life that they, as natural brute beasts made to be destroyed, are never at leisure to consider either the nature and necessity of their noble souls or to converse with the notion of a deity. You may perceive a company of self-deceiving speculatists, who make broad the phylacteries of their garments and boast of some high

attainments in religion, indeed, [and] would have others look on them as arrived at the very porch of heaven and advanced to a high pitch of proficiency in the ways of God because they can discourse a little of the mysteries of salvation; and, without ever diving farther into the depth and true nature of religion, [they] dream themselves into a consideration of being saints and conclude themselves candidates for glory.

This is that heart-moving object which presents itself to your eye and observation this day. This is that deplorable posture in which you may perceive most men at the very point of perishing eternally, who are within the pale of the visible church, some dancing themselves headlong in all haste into the lake of fire and brimstone, some so much concerned in things which have no connection with their happiness as to drop unconcernedly into the pit, out of which there is no redemption. And others [are] dreaming themselves into endless perdition. And all of them unite in a deriding at or despising the means used and essays¹ made in order to their recovery.

But if His servants, in following their work closely, seem to have gained a little ground on men and almost persuaded them to be Christians, Satan, to the end he may make all miscarry and counterwork these workers together with God and poison poor souls by a perversion of the gospel beyond the power of an antidote, has raised up, instigated, and set on work a race of proud rationalists, for they are wiser than to class themselves among those poor fools, those base things, those nothings, to whom Christ is made all things, to whom Christ is made wisdom that He may be righteousness, sanctification, and redemption to them—indeed, they must be wise men after the flesh, wise above what is written. A crucified Christ is really to them foolishness and weakness, though the

1. *Essays*: attempts.

power of God and the wisdom of God. They will needs go to work another way. They will needs glory in His presence and have a heaven of their own band-wind.² Oh, my soul, enter not into their secrets! And, oh, sweet Jesus, let Thy name be to me, “The Lord my righteousness.” Thou hast won it—wear it. And gather not my soul with such who make mention of any other righteousness but of Thine only to bring in another gospel among us than the gospel of the grace of God. As they determine to know some other thing than Christ and Him crucified, so with the enticing words of man’s wisdom they bewitch men into a disobedience to the truth, setting somewhat else before them than a crucified Christ. And this they do that they may remove men from those who call them into the grace of Christ to another gospel. A christ, it is true, they speak of. But it is not the Christ of God, for all they drive at (Oh, cursed and truly anti-Christian design!) is that He may profit them nothing, while they model all religion according to this novel project of their magnified morality. This is that which gives both life and luster to that image which they adore, to the Dagon after whom they would have the world wonder and worship.

That there is such a moralizing or muddizing (if I may be for once admitted to coin a new word to give these men their due) of Christianity now introduced and coming in fashion, many of the late pieces in request do evince. Now that Christianity should moralize men above all things, I both give and grant; for he who is partaker of the divine nature and has obtained precious faith must add virtue to his faith. But that it should be only conceived and conceited as an elevation of nature to a more clear light, in the matter of morality, in which our Lord is only respected as a heavenly teacher and perfect pattern proposed for imitation, is but a proud, pleasing fancy

2. *Band-wind*: effort or making.

of self-conceited, darkened, and deluded dreamers, robbing God of the glory of His mercy and goodness; our Lord Jesus Christ of the glory of His grace and merit; the Spirit of the efficacy of His glorious and mighty operations; and themselves and their pilgrimages, who give them the hand as guides, of the comfort and fruit of all.

It cannot escape your observation how busy Satan is this day, on the one hand, to keep men, [who are] under the call of the gospel to give all diligence to make their calling and election sure, idle all the day, so that no persuasion can induce them to engage seriously to fall about a working out their own salvation in fear and trembling; and, on the other, equally diligent and industrious to divert men from trusting in the name of the Lord and staying on their God. [Instead, he is] setting them on work to go and gather fuel and kindle a fire and compass themselves about with sparks, that they may walk in the light of their own fire and in the sparks that they have kindled, knowing well that they will this way most certainly lose their toil and travail and have no other reward at His hand of all their labor but to lie down in everlasting sorrow, while the stouthearted and far from righteousness and salvation will get their soul for a prey and be made to rejoice in His salvation and bless Him who has made them meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

I am neither the fit person for so great an undertaking, nor do these limits within which I must bound myself permit me to expatiate in many notions about the nature of this excellent and precious thing [of] true gospel holiness. Oh! If, in the entry, I could on my own behalf and others sob out my “alas!” from the bottom of my soul, because, be what it will, it is some other thing than men take it to be. Few habituate themselves to a thinking on it, in its high nature and soul-enriching advantages, till their hearts receive suitable impressions of it,

and their lives be the very transumpt of the law of God written in their heart. The thing, alas, is lost in a noise of words and heap of notions about it. Neither is it a wonder that men fall into mistakes about it, since it is only the heart possessed of it that is capable to understand and perceive its true excellency. But if it be asked what it is, we say [that] it may be shortly taken up as the elevation and raising up of a poor mortal to a conformity with God. As a participation of the divine nature or as the very image of God stamped on the soul, impressed on the thoughts and affections, and expressed in the life and conversation, so that the man in whom Christ is formed and in whom He dwells, lives, and walks has while on the earth a conversation in heaven—not only in opposition to those many whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things, but also to those pretenders to and [im]personators of religion, who have confidence in the flesh and worship God with their own spirit, which in the matters of God is flesh and not spirit, and have somewhat else to rejoice in than in Christ Jesus, and a being found in Him, not having their own righteousness.

