

DIRECTION I.—SECOND GENERAL PART

[The reason why the Christian must be armed, ‘That ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.’]

These words present us with the reason why the Christian soldier is to be thus completely armed, ‘That ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.’ The strength of this argument lies in these two particulars [or branches]. **FIRST**, The danger, if unarmed. The enemy is no mean contemptible one, no less than the devil, set out as a cunning engineer by his wiles and stratagems. **SECOND**, The certainty of standing against all his wits and wiles, if we be thus armed. As [there is] no standing without armour, so [there is] no fear of falling into the fiend’s hands if armed.

BRANCH FIRST.

[The danger, if unarmed.]

The saint's enemy is the devil, described by his wiles, properly, the methods of Satan. [The Greek word¹] signifies, the art and order one observes in handling a point; we say such a one is methodical. Now because it shows ingenuity and acuteness of wit so to compose a discourse, therefore it is transferred to express the subtlety of Satan, in laying off his plots and stratagems, in his warlike preparations against the Christian. Indeed the expert soldier hath his order as well as the scholar; there is method in forming of an army, as well as framing an argument. The note which lies before us is—

DOCTRINE, That the devil is a very subtle enemy. The Christian is endangered most by his policy and craft. He is called the old serpent—the serpent subtle above other creatures; an old serpent above other serpents. Satan was too crafty for man in his perfection, much more now in his maimed estate, having never recovered that first crack he got in his understanding, by the fall of Adam. And as man hath lost, so Satan hath gained more and more experience; he lost his wisdom, indeed, as soon as he became a devil, but, ever since, he hath increased his craft; though he hath not wisdom enough to do himself good, yet [he hath] subtlety enough to do others hurt. God shows us where his strength lies, when he promiseth he will bruise the head of the serpent; his head

crushed, and he dies presently. Now in handling this point of Satan’s subtlety, we shall consider him in his two main designs, and therein show you his wiles and policies. **HIS FIRST MAIN DESIGN** is to draw into sin. The **SECOND MAIN DESIGN** is to accuse, vex, and trouble the saint for sin.

[SATAN'S FIRST MAIN DESIGN
is to draw into sin.]

FIRST. Let us consider the devil as a tempter to sin, and there he shows us his wily subtlety in three things. **First**. In choosing the most advantageous season for temptation. **Second**. In managing the temptations, laying them in such a method and form as shows his craft. **Third**. In pitching on fit instruments for his turn, to carry on his design.

[Satan’s subtlety in choosing the most
advantageous seasons for tempting.]

First. Satan shows his subtlety in choosing the most proper and advantageous seasons for tempting. ‘To every thing there is a season,’ Solomon saith, *Ecc.* 3:1, that is, a nick of time, which taken, gives facility and speedy despatch to a business; and therefore the same wise man gives this reason why man miscarries so frequently, and is disappointed in his enterprises, ‘because he knows not his time,’ *Ecc.* 9:12. He comes when the bird is flown. A hundred soldiers at one time may turn a battle, save an army, when thousands will not do [it] at another. Satan knows when to make his approaches, when (if at any time) he is most

1. μεθοδειας του διαβολου.

likely to be entertained. As Christ hath the tongue of the learned to speak a word in season of counsel and comfort, to a doubting dropping soul, so Satan knows his black heart, and hellish skill, in speaking words of seduction and temptation in season; and a word in season is a words on its wheels. I shall give you a view of his subtlety in special seasons, which he chooseth to tempt in. These special seasons are:

1. Season. When the Christian is newly converted. No sooner is this child of grace, the new creature, born, but this dragon pours a flood of temptation after it. He learned the Egyptians but some of his own craft, when he taught them that bloody and cruel baptism, which they exercised upon the Israelitish babes, in throwing them into the river as soon as they were born. The first cry of the new creature gives all the legions of hell an alarm. They are as much troubled at it as Herod and Jerusalem were when Christ was born; and now they sit in council to take away the life of this new-born king. The apostles met with opposition and persecution in their latter days when endued with larger portions of the Spirit, but with temptations from Satan in their former, when young converts; as you may observe in the several passages recorded of them. Satan knew grace within was but weak, and the supplies promised at the Spirit's coming not landed. And when is an enemy more like to carry the town than in such a low condition? And therefore he tries them all. Indeed the advantages are so many, that we may wonder how the young convert escapes with his life; knowledge [being] weak, and [he] so soon let him into an error, especially in divided times, when many ways are held forth one saying, Here is Christ, another There is Christ. And the Christian [is] ready to think every one means honestly that comes with good words, as a little child that hath lost his way to his father's house, is prone to follow any that offer their conduct [or] experience of what he knows little. And if Adam, whose knowledge [was] so perfect, yet was soon cheated—being assaulted before he was well warm in his new possessions—how much more advantage hath Satan of the new convert! In him he finds every grace in a great indisposition to make resistance, both from its own weakness, and the strength of contrary corruption, which commonly in such is unmortified. [This] makes it act with more difficulty and mixture,

as in a fire newly kindled, where the smoke is more than the flame, or like beer newly tunned which runs thick. So that though there appear more strength of affection in such, that it works over into greater abundance of duty than in others, yet [it is] with more dregs of carnal passions, which Satan knows, and therefore chooseth to stir what he sees troubled already.

2. Season. When the Christian is beset with some great affliction, this is as blind lane or solitary place, fit for this thief to call for his purse in. An expert captain first labours to make a breach in the wall, and then falls on in storming the city. Satan first got power from God to weaken Job in his estate, children, health and other comforts he had, and now tempts him to impatience, and what not; he lets Christ fast forty days before he comes, and then he falls to his work; as an army stays till a castle be pinched for provision within, and then sends a parley, never more likely to be embraced than in such a strait. A temptation comes strong when the way to relief seems to lie through the sin that Satan is wooing to; when one is poor and Satan comes, What! wilt starve rather than step over the hedge and steal for thy supply? this is enough to put flesh and blood to the stand.

3. Season. When the Christian is about some notable enterprise for God's glory, then Satan will lie like a serpent in the way, 'an adder in the path, that biteth his horse-heels, so that his rider shall fall backward.' Thus he stood at Joshua's right hand 'to resist him.' The right hand is the working hand, and his standing there implies the desire to hinder him in his enterprise. Indeed the devil was never friend to temple-work, and therefore that work is so long a doing. What a handsome excuse doth he help the Jews unto—The time is not come! God's time was come, but not the devil's, and therefore he helps them to this poor shift, Ezra 1, 2, 6, 8, perverting the sense of providence as if it were not time, because they were so poor; whereas they thrive no better because they went no sooner about the work, as God tells them plainly. Paul and Barnabas had a holy design in their thoughts, to [go] visit the brethren in every city, and strengthen their faith. The devil knew what a blow this might give to his kingdom; their visiting might hinder him in his circuit, and he stirs

up an unhappy difference between these two holy men, who grow so hot that they part in this storm, Acts 15:36-39. There were two remarkable periods of Christ's life, his intrat and exit, his entrance into his public ministry at his baptism, and his finishing it at his passion, and at both we have the devil fiercely encountering him. The more public thy place, Christian, and the more eminent thy service for God, the more thou must look that the devil [will have] some more dangerous design or other against thee; and therefore if every private soldier needs armour against Satan's bullets of temptation, then the commanders and officers, who stand in the front of the battle, much more.

4. Season. When he hath the presence of some object to enforce his temptation. Thus he takes Eve when she is near the tree, and had it in her eye while he should make the motion, [so] that [by] assaulting two ports at once, it might be the harder for her to hinder the landing of his temptation; and if Eve's eye did so soon affect her heart with an inordinate desire, then much more now is it easy for him, by the presence of the object, to excite and actuate that lust which lies dormant in the heart. As Naomi sent her daughter to lie at the feet of Boaz, knowing well, if he endured her there, there were hope he might take her into his bed at last. If the Christian can let the object come so near, Satan will promise himself [that] his suit may in time be granted. Therefore it should be our care, if we would not yield to the sin, not to walk by, or sit at, the door of the occasion. Look not on that beauty with a wandering eye, by which thou wouldst not be taken prisoner. Parley not with that in thy thoughts, which thou meanest not to let into thy heart. Conversation begets affection: some by this have been brought to marry those, whom at first they thought they could not have liked.