True gospel holiness, then, consists in some similitude and likeness to God and fellowship with Him founded on that likeness. There is such an impression of God, His glorious attributes, His infinite power, majesty, mercy, justice, wisdom, holiness, and grace, etc., as sets Him up all alone in the soul without any competition and produces those real apprehensions of Him that He is alone excellent and matchless. Oh, how preferable does He appear, when indeed seen, to all things! And how does this light of His infinite gloriousness, shining into the soul, darken and obscure to an invisibleness all other excellencies, even as the rising of the sun makes all the lesser lights to disappear. Alas! How is God unknown in His glorious being and attributes! When once the Lord enters

the soul and shines into the heart, it is like the rising of the sun at midnight. All these things which formerly pretended to some loveliness and did dazzle with their luster are eternally darkened. Now, all natural perfections and moral virtues in their flower and perfections are at best looked on as *aliquid nihil*.³ What things were formerly accounted gain and godliness are now counted loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord, and the soul cannot only suffer the loss of them all without a sob, but be satisfied to throw them away as dung, that it may win Him and be found in Him. Now, the wonder of a deity, in His greatness, power, and grace, swallows up the soul in sweet admiration. Oh, how does it love to lose itself in finding here what it cannot fathom! And then it begins truly to see the greatness and evil of sin. Then it is looked on without the covering of pleasure or profit and loathed as the leprosy of hell. Now the man is truly like God in the knowledge of good and evil, in the knowledge of that one infinite good, God, and in the knowledge of that one almost infinite evil, sin. This is the first point of likeness to Him: to be conformed to Him in our understanding, that as He knows Himself to be the only self-being and fountain-good, and all created things in their flower and perfection with all their real or fancied conveniences being compared with Him but as the drop of a bucket, or nothing, indeed, less than nothing, vanity (which is nothing blown up, by the force or forgery of a vainly working imagination, to the consistence of an appearance), so for a soul to know indeed and believe in the heart that there is nothing [that] deserves the name of good besides God, to have the same superlative and transcendent thoughts of that great and glorious self-being God and the same diminishing and debasing thoughts of all things and beings besides Him.

3. *Aliquid nihil*: to deem someone nothing.

And that as the Lord sees no evil in the creation but sin and hates that with a perfect hatred, as contrary to His holy will, so for a soul to aggravate sin in its own sight to an infiniteness of evil, at least till it see it only short of infiniteness in this respect, that it can be swallowed up of infinite mercy. But from where has the soul all this light? It owes all this and owns itself as debtor for it to Him who opens the eyes of the blind. It is He who commands the light to shine out of darkness who has made these blessed discoveries and has given the poor benighted⁴ soul the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. These irradiations are from the Spirit's illumination. 'Tis the Spirit of wisdom and revelation that has made daylight in the darkened soul. The man who had the heart of a beast as to any saving or solid knowledge of God or himself has now got an understanding to know Him that is true. Now is Christ become the poor man's wisdom. He is now renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him. He might well babble of spiritual things, but till now he understood nothing of the beauty and excellency of God and His ways. Indeed, he knew not what he knew. He was ignorant as a beast of the life and luster of those things which he knew in the letter. Nothing seemed more despicable to him in the world than true godliness. But now he judges otherwise, because he has the mind of Christ. The things which in his darkness he did undervalue as trifles to be mocked at, he now can only mind and admire since he became a child of light. Now being delivered from that blindness and brutishness of spirit, which possesses the world (and possessed himself till he was transformed by the renewing of his mind), who esteem basely of spiritual things and set them at nought—[these] he prizes as alone precious. The world wonders what pleasure or

4. *Benighted*: overtaken by darkness.

content can be in the service of God, because they see not by tasting how good He is. To be prying into and poring on invisible things is to them visible madness. But to the enlightened mind, the things that are not seen are only worth seeing, and while they appear not to be, they only are, whereas the things that are seen appear but to be, and are not. Though the surpassing sweetness of spiritual things should be spoke[n] of to them, who cannot favor the things of God, in such a manner as the glorious light of them did surround men, yet they can perceive no such thing. All is to them cunningly devised fables. Let be spoke what will, they see no form, no comeliness, no beauty in this glorious object—God in Christ reconciling sinners to Himself. Alas! The mind is blinded; the dungeon is within; and till Christ open the eyes as well as reveal His light, the soul abides in its blindness and is buried in midnight darkness. But when the Spirit of God opens the man's eyes, and he is translated by an act of omnipotency out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of His dear Son, which is a kingdom of marvelous light—oh what matchless beauty does he now see in these things, which appeared despicable and dark nothings to him till he got the unction, the eye salve, which teaches all things. Now he sees (what none without the Spirit can see) the things which God has prepared for them that love Him and are freely given them of God. And these, though seen at a distance, reflect such rays of beauty into his soul that he beholds and is ravished. He sees and is swallowed up in wonder.

But then, in the next place, this is not a spiritless inefficacious speculation about these things, to know no evil but sin and separation from God and no blessedness but in the fruition of Him. It is not such a knowledge of them as does not principle motion to pursue after them. This I grant is part of the image of God, when the Sun of Righteousness by arising

on the man has made daylight in his soul and by these divine discoveries has taught him to make the true parallel between things that differ and to put a just value on them according to their intrinsic worth. But this divine illumination does not consist in a mere notion of such things in the head, nor does it subsist in enlightening the mind, but in such an impression of God on the soul as transforms and changes the heart into His likeness by love. Knowledge is but one line, one draught or lineament of the soul's likeness to Him. That alone does not make up the image, but knowledge rooted in the heart and engraven on the soul, shining and showing itself forth in a gospel-adorning conversation, that makes a comely proportion. When the same hand that touched the eye and turned the man from darkness to light and gave a heart to know Him that He is the Lord, [then] that does also circumcise the man's heart to love the Lord his God with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his mind, and this love, manifesting its liveliness in its constraining power to live to Him and for Him. Light without heat is but wildfire; but light in the mind, begetting heat in the heart, making it burn Godward, Christward, and heavenward, light in the understanding, setting on fire and inflaming the affections, and these shining out in a heavenly conversation—[this] makes up the lively image of God, both in feature and stature, both in proportion and color. Faith begins this image and draws the lineaments. And love bringing forth obedience finishes and gives it the lively luster. The burnings of love in obedience to God is that which illuminates the whole and makes a man look indeed like Him to whose image he is predestinate[d] to be conform[ed]. And then [it] makes him who is ravished with the charms of that beauty say, as in a manner overcome by this, "How fair is your love, my sister, my spouse? How much better is your love than wine, and the smell of your ointments than all spices?" But