5. Season. After great manifestations of God's love, then the tempter comes. Such is the weak constitution of grace, that it can neither well bear smiles or frowns from God without a snare; as one said of our English nation,² it cannot well bear liberty nor bondage in the height. So neither can the soul. If God smile and open himself a little familiar to us,

then we are prone to grow high and wanton; if the frown, then we sink as much in our faith. Thus the one, like fair weather and warm gleams, brings up the weeds of corruption; and the other, like sharp frosts, nips and even kills the flowers of grace. The Christian is in danger on both hands; therefore Satan takes the advantage, when the Christian is flush of comfort, even as a cheater, who strikes in with some young heir, when he hath newly received his rents, and never leaves till he hath eased him of his money. Thus Satan lies upon the catch, then to inveigle a saint into one sin or other, which he knows will soon leak out his joy. Had ever any a larger testimony from heaven than Peter? Matt. 16:17, where Christ pronounceth him blessed, and puts a singular honour upon him, making him the representative of all his saints. No doubt this favour to Peter stirred up the envious spirit the sooner to fall upon him. If Joseph's parti-coloured coat made the patriarchs to plot against him their brother, no wonder malice should prompt Satan to show his spite, where Christ had set such a mark of love and honour; and therefore we find him soon at Peter's elbow, making him his instrument to tempt his Master, who rebukes Peter with a 'get thee behind me, Satan.' He that seemed a rock even now, through Satan's policy is laid as a stone of offence for Christ to stumble at. So [with] David, when he had received such wonderful mercies, settled in his throne with the ruin of his enemies, yea, pardoned for his bloody sin, and now ready to lay down his head with peace in the dust, Satan chops in to cloud his clear evening, and tempts him to number the people; so ambitious is Satan then chiefly to throw the saint into the mire of sin, when his coat is cleanest.

6. Season. At the hour of death, when the saint is down and prostrate in his bodily strength, now this coward falls upon him. It is the last indeed he hath for the game; now or never; overcome him now and ever. As they say of the natural serpent³, he is never seen at his length till dying; so this mystical serpent never strains his wits and wiles more, than when his time is short. The saint is even stepping into eternity, and now he treads upon his heel, which he cannot

2. Totam nee pati potest libertatem nec servitatem.

3. Nunquam nisi moriens, producitur in longum.

trip up so as to hinder his arrival in heaven, yet at least to bruise it, that he may go with more pain thither.

[Satan's subtlety in managing his temptations, where several stratagems used by him to deceive the Christian are laid down.]

Second. The second way wherein Satan shows his tempting subtlety, is in those stratagems he useth to deceive the Christian, managing his temptations, laying them in such a method and form, as shows his craft.

1. Stratagem. He hangs out false colours, and comes up to the Christian in the disguise of a friend, so that the gates are opened to him, and his motions received with applause, before either be discovered. Therefore he is said to 'transform himself into an angel of light,' II Cor. 11:14. Of all plots it is most dangerous, when he appears in Samuel's mantle, and silvers his foul tongue with fair language. Thus in point of error he corrupts some in their judgement, by commending his notions for special gospel-truths, and like a cunning chapman⁴ puts off his old ware (errors I mean that have lain long upon his hand), only turning them a little after the mode of the times, and they go for new light, under the skirt of Christian liberty. He conveys in libertinism, by crying up the Spirit. He decries and vilifies the Scripture, by magnifying faith. He labours to undermine repentance, and blow up good works. By bewailing the corruption of the church in its administrations, he draws unstable souls from it, and amuseth them, till at last they fall into a giddiness⁵, and can see no church at all in being. And he prevails no less on the hearts and lives of men by this wile, than on their judgments. Under the notion of zeal, he kindles sometimes a dangerous flame of passion and wrath in the heart, which like a rash fire makes the Christian's spirit boil over into unchristian desires of, and prayers for, revenge where he should forgive. Of this we have an instance of the disciples, Luke 9:54, where two holy men are desiring that 'fire may come down

4. CHAPMAN: a peddler, hawker, archaic; a trader.—SDB

5. Vertigo.

from heaven.' Little did they think from whence they had their coal that did so heat them, till Christ told them, 'Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of,' ver. 55. Sometimes he pretends pity and natural affection, which in some cases may be good counsel, and all the while he desires to promote cowardice and sinful self-love, whereby the Christian may be brought to fly from his colours, shrink from the truth, or decline some necessary duty of his calling. This wile of his, when he got Peter to be his spokesman, saying, Master, pity thyself, Christ soon spied, and stopped his mouth with that sharp rebuke, 'Get thee behind me, Satan.' O what need have we to study the Scriptures, our hearts, and Satan's wiles, that we may not bid this enemy welcome, and all the while think it is Christ that is our guest!

2. Stratagem. Is to get intelligence of the saint's affairs. This is one great wheel in the politician's clock, to have spies in all places, by whom they are acquainted with the counsels and motions of their enemies, and [as] this gives them advantage to disappoint their designs, so also more safely to compass their own. It is no hard matter for him to play this game well, that sees his enemies' hands. David knew how the squares went at court, Jonathan's arrows carried him the news; and accordingly he removed his quarters, and was too hard for his great enemy Saul. Satan is the greatest intelligencer in the world; he makes it his business to inquire into the inclinations, thoughts, affections, purposes of the creature, that finding which humour abounds, he may apply himself accordingly,—[finding] which way the stream goes, that he may open the passage of temptation, and cut the channel to fall of the creature's affections, and not force it against the torrent of nature. Now if we consider but the piercing apprehension of the angelic nature, how quick he is to take the scent which way the game goes, by a word dropped, the cast of an eye, or such a small matter—signal enough to give him the alarm; if we consider his experience in heart-anatomy, having inspected, and as it were dissected, so many in his long practice, whereby his knowledge is much perfected, as also his great diligence to add to both these, being as close a student as ever, considering the saints, and studying how he may do them a mischief, as we see in Job's case, whom he had so observed, that he was able to give an answer ex

tempore to God, [as to] what Job's state and present posture was, and what might be the most probable means of obtaining his will of him; and besides all this, the correspondence that he hath with those in and about the Christian, from whom he learns much of his estate, as David [did] by Hushai in Absalom's counsel;—all these considered, it is almost impossible for the creature to stir out of the closet of his heart, but it will be known whither he inclines. Some corrupt passion or other will bewray the soul to him, as they did [bewray] David to Saul, who told him where he might find him, in the wilderness of Engedi, I Sam. 24:4. Thus will these give intelligence to Satan, and say [to him], If thou wouldst surprise such a one, he is gone that way, you will have him in the wood of worldly employments, over head and ears in the desires of this life. See where another sits under a bower, delighting himself in this child, or that gift, endowment of mind, or the like; lay but the lime-twig⁶ there, and you shall soon have him in it. Now Satan having thus intelligence, lets him alone to act his part. He sure cannot be at a loss himself, when his scholars, the Jesuits I mean, have such agility of mind, to wreath and cast themselves into any form becoming the persons they would seduce. Is ambition the lust the heart favours? O the pleasing projects that he will put such upon! How easily, having first blown them up with vain hopes, doth he draw them into horrid sins. Thus Haman, that he may have a monopoly of his prince's favour, is hurried into that bloody plot, fatal at last to himself against the Jews. Is uncleanness the lust after which the creature's eye wanders? Now he will be the pander, to bring him and his minion together. Thus he, finding Amnon sick of this disease, sends Jonadab, a deep-pated fellow, II Sam. 13.3, to put this fine device into his head of feigning himself sick, whereby his sister fell into his snare.