consider that as these beams which irradiate the soul are from the Spirit of Christ, so that spiritual heat and warmth come out of the same airth and proceed from the same author. For our fire burns as He blows. Our lamp shines as He snuffs and furnishes oil. Men therefore should not indulge themselves in this delusion to think that that which will pass for pure religion and undefiled before God consists either in an outward blameless conversation or in putting on and wearing an external garb of profession. No, as the top of it reaches higher, so the root of it lies deeper. It is rooted in the heart. This seed being sown in an honest heart (or making the heart honest in which it is sown) takes root downward and brings forth fruit upward. As trees that grow as far underground as above, so these trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord that He may be glorified, grow as far and as fast underground as above. Godliness grows as far downward in self-emptying, self-denial, and self-abasing, in hungering and thirsting after more of righteousness, in the secret engagements of the heart to God in Christ, in these burstings of heart and bleeding of soul, to which God alone is witness, because of shortcoming in holiness, because of a body of death within, and because of that law in the members warring against the law of the mind, and bringing often into captivity to the law of sin, as it grows upward in a profession. And this is that pure religion and undefiled before God, which is both most pleasant to Him and profitable to the soul.

But to make the difference between dead morality, in its best dress, and true godliness more clear and obvious [so] that loveliness of the one may engage men into a loathing of the other, this dead carion and stinking carcass of rotten morality, which still stinks in the nostrils of God, even when embalmed with the most costly ointments of its miserably misled patrons, we say that true godliness, which in quality and kind differs

from this much pleaded for and applauded morality, a black heathen by a mongrel kind of Christians baptized of late with the name of Christianity and brought into the temple of the Lord, concerning which He has commanded that it should never in that shape and for that end it is introduced enter into His congregation. And the bringers for their pains are like to seclude themselves forever from His presence. It respects Jesus Christ, first, as its principle; second, as its pattern; third, as its altar; and, fourth, as its end.

I. I say, true holiness in its being and operation respects Jesus Christ as its principle. "I live," said that shining saint, "yet not I, but Christ lives in me." As that which gives religion its first being is the religation of the soul to God, so that which gives it motion and draws forth that life into action is the same God's working all their works in them and for them, so that in all they do they are workers together with God. Every act of holiness is an act of the soul made alive to God through Jesus Christ and quickened to each action by the supervenience⁵ of new life and influence. "Therefore," says Christ, "without Me you can do nothing." It is not, "Being out of Me you can do nothing," for He spoke it to those who were in Him, but, "If you leave Me out in doing, all you do will be nothing." 'Tis Jesus Christ who gives life and legs, so that our runnings are according to His drawings. "My soul follows hard after Thee," said that holy man. But from where is all this life and vigor? "Thy right hand upholds me." Oh! It is the upholdings and helpings of this right hand, enlarging the man's heart, that makes a running in the ways of His commandments. It is He who, while the saints work out the work of their own salvation, works in them both to will and to do. It is He who gives power

5. *Supervenience*: to follow after.

to the faint and who, to them that have no might, increases strength, so that the poor, lifeless, languishing lie-by is made to mount up with eagle's wings and surmount all these difficulties with a holy facility, which were simply insuperable and pure impossibilities. Now the man runs and does not weary, because Christ draws; and he walks and does not faint, because Christ, in whom dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily, dwells in him and walks in him, and dwells in him for that very end that he may have a completeness and competency of strength for duty. All grace is made to abound to him, that he, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound unto every good work. He is able of himself to do nothing, no, not to think anything as he ought. But he has a sufficiency of God by which he is thoroughly furnished unto every good work, so that he may say, "I am able for all things." It is more than "I am able to do all things," as we read it. Its just import is, "I am able to do all things and to endure all things." And that which keeps it from vain boasting is what is added: "through Christ which strengthened me," or, "putting power in me," or rather, "empowering me," which is by a supervenient act drawing forth life into a liveliness of exercise, according to the present exigent. There is a power in a saint, because Christ is in him, that overpowers all the powers of darkness without and all the power of indwelling corruption within, so that when the poor weak creature is ready to despond within sight of his duty and say, because of difficulty, "What is my strength that I should hope?"—[then] Christ says, "Despond not. My grace is sufficient for you, and My power will rest on you." [And this will be] to a reviving you and raising you up and putting you in case to say, "When I am weak, then I am strong. His strength, who empowers me, is made perfect in my weakness, so that I will glory in my infirmities and be glad in being grace's debtor." But what power is that which raises the dead

sinner and carries the soul in its actings so far without the line and above the sphere of all natural activity, when stretched to its utmost? Oh, it is an exceeding[ly] great power which is to them-ward who believe, that must make all things, however difficult, easy, when He works in them to will and to do according to the working of His mighty power (or, as it is on the margin, and more emphatic, “of the might of His power”), which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand, etc. He that raised up the Lord Jesus from the dead raises up believers also by Jesus. And being raised and revived by Him to walk in newness of life, the life of Jesus, in its communications of strength, is manifest in their mortal flesh, according to that of the same apostle: “The life that I live in the flesh,” says he, “I live by the faith of the Son of God. Faith brings in Christ in my soul; and Christ, being my life, carries out my soul in all the acts of obedience in which, though I be the formal agent, yet the efficiency and the power by which I operate is from Him, so that I can give no better account of it than this: I, [and] not I.” But who then, if not you? “The grace of God,” says he, “which was with me.” But this mystery to our bold (because blind) moralists of an indwelling Christ working mightily in the soul is plain madness and melancholy. However, we understand his knowledge in the mystery of Christ who said, “The life I live in the flesh, etc.” And from what we understand of his knowledge in that mystery which he had by revelation, we understand our moralists to be men of corrupt minds, who concerning the faith have made shipwreck. But what is that, “The life I live in the flesh, etc.”? The import of it seems to be this, if not more: While I have in me a soul animating my body as the principle of all my vital and natural actions, I have Jesus Christ animating my soul. And by the impulse and communicate[d] virtue and strength of an indwelling Christ, I am made to run the ways of

His commandments, in which I take so great delight, that I am found of no duty as of my enemy.