3. Stratagem. In his gradual approaches to the soul. When he comes to tempt, he is modest, and asks but a little; he know that he may get that at many times, which he should be denied if he asked all at once. A few are let into a city, when an army coming

in a body would be shut out; and therefore that he may beget no suspicion, he presents may be a few general propositions, which do not discover the depth of his plot. These like scouts go before, while his whole body lies hid as it were in some swamp at hand. Thus he wriggled into Eve's bosom, whom he doth not, at first dash, bid take and eat. No, he is more mannerly than do so. This would have been so hideous, that as the fish with some sudden noise, by a stone cast into the river, is scared from the bait, so she would have been affrighted from holding parley with such a one. No, he propounds a question which shall make way for this. Hath God said? art [thou] not mistaken? Could this be his meaning, whose bounty lets thee eat of the rest, to deny thee the best of all? Thus he digs about and loosens the root of her faith, and then the tree falls the easier the next gust of temptation. This is a dangerous policy indeed. Many have yielded to go a mile with Satan, that never intended to go two; but when once on the way, they have been allured farther and farther, till at last they know not how to leave his company.

Thus Satan leads poor creatures down into the depths of sin by winding stairs, that let them not see the bottom whither they are going. He first presents an object that occasions some thoughts; these set on fire the affections, and they fume up into the brain, and cloud the understanding, which being thus disabled, Satan now dares a little more declare himself, and boldly solicit the creature to that it even now have defied. Many who at this day lie in open profaneness, never thought they should have rolled so far from their profession; but Satan beguiled them, poor souls, with their modest beginnings. O Christian, give not place to Satan, no, not an inch, in his first motions. He that is a beggar and a modest one without doors, will command the house if let in. Yield at first, and thou givest away thy strength to resist him in the rest; when the hem is worn, the whole garment will ravel out, if it be not mended by timely repentance.

4. Stratagem. The fourth way, wherein Satan shows his subtlety in managing his temptations, is in his reserves. A wise captain hath ever some fresh troops at hand, to fall in at a pinch when others are worsted. Satan is seldom at a loss in this respect; when one temptation is beat back, he soon hath

6. LIME-TWIG: 1) a twig smeared with birdlime to snare birds. 2) any kind of snare. — SDB

another to fill up the gap, and make good the line.

Thus he tempts Christ to diffidence and distrust, by bidding him turn stones into bread, as if it were now time to carve for himself, being so long neglected of his Father, as to fast forty days, and no supplies heard of. No sooner had Christ quenched this dart with these words, 'It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God,' *Matt. 4:4*, but he hath another on the string, which he let fly to him, tempting him to presumption. 'Then the devil taketh him up and setteth him on a pinnacle,' and bids, 'Cast thyself down headlong; for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee,' &c., *ver. 5, 6*. As if he had said, If thou hast such confidence on God and his Word, as thou pretendest, show it by casting thyself down, for thou hast a word between thee and the ground, if thou darest trust God. And truly, though Christ had his answer ready, and was prepared to receive his charge on the right hand and on the left, being so completely armed that no temptation could come amiss, yet note we, [that] Satan's temptations on Christ were like the serpents motion on a rock, of which Solomon speaks, *Prov. 30:19*. They make no impression, no dint at all; but on us they are as a serpent on sand, or dust, that leaves a print, when not in the heart yet in the fancy—colours that which is next door to it, and so the object there is ready to slip in, if great care be not observed. Especially in this case when he doth thus change his hand, as when we have resisted one way, falls afresh in another, yea, plants his succeeding temptation upon our very resistance in the former.

Now it requires some readiness in our postures, and skill at all our weapons, to make our defence; like a disputant, when he is put out of his road, and hath a new question started, or argument unusual brought, now he is tried to purpose. And truly this is Satan's way when he tempts the Christian to neglect of [the] duties of God's worship (from his worldly occasions, the multitude of them, or necessity of following them); and this takes not, then he is on the other side, and is drawing the Christian to the neglect of his worldly calling, out of a seeming zeal to promote his other in the worship of God. Or first, he comes and labours to deaden the heart in duty, but the Christian too watchful for him there, then he is

puffing of him up with an opinion of his enlargement in it, and ever he keep his sliest and most sublimated temptations for the last.