II. The gospel holiness respects Jesus Christ as its pattern. It proposes no lower pattern for imitation than to be conform[ed] to His image (he that is begotten again into a lively hope, by the resurrection of Christ from the dead, girds up the loins of his mind, which are the affections of his soul, lest by falling flat on the earth he be hindered in running the race set before him, as looking to the forerunner, his pattern) in this girdle of hope, that he may be “holy in all manner of conversation,” keeping his eye on the precept and pattern, that his practice may be conform[able]. “It is written,” says he, “be ye holy, for I am holy.” The hope of seeing God and being ever with Him imposes a necessity on him who has it to look no lower than at Him who is glorious in holiness. And therefore he is said to purify himself even as He is pure. And knowing that this is the end of their being quickened together with Christ, that they may walk even as He walked, they in their working and walking aim at no less than to be like Him. And therefore [they] never sit down on any attained measure, as if they were already perfect. The spotless purity of God, expressed in His laws, is that to which they study assimilation. Therefore, they are still in motion toward this mark and are changed from one of glorious grace into another, into the same image, even as by the Spirit of the Lord, who never gives over His putting them to cleanse from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, till that be true in the truest sense: “You are all fair, my love; there is no spot in you.” And knowing that perfect fruition of him cannot be without the perfect conformity to Him, in this do they exercise themselves to grow in grace and to be still advancing toward some more likeness to His image, forgetting all their attainments as things that are behind, and by

their teachings forth to that which is before, make it evident that they make every begun degree of grace and conformity to God a prevenient capacity for a new degree which yet they have not attained. I know our moralists look on themselves as matchless, in talking of following His steps as He has left us an example. In this they make a flourishing with flaunting effrontery, but for all their boasting of wisdom, such a poor simple man as I am made to wonder at their folly, who proposing, as they say, the purity of Christ as their pattern, are not even thence convinced that in order to a conformity to this there is a simple and absolute necessity of the mighty operations of that Spirit of God, by which this end can be reached. But while they flout at the Spirit's working as a melancholy fancy, by which the soul is garnished with the beauty of holiness and made a habitation for God, I doubt not to say of these great sayers that they understand neither what they say nor of what they affirm. Indeed, does not the talking of the one, not only without seeing the necessity of the other but speaking against it, say in the heart of everyone who has not the heart of a beast that they have never yet got a sight of the holiness of that pattern nor of their own pollutions and impotency? For if they had, they would give themselves up to Jesus Christ to be washed by Him, without which they can have no part with Him. Oh there will be a vast difference at the latter day between them who have given their black souls to Jesus to bleach, when He will present them without spot, not only clothed with wrought gold but all glorious within, and those who have never dipped, indeed, who have despised to dip their defiled souls in any other fountain, save in the impure puddle of their own performances. This will make them loathsome in His sight and cause His soul [to] abhor those who have done this despite to the Spirit of grace as to slight that blessed fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, let them pretend as high as they will

to look to Him as a pattern; while, because the plague-sore is gone up in their eye, they look not to Him as a price nor to the grace of Jesus Christ as that which can only principle any acceptable performance of duty, He will plunge them in the ditch, and it will cost them their souls for rejecting the counsel of God against themselves in not making use of Him who came by water as well as by blood.

III. This gospel holiness respects Christ as the altar. It is in Him and for Him, that His soul is well pleased with our performance—this is the altar on which you must lay your gift and leave it, without which your labor is lost, and whatever you do is loathed as a corrupt thing. As believers draw all their strength from Him, so they expect acceptance only through Him, and for Him. They do not look for it, but in the beloved. They dare not draw near to God in duty, but by Him. This is the new and living way which is consecrate[d] for them. And if such who offer to come to God do not enter in here, instead of being admitted to a familiar converse with God, they will find Him a consuming fire. When the saints have greatest liberty in prayer, and so of all other performances, when their hearts are most lifted up in the ways of the Lord, they abhor at thinking their prayer can any otherways be set forth before Him as incense or the lifting up of their hands as the evening sacrifice, but as presented by the great intercessor and perfumed by the merit of His oblation. If they could weep out the marrow of their bones and the moisture of their body in mourning over sin, yet they durst⁶ not think of having what comes from so impure a spring and runs through so polluted a channel presented to God, but by Jesus Christ, in order to acceptance. For as they look to the exalted Savior to get their

6. *Durst*: to dare.

repentance from Him, so when by the pourings out on them of the Spirit of grace and supplication, He has made them [to] pour out their hearts before Him and has melted them into true tenderness so that their mourning is a great mourning, they carry back these tears to be washe[d] and bathed in His blood, as knowing without this of how little worth and value with God their salt water is. But when they are thus washed, He puts them in His bottle and then pours them out again to them in the wine of strong consolation. Thus are they made glad in His house of prayer, and their sighs and groans come up with acceptance on His altar. Oh blessed altar that sanctifies the gold! This is that altar to which the mocking moralist has no right. It is by Him that the poor believer offers up his sacrifice to God continually. Whatever he does in word or deed, he desires to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus. As he knows He lives to make intercession and to appear in the presence of God for His poor people, both to procure influences for duty and plead for acceptation, so he depends on Him for both, as knowing he can never otherways hear nor have it said to him, "Well done thou good and faithful servant." It may be he can do little. He has but a mite to offer. But he puts it in the mediator's hand to be presented to God. He has not gold nor silver nor purple to bring. He can do no great things. He has but goats' hair or rams' skins, but he gives them the right tincture. He makes them red in the blood of Christ, and so they are a beautiful incarnation.