5. Stratagem. In his politic retreats. You shall have an enemy fly as [if] overcome, when it is on a design of overcoming. This was Joshua's wile, by which he caught the men of Ai in a trap, *Josh. 8*. We read not only of Satan's being cast out, but of the unclean spirit going out voluntarily, yet with a purpose to come again, and bring worse company with him, *Matt. 12:43*. Satan is not always beat back by the dint and power of conquering grace, but sometimes he draws off, and raiseth his own siege, the more handsomely to get the Christian out of his fastnesses and trenches, that so he may snap him on the plains, whom he cannot come at in his works and fortifications. Temptations send the saint to his castle, as the sight of the dog doth the coney to her burrow. Now the soul walks the rounds, stands upon its guard, dares not neglect duty, because the enemy is under its very walls, shutting in his temptations continually; but when Satan seems to give the soul over, and the Christian finds he is not haunted, with such motions as formerly, truly now he is prone to remit in his diligence, fail in his duty, and grow either unfrequent or formal therein; as the Romans, whose valour decayed for want of the Carthaginian troops to alarm them. Let Satan tempt or not tempt, assault or retreat, keep thou in order, stand in a fighting posture, let his flight strengthen thy faith, but not weaken thy care. The Parthians do their enemy most hurt in their flight, shooting their darts as they run, and so may Satan do thee, if thy seeming victory makes thee secure.

[Satan's subtlety in choosing fitting instruments for his purpose.]

Third. Satan shows his subtlety in pitching on fit instruments for his turn to carry on his designs. He, as the master-workman, cuts out the temptation, and gives it the shape, but sometime he hath his journeymen to make it up; he knows his work may be carried on better by others, when he appears not aboveboard himself. Indeed there is not such a suitability between the angelical nature and man's, as there is between one man and another; and therefore he cannot make his approaches so familiarly with us,

as man can do to man. And here, as in other things, he is God's ape. You know this very reason was given, why the Israelites desired God might not speak to them, but Moses, and God liked the motion: 'they have well said,' saith God, 'I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee,' Deut. 18:17, 18. Thus Satan useth the ministry of men like ourselves, by which as he becomes more familiar, so he is less suspected, while Joab-like, he gets another to do his errand. Now it is not any [one that] will serve his turn for this employment; he is very choice in his instruments he pitcheth on. It is not every soldier [that] is fit for an embassage, to treat with an enemy, to betray a town, and the like. Satan considers who can do his work to his greatest advantage. And in this he is unlike God, who is not at all choice in his instruments, because he needs none, and is able to do as well with one as another; but Satan's power being finite, he must patch up the defect of the lion's skin with the fox's. Now the persons Satan aims at for his instruments are chiefly of four sorts. 1. Persons of place and power. 2. Persons of parts and policy. 3. Persons of holiness, or at least reputed so. 4. Persons of relation and interest.

1. Instrument. Satan makes choice of persons of place and power. These are either in the commonwealth or church. If he can, he will secure the throne and the pulpit, as the two forts that command the whole line. (1.) Men of power in the commonwealth; it is his old trick to be tampering with such. A prince or a ruler may stand for a thousand; therefore saith Paul to Elymas, when he would have turned the deputy from the faith, 'O full of all subtilty thou child of the devil!' Acts 13:10. As if he had said, You have learned this of your father the devil—to haunt the courts of princes, wind into the favour of great ones. There is a double policy that Satan hath in gaining such to his side. (a) None have such advantage to draw others to their way. Corrupt the captain, and it is hard if he bring not off his troop with him. When the princes—men of renown in their tribes—stood up with Korah, presently a multitude are drawn into the conspiracy, Num. 16:2,19. Let Jeroboam set up idolatry, and Israel is soon in a snare. It is said [that] the people willingly walked after his commandment, Hos, 5:11. (b) Should the sin stay at court, and the infection go no farther, yet the sin of such a one, though a

good man, may cost a whole kingdom dear. 'Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel,' 1 Chron. 21:1. He owed Israel a spite, and he pays them home in their king's sin, which dropped in a fearful plague upon their heads. (2.) Such as are in place and office in the church. No such way to infect the whole town, as to poison the cistern at which they draw their water. Who shall persuade Ahab that he may go to Ramoth-Gilead and fall? Satan can tell: 'I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets,' 1 Kings 22:22. How shall the profane be hardened in their sins? Let the preacher sew pillows under their elbows, and cry Peace, peace, and it is done. How may the worship of God come to be neglected? Let Hophni and Phinehas be but scandalous in their lives, and many both good and bad will 'abhor the sacrifice of the Lord.'