But let us, on the other hand, take a short view of what our moralists substitute in its place, as in their account both more beautiful in the eye and more beneficial to the souls of men, in which I intend to be brief. I might comprehend the account to be given shortly and give it most exactly, yet truly in these few words. As the most undoubted deviation from and perfect opposition to the whole contrivance of

salvation and the conveyance of it into the souls of men, as revealed in this gospel which brings life and immortality to light, that fighters against the grace of God in its value and virtue can forge, stretching their blind reason to the overthrow of true religion and ruin of the souls of men. For to this height these masters of reason have in their blind rage risen up against the Lord and against His anointed. This is the dreadful period of that path, in which we are persuaded to walk, indeed hectored, if we would not forfeit the repute of men by these grand sophies, who arrogate to themselves the name and thing of knowledge, as if wisdom were to die with them. The deep mysteries of salvation, which angels desire to look into and only satisfy themselves with admiration at, must appear as respondents at their bar. And if they decline the judge and court as incompetent, they flee out and flout at subjecting this blind mole, man's reason, to the revelation of faith in a mystery. The manifold wisdom of God and the manifold grace of God must either condescend to their unfoldings and be content to speak in their dialect, or else these wits, these Athenian dictators, will give the deep things of God, because beyond their divings, the same entertainment which that great gospel preacher Paul met with from men of the same mold, kidney, and comple[x]ion, because he preached to them Jesus. "What would the babblers say," said they. The Spirit of wisdom and revelation they know not, they have not, they acknowledge not. Indeed, they despise Him in His saving and soul-ascertaining illuminations. And the workings of that mighty power to them-ward who believe is, to the men of this new mold (because they have not found it), an insufferable fancy to be exploded with a disdain and indignation, which discovers what spirit actuates them in this opposition.

But I would recommend to you who can neither purchase nor peruse what is more voluminous (however worthy) the

serious perusal, as of the whole of that savory and grace-breathing peace, the fulfilling of the Scriptures; so in this that short but sweet digression against black-mouthed Parker, in which the gracious author takes out his own soul and sets before your eye the image of God impressed on it. For while he deals with that desperado by clear and convincing reason, flowing natively from the pure fountain of divine revelation, he has the advantage of most men, and writers too, in silencing that proud blasphemer of the good ways of God with arguments taken from what he has found acted on his own soul. And likewise I would recommend as a sovereign antidote against this poison the diligent perusing and pondering of what is shortly hinted against the hellish belchings of the same unhallowed author (in the preface to that piece of great Mr. Durham on the commands) by a disciple, who, besides his natural acuteness and subactness⁷ of judgment in the depth of the gospel mysteries, is known by all who know him (and for myself, I know none now alive his equal) to have most frequent access to lean his head on his master's bosom, and so in best case to tell his fellow disciples and brethren what is breathed into his own soul, while he lives in these embraces and under the sheddings abroad of that love of God in his soul, which drew and did dictate these lines against that flouter at all such fruitions. Nor can I here omit to observe how, when the devil raised up Parker, that monster, to bark and blaspheme, the Lord raised up a Merveil to fight him at his own weapon, who did so cudgel and quell that boasting bravo as I know not if he be dead of his wound, but for anything I know, he has laid his speech.

It was not the author's design in this piece (leveled only at this mark to teach you how to make use of the strength and grace that is in Christ Jesus and find the promised ease

7. *Subactness*: the quality of being subdued.

in performance of duties, in handling of which argument he has been remarkably assisted. And you cannot read with attention, but you must bear him witness and bless the Lord on his behalf that he has hit the mark at which he aimed) to engage in a formal debate with these audacious moralists who would boast and bogle us out of the good old way in which, if men walk, they must find rest to their souls. Yet if by the doctrine he has here explained and pressed as the only way of life they do not find what a mortal wound he has given their morality, all the lovers of the truth will see it. And it may be, the Lord sparing life and continuing the same gracious and great assistance he has had in engaging with many and great adversaries to the truth at home and abroad, they may see somewhat from his pen which may make the lovers of our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and of the operations of His Spirit sing over these successors to Sisera, who with their jumping chariots and rattling wheels assault the truth. At his feet they bowed, they fell, they lay down at his feet, they bowed, they fell where they bowed, there they fell down dead; so let all the enemies of Thy truth perish, O Lord!

How to make the whole more useful for you, for whose advantage 'tis mainly intended, I leave to the author's own direction. Only this I must say: his method and mold in which he casts his sweet matter and his way of handling this so seasonable a subject is so accommodate[d] to each case and brought home to the conscience and down to the capacity of the meanest Christian, which was his aim—that the feeble, in this day, might be as David. That even though many worthy men have not only hinted but enlarged upon the same matter, yet you cannot but see some heart-endearing singularity in his way of improving and handling this great gospel truth. Next, I must tell you that as I myself read it with much satisfaction (though, alas, I dare not say, I have by reading reaped

the designed advantage), so that you may be blushed into a perusal of it and profiting by it, I must likewise tell you, I say, it has been turned into Dutch. And that it has not only met with great acceptation among all the serious and godly in these parts who have seen it, but is much sought after. And they profess themselves singularly by this edified and set a-going after God by its efficacious persuasiveness, with a singing alacrity. And if it have not the same effect on you and me, they and it will arise up against us in judgment.

Up, therefore, Christians, and be doing. Listen to such a teacher, who, lest you tire in your race or turn back, teaches you a certain and sweet way of singular proficiency and progress in the ways of God. It may be it is not your work nor mine to write both against these soul-murdering, however magnified, methods of taking men off Jesus Christ. But our penury of parts for that should first put us to seek plenty of tears that we may weep to see our master so wounded by the piercing pens of those who, to patronize their mock religion, wrest the Scriptures and with wicked hands wring the Word of the Lord till it weep blood. This, I say, should provoke you and me to weep on Him till He appear and beat the pens of such deceivers out of their hand by a blow of His. Second, it should provoke us to know the truth that we may contend earnestly for the faith delivered to the saints, and to have these contradicted truths so impressed in their life on our souls that the pen of the most subtle pleader for this perversion of the gospel may neither delete these nor be able to stagger us, but we may, from the efficacious working of these, have the witness in ourselves and know the men who teach otherways not to be of God. Third, it should be our ambition, when the all of religion is cried down and a painted shadow, a putrid, however perfumed, nothing put in its place, to make it appear by our practice that religion is an elevation of the soul above the sphere and activity

of dead morality, and that it is no less or lower principle that acts us than Christ dwelling in us and walking in us. How can the love of God and of Christ and of the Spirit be in us, if these perverse praters against the power of godliness provoke us not to emit a practical declaration to the world and extort a testimony to His grace by our way from the enemies of it? Improve, therefore, this His special help to that purpose, which in a most seasonable time is brought to your hand.

But to sum up all shortly, there are but three things which make religion a heavy burden. First, the blindness of the mind, and here you are taught to make use of that eye salve by which the eyes of the blind see out of obscurity and out of darkness. He who formerly erred in spirit, by the light held forth in these lines, may see a surpassing beauty in the ways of God. Second, that aversion and unwillingness which is in the mind by which the sweet and easy yoke of His commands is spurned at as heavy. In order to the removing of it, and that you may be among His willing people, here you have Christ held forth in His conquering beauty, displaying His banner of love over souls, so that you cannot look on Him as held forth, but faith will bow your neck to take on His yoke, because it sees it is lined with the love of Christ. And then this love that lines the yoke, shed abroad in the heart, will constrain to a bearing of it. But, third, when the spirit is willing, there remains yet much weakness. Love kindled in the heart conquers the mind into a compliance with His will and a complacency in His commands. But its greatest strength is often to weep over a withered hand. Now that your hands which fall down may be made strong for labor, and you may be girded with strength and have grace for grace, indeed, all grace to make you abound unto every good word and work, the author leads you up to the full fountain of all gospel furniture and strength and teaches you how to make use of Christ as your sufficiency for working all your works in

you and for you. I say, therefore, again to you: Take heart; let not your hands fall down; essay nothing you would have well done or easily done in your own strength, but yet however difficult the duty be, approach it as having no confidence in the flesh but with an eye to your stock, that rich storehouse of all furniture. And it will be with you as it was with the priests, before whom Jordan recoiled, so soon as their foot entered within the brink. God will make your difficulties vanish and, by the illapses of the Spirit of power and might from Jesus Christ depended on, will so strengthen you that your duty is made easy to admiration and becomes the delight of your soul. Pray for the continuance of the life of the author, who, by his assiduous working for Christ, has been often near unto death, not regarding his own life to supply the lack of other men's service to the interest and church of God. And let him be comforted for this piece of travel undertaken for your soul's interest by hearing you do improve it to your advantage, for which it is so exactly calculate[d]. And with all I beg your fervent and earnest intercessions for grace and more grace, to him who is your poor yet soul's well-wisher and servant for Christ's sake,

—R. M. W.

CHAPTER 1

The Introduction with Some General Observations from the Cohesion

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

—JOHN 14:6

Doubtless it is always useful, indeed, necessary for the children of God to know the right way of making use of Christ, who is made all things to them which they need, even “wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Cor. 1:30). But it is never more necessary for believers to be clear and distinct in this matter than when Satan by all means is seeking to pervert the right ways of the Lord and, one way or other, to lead souls away and draw them off Christ, knowing that, if he prevail here, he has gained his point. And therefore he endeavors not only to darken it by error, either more gross or more subtle, but also to darken it by mistakes and prejudices. From this, it comes to pass that not only strangers are made to wander out of the way, but oftentimes many of His own people are walking in darkness of ignorance and mistakes and remain lean through want of the real exercise of the life of faith, which would make them fat and flourishing, because it would make them “strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might” [Eph. 6:10] and to grow up in Christ in all things.

The clearing up then of this truth cannot but be most seasonable now, when Satan is prevailing with many whom he cannot get tempted to looseness and profanity to sit down on something which is not Christ and to rest on something with themselves distinct from Him, both in the matter of justification and sanctification. This subtle adversary is now setting some to work to cry up¹ by preaching, speaking, and printing a way to heaven which is not Christ—a kind of morality, civility, and outward holiness on which the soul is to rest. And this holiness, not wrought and effectuated through the strength of Jesus [nor] by faith sucking life and furniture² from Him, but through our own art and skill, which in effect is nothing but an extract of refined popery, Socinianism, and Arminianism, devised and broached of purpose to draw the soul off Christ that he may stand on his own legs and walk by his own power and thank himself, at least in part, for the crown at length.

Further, through the great goodness of God, the true way of a soul's justification is admirably cleared up, and many are, at least theoretically, acquainted with it, and many also practically, to the quieting of their wakened consciences and stopping the mouth of their accusers and obtaining of peace, joy, and the lively hope of the everlasting crown. Yet many gracious souls profess their unacquaintedness with the solid and thriving way of use-making of Christ for growth in grace and true sanctification. Therefore, some discovery of the truth here cannot but be useful, seasonable, indeed, and acceptable to them. If He who is the truth would give grace to understand and to unfold this so necessary and always advantageous a truth and would help to write of and explain this truth by faith in Him who is here said to be the truth, then should we

1. *To cry up*: to create.

2. *Furniture*: necessary equipment, help, or sustenance.

have cause to bless and magnify His name. But if He, because of sin, will hide Himself and not let out these beams of light by which we might discover light, we will but darken counsel with words without our knowledge and leave the matter as unclear as ever. Therefore is it necessary there be both in him that writes and in such as read a single dependence on Him who is for a leader (Isa. 55:5) and has promised to “bring the blind by a way that they knew not” and to “lead them in paths that they have not known” and to “make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight” (Isa. 42:16), that thus by acting faith on Him we may find insofar the truth of this verified—namely, that He is the way, the truth, and the life.

Now, for clearing up of this matter, we would know that our Lord Jesus from the beginning of this chapter is laying down some grounds of consolation, sufficient to comfort His disciples against the sad news of His departure and death and to encourage them against the fears they had of much evil to befall them when their Lord and Master should be taken from them, which is a sufficient proof of the tender heart of Jesus, who allows all His followers strong consolation against all fears, hazards, troubles, and perplexities which they can meet with in their way. He will not leave them comfortless, and therefore He lays down strong grounds of consolation to support their drooping and fainting hearts, as loving to see His followers always rejoicing in the Lord and singing in the ways of Zion—that the world may see and be convinced of a reality in Christianity and of the preferableness of that life, despite all the troubles that attend it to any other, however sweet and desirable it may appear to flesh and blood.