2. Instrument. He employeth persons of parts and policy. If any hath more pregnancy of wit and depth of reason than other, he is the man Satan looks upon for his service, and so far does he prevail, that very few of his rank are found among Christ's disciples, 'Not many wise.' Indeed, God will not have his kingdom, either in the heart or in the world, maintained by carnal policy, [for] it is a gospel command that we walk in godly simplicity⁷. Though the serpent can shrink up into his folds, and appear what he is not, yet it doth not become the saints to juggle or shuffle with God or men; and truly when any of them have made use of the serpent's subtlety, it hath not followed their hand. Jacob got the blessing by a wile, but he might have had it cheaper with plain dealing. Abraham and Sarah both dissemble to Abimelech; God discovers their sin, and reproves them for it by the mouth of a heathen. Asa, out of state-policy, joins league with Syria, yea, pawns the vessels of the sanctuary and all for help. And what comes of all this? 'Herein thou hast done foolishly,' saith God, 'from henceforth thou shalt have wars.' Sinful policy shall not long thrive in the saints' hands well. But Satan will not out of his way; he inquires for the subtlest-pated men, a Balaam, Ahithophel, Haman, Sanballat, men admired for their counsel and deep plots; these are for his turn. A wicked cause needs a

7. Sine plicis—without folds.

smooth orator; bad ware, a pleasing chapman. As in particular, the instruments he useth to seduce and corrupt the minds of men are commonly subtle-pated men, such 'that if it were possible should deceive the very elect.' This made the apostle so jealous of the Corinthians, whom he had espoused to Christ, lest, as Eve by the serpent, so their 'minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.' He must be a cunning devil indeed that can draw off the spouse's love from he Beloved; yet there is such a witchery in Satan's instruments, that many have been brought to fly on the face of those truths and ordinances, yea, [of] Christ himself, to whom they have seemed espoused formerly. Now in three particulars this sort of Satan's instruments show their master's subtlety.

(1.) In aspersing the good name of the sincere messengers of Christ—Satan's old trick to raise his credit upon the ruined reputation of Christ's faithful servants. Thus he taught Korah, Dathan, and Abiram to charge Moses and Aaron: 'Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation is holy,' Num. 16:3. They would make the people believe that it was the pride of their heart to claim a monopoly to themselves, as if none but Aaron and his fraternity were holy enough to offer incense, and by this subtle practice they seduced for a while, in a manner, the whole congregation to their side. So the lying prophets, that were Satan's knights of the post to Ahab, fell foul on good Micaiah. Our Saviour himself was no better handled by the Pharisees and their confederates; and Paul, the chief of the apostles, [had] his ministry undermined, and his reputation blasted, by false teachers, as if he had been some weak sorry preacher. 'but his bodily presence is weak,' say they, 'and his speech contemptible,' II Cor. 10:10. And is this your admired man?

(2.) In covering their impostures and errors with choice notions and excellent truths. Arius himself, and other dangerous instruments of Satan, were too wise to stuff their discourses with nothing but heterodox matter. Precious truths dropped from them, with which they sprinkled their corrupt principles, yet with such art as should not easily be discerned. This, as one observes, our Saviour warns his disciples of, when he bids them 'beware of the leaven of the Pharisees,' that is, of their errors. But why leaven? [Just] for the secret mixture of it with the

wholesome bread. You do not make your bread all of leaven, for none would then eat it, but crumble a little into a whole batch, which sours all. Thus Christ doth tell the disciples, that the Pharisees among many truths mix their errors; and therefore it behoves them to beware, lest with the truth the errors go down also. Again, leaven is very much like the dough, of the same grain with it, [and] only differs in age and sourness. Thus Christ intimates the resemblance of their errors to the truth, as it were, out of the Scriptures, but soured with their own false glosses. This indeed makes it easy for Christ's sheep to be infected with the scab of error, because that weed which breeds the rot is so like the grass that nourisheth them.