In prosecution of which design, He told them that they knew where He went and the way also which He was to take and by which He was to bring them to the Father (v. 4) to the mansion spoken of, and so to life eternal. But Thomas rashly

and incredulously (as too usually he did, [John] 11:16; 20:25) vents himself and little less than contradicts his Master, saying, “We know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?” (v. 5), in which we have an emblem of many a believer who may have more grace and knowledge of God and of Christ than they will be able to see or acknowledge that they have, what through temptations, inward distempers, sense of their many defects and great ignorance, strong desires of high measures, clearer discoveries of the vastness of the object, mistakes about the true nature of grace, despising the day of small things, and indistinctness as to the actings of grace, or want of understanding and right uptaking of grace in its various outgoings and actings under various notions, and the like.

On which, Christ, after His usual manner, takes occasion to clear up that ground of consolation further to them and to let them see the true way of coming to the Father, that by this they might be helped to see that they were not such strangers to the way as they supposed. And, in addition, He amplifies and lays out the properties and excellencies of this way as being the only true and living way, and that in such a manner as they might both see the way to be perfect, full, safe, saving, and satisfying and also learn their duty of improving this way always and in all things until they come home at length to the Father, saying, “I am the way, the truth, the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

Christ, [by] then saying that He not only is the way to the Father—even the true way—but that He is so the true way as that He is also truth itself in the abstract; and so the living way, that He is life itself in the abstract—[this] gives us ground to consider after what manner it is that He is the truth and the life, as well as the way, and that for clearing up and discovering of Him being an absolutely perfect, transcendently excellent, incomparably preferable, and fully satisfying way, useful to

believers in all cases, all exigents, all distresses, all difficulties, all trials, all temptations, all doubts, all perplexities, and in all causes or occasions of distempers, fears, faintings, discouragements, etc., which they may meet with in their way to heaven. And this will lead us to clear up the duty of believers, on the other hand, and to show how they should in all their various cases and difficulties make use of Christ as the only all-sufficient way to the Father and as truth and life in the way—and so we will be led to speak of Christ being to His people all that is requisite for them here in the way, whether for justification or sanctification, and how people are to make use of Him as being all, or, as being made of “God...unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Cor. 1:30).

Before we come to the words in particular, we would look on them as having relation to Thomas’s words in the preceding verse, in which he did little less than contradict what Christ had said in verse 4 and learn several very comfortable points of doctrine, as:

I. That Jesus Christ is very tender of His followers and will not cast them off nor upbraid them for every escape by which they may provoke Him to anger and grieve His Spirit. But [He] gently passes by many of their failings when He finds they are not obstinate in their mistake nor perverse in their way. For how gently and meekly does He here pass over Thomas’s unhandsome expression, finding that Thomas spoke here not out of obstinacy and pertinaciousness but out of ignorance and a mistake. And the reason is because (1) Christ knows our infirmity and weakness and is of a tender heart, and therefore [He] will not break the bruised reed (Isa. 42[:3]). Well knows He that rough and untender handling would crush us and break us all in pieces. And (2) He is full of bowels of mercy and can

have compassion on them that are out of the way and can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities (Heb. 4:15; 5:2).

Which truth, as on the one hand, should encourage all to choose Him for their leader and give up themselves to Him who is so tender of His followers. So, on the other hand, it should rebuke such as are ready to entertain evil and hard thoughts of Him, as if He were a hard master and ill to be followed, and put all from entertaining the least thought of His untenderness and want of compassion.

II. But, moreover, we see that weaknesses and corruptions breaking out in believers when they are honestly and ingenuously laid open before the Lord will not fear Him away but rather engage Him the more to help and succor. Much of Thomas's weakness and corruption appeared in what he said, yet the same being honestly and ingenuously laid open to Christ not out of a spirit of contradiction but out of a desire to learn, Christ is so far from thrusting him away that He rather condescends the more out of love and tenderness to instruct him better and clear the way more fully. And that because (1) He knows our mold and fashion, how feckless³ and frail we are, and that if He should deal with us according to our folly, we should quickly be destroyed. (2) He is not as a man, hasty, rash, proud; but gentle, loving, tender, and full of compassion. (3) It is His office and proper work to be an instructor to the ignorant and a helper of our infirmities and weaknesses, a physician to bind up and cure our sores and wounds.

Who would not then willingly give up themselves to such a teacher that will not thrust them to the door nor give them up to themselves always when their corruptions would provoke Him to it? And what a madness is this in many to stand back

3. *Feckless*: weak or useless.

from Christ because of their infirmities and to scar⁴ at Him because of their weakness, when the more corruption we find, the more we should run to Him? And it is soon enough to depart from Christ when He thrusts us away and says He will have no more to do with us. Indeed, He will allow us to stay after we are thrice thrust away. Only let us take heed that we approve not ourselves in our evils, that we hide them not as unwilling to part with them, that we obstinately maintain them not nor ourselves in them, but that we lie open before Him and deal with Him with honesty, ingenuousness, and plainness.

III. We see, further, that ignorance ingenuously acknowledged and laid open before Christ puts the soul in a fair way to get more instruction. Thomas having candidly according as he thought in the simplicity of his heart professed his ignorance is in a fair way now to get instruction. For this is Christ's work: to instruct the ignorant, to open the eyes of the blind.

Why then are we so foolish as to conceal our ignorance from Him and to hide our case and condition from Him, and why does not this commend Christ's school to us so much the more? Why do we not carry as ingenious scholars,⁵ really desirous to learn?

IV. But we may learn that our ill condition and distempers put into Christ's hand will have remarkable out-gates⁶ and an advantageous issue, seeing Christ takes occasion here from Thomas laying open his condition, not without some mixture of corruption, to clear up the truth more fully and plainly than it was before. For by this (1) Christ gives an open declaration of the glory of His power, mercy, goodness, wisdom,

4. *Scar*: glare at or be disgusted by.

5. *Scholars*: students.

6. *Out-gates*: escapes.

etc. (2) He has occasion to give a proof of His divine art and glorious skill of healing diseased souls and of making broken bones stronger than ever they were. (3) Thus He effectually accomplished His noble designs and perfects His work in a way tending to abase man by discovering his infirmities and failings and to glorify Himself in His goodness and love. (4) Thus He triumphs more over Satan and in a more remarkable and glorious manner destroys his works. (5) Thus He declares how wonderfully He can make all things work together for good to His chosen ones that love Him and follow Him. (6) Indeed, thus He engages souls to wonder more at His divine wisdom and power; to despair less in time coming when cases would seem hard; to acknowledge His great and wonderful grace and His infinite power and wisdom that can bring life out of death; and also to be more sensible of the mercy and thankful for it.

Oh, believer, what manner of joy is here! How happy you are that has given up yourself to Him! Your worst condition can turn to your advantage. He can make your ignorance, vented with a mixture of corruption, turn to the increase of your knowledge. Bless Him for this and with joy and satisfaction abide under His tutory⁷ and at His school. And in addition, be not discouraged, be your case of ignorance and corruption what it will. Lay it before Him with sincerity and singleness of heart and then you may glory in your infirmities, “that the power of Christ may rest upon [you]” (2 Cor. 12:9), for you will see in due time what advantage infinite love and wisdom can bring to your soul by this.

May not this be a strong motive to induce strangers to give up themselves to Him who will sweetly take occasion at their failings and shortcomings to help them forward in the way?

7. *Tutory*: teaching or instruction.

And what excuse can they have who sit [under] the call of the gospel and say, in effect, they will not go to Christ because their case is not good? And, oh, that believers were not sometimes led away with this error of scaring at Christ because of infirmities seen and discovered!

V. It is remarkable that as the disciples did oftentimes vent much of their carnal conceptions of the kingdom of Christ as apprehending it to be some carnal, outward, pompous, stately, and, on that account, desirable condition, so there might be much of this carnal apprehension lurking under this acknowledgment and question of Thomas. And the Lord, who knew their thoughts, does here wisely draw them off those notions and sets them about another study to tell us that it is best and most useful and profitable for us to be much taken up in the study and search of necessary fundamental truths and, particularly, of the way to the Father. For (1) here is the substantial food of the soul. Other notions are but vain, and oftentimes they make the case of the soul worse; but the study of this is always edifying. (2) The right understanding of this and other fundamental truths will not puff up but keep the soul humble and will make the soul active and diligent in duty. (3) The fruit of this study is profitable and lasting. (4) And the right uptaking of these truths will discover the vanity of other sciences, falsely so called, and the folly of spending our time about other things. (5) The right understanding of this fundamental will help us to understand other truths the better. (6) A mistake in this and such like fundamentals or the ignorance of them is more dangerous than the ignorance of or mistake in other things.

Oh! If this were teaching us all in humility to be much in the study of such fundamental necessary truths as this is and to guard against a piece of vanity in affecting knowledge, the

effect of which is nothing but a puffing of us up with pride and conceit!

VI. We may here take notice of what may serve to discover Thomas's mistake, and what is the ground of Christ's assertion (v. 4), which Thomas does little less than contradict (v. 5)—namely, that such as had any acquaintance with Christ did according to the measure of their knowledge of Him both know heaven and the way to it. From this we see these truths:

1. Persons may have some real acquaintance with Christ and yet be for a time very indistinct in their notions about Him and apprehensions of Him. They may know Christ in some measure and yet look on themselves as great strangers to the knowledge of heaven and be often complaining of their ignorance of the right way to heaven.
2. Where there is the least measure of true acquaintance with Christ, with love to Him and a desire to know more of Him, Christ will take notice of it, though it be covered over with a heap of mistakes and accompanied with much ignorance, weakness, and indistinctness. He sees not as man sees, which is good news to some that are weak in knowledge and unable to give any good account of any knowledge they have—yet one thing they can say: that He who knows all things knows that they love Him.
3. Various are the dispensations of God's grace to His own. To some, He gives a greater [and] to others a lesser measure of knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven—and to one and the same person, more at one time than at another. Various are His manifestations and out-lettings of grace and love. Small beginnings may come to much at length. Thomas and

the rest of the disciples had but little clear and distinct apprehensions of the way of salvation through Jesus Christ. And yet, before all was done, they attained to such a measure of understanding in the mysteries of God as that we are said to be “built upon the foundation of the apostles...Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone” (Eph. 2:20). This should teach the best much sobriety and not to judge of all by themselves or to think that God’s way with them must be a standard or a rule by which to judge of all the rest, as if His way of dealing were one and the same with all.

4. The knowledge of Christ is all. Know Him, and we know heaven and the way to it; for on this ground does Christ make good what He said touching their knowing where He went and the way, and [He] answers the objection that Thomas did propose—namely, because He was the way, etc., and they, being acquaint[ed] with Him (which here is presupposed), were not ignorant of the place where He was going nor of the way leading there. The knowledge then of Jesus Christ is a true and full compend[ium] of all saving knowledge. Hence it is life eternal to know Him (John 17:3). They that know Him know the Father (8:19; 14:9). They that see Him see the Father also (14:9). He is in the Father, and the Father, in Him (10:38; 14:10–11; 17:21). And so, knowing Him, they know heaven, for what is heaven else but the presence and glorious manifestations of the Father? For when Christ speaks of Him going to heaven, He says He was going to the Father. So, knowing Him, they know the way—both how Christ was to go to heaven as

our cautioner,⁸ head, and attorney, and how we must follow.

Let then a man have never so much knowledge and be acquainted with the mysteries of all arts and sciences and with the depths of nature and intrigues of states and all the theory of religion. If he be unacquainted with Jesus, he knows nothing as he ought to know.

And, on the other hand, let a poor soul that is honest and has some knowledge of and acquaintance with Him be satisfied, though he cannot discourse nor dispute nor speak to cases of conscience as some others. If we know Him, it matters not though we be ignorant of many things and by this become less esteemed of by others. Here is the true test by which we may take a right estimate of our own or of others' knowledge. The true rule to try knowledge by is not fine notions, clear and distinct expressions, but heart-acquaintance with Him "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:3).

Oh, sad! That we are not more taken up in this study which would be a compendious way for us to know all. Why spend we our money for that which is not bread and our labor for that which will not profit us? Why waste we our time and spirits in learning this science and that art, when, alas, after we with much labor and toil have attained to the yondmost pitch there, we are never one whit the nearer heaven and happiness? Indeed, it were well if we were not further off! Oh! If we were wise at length and could think more of this one thing necessary and could be stirred up to learn more of Him and to make this the subject of all our study and labor.

8. *Cautioner*: surety.