(3.) Their subtlety appears in holding forth such principles as are indulgent to the flesh. This brings in whole shoals of silly souls into their net. The heart of man loves a life to shape a religion according to his own humour, and is easy to believe that to be a truth that favours his own inclination. Now there are three lusts that Satan's instruments labour to gratify in their doctrine—carnal reason, pride, and fleshly liberty.

(a) Carnal reason. This is the great idol which the more intelligent part of the world worship, making it the very standard of their faith, and from this bitter root have sprung those Arian and Socinian heresies. And truly he that will go no farther than reason will carry him, may hold out in the plain way of the moral law, but when he comes to the depths of the gospel, must either go back, or be content that faith should help reason over.

(b) Another lust that Satan cockers is pride. Man naturally would be a god to himself, though for clambering so high he got his fall; and whatever doctrine nourisheth a good opinion of man in his own eye, this is acceptable to him; and this hath spawned another fry of dangerous errors—the Pelagian and Semi-pelagian, which set nature upon its legs, and persuade man he got alone to Christ, or at least with a little external help, of a hand to lead, or argument to excite, without any creating work in the soul. O, we cannot conceive how glib such stuff goes down. If one workman should tell you your house is rotten, and must be pulled down, and all new materials prepared; and another should say, No such matter; such a beam is good, and such a spar may stand—a

little cost will serve the turn: it were no wonder that you should listen to him that would put you to least cost and trouble. The faithful servants of Christ tell sinners from the Word, that man in his natural state is corrupt and rotten, that nothing of the old frame will serve, and there must needs be all new; but in comes an Arminian, and blows up the sinner's pride, and tells him he is not so weak or wicked as the other represents him. If thou wilt, thou mayest repent and believe; or, at least, by exerting thy natural abilities, oblige God to superadd what thou hast not. This is the workman that will please proud man best.

(c) Satan by his instruments nourisheth that desire of fleshly liberty, which is in man by nature, who is a son of Belial, without yoke; and if he must wear any, that will please best which hath the softest lining, and pincheth the flesh least; and therefore when the sincere teachers of the Word will not abate of the strictness of the command, but press sincere obedience to it, then come Satan's instruments and say, These are hard task-masters, who will not allow one play-day in a year to the Christian, but tie him to continual duty; we will show you an easier way to heaven. Come, saith the Papist, confess but once a year to the priest, pay him well for his pains, and be an obedient son of the church, and we will dispense with all the rest. Come, saith the Familist⁸, the gos-

8. FAMILISTS, the Family of Love, followers of the Dutch merchant Hendrik Niclaes (c. 1502-c. 1580), who were communitarians in life-style and mystics in theology. The sect was established in 1540, in Emden, East Friesland. Members followed the pantheistic, antinomian teachings of Niclaes and were under his leadership. They professed Christian perfectionism influenced by Anabaptist teachings, but they renounced specific creeds, dogmas, and liturgies, calling for a mystical unity of believers inspired by divine love. Other groups sprang up where Niclaes traveled on business-in Amsterdam, Paris, London, and elsewhere. His books, especially *Mirror of Justice* (published anonymously), received considerable attention. In England, where the Familists were most strident, Queen Elizabeth I condemned their books in 1580 and sought to jail the believers. They persisted, however, and King James I claimed they were responsible for the rise of Puritanism. It has been thought that John Bunyan received inspiration for his *Pilgrim's Progress* (continued...)

pel charter allows more liberty than these legal preachers tell you of. They bid you repent and believe, when Christ hath done all these to your hand. What have you left to do but to nourish the flesh? Something sure is in it, that impostors find such quick return for their ware, while truth hangs upon the log. And is it not this, that they are content to afford heaven cheaper to their disciples than Christ will to his? He that sells cheapest shall have most customers, though, at last, best will be best cheap; truth with self-denial [is] a better pennyworth, than error with all its flesh-pleasing.

3. Instrument. Satan makes choice of such as have a great name for holiness. None so good as a live bird to draw other birds into the net. But is it possible that such should do this work for the devil? Yes, such is the policy of Satan, and the frailty of the best, that the most holy men have been his instruments to seduce others. 'Abraham' he tempts his wife to lie, 'Say thou art my sister.' The old prophet leads the man of God out of his way, I Kings 13:11; the holiness of the man, and the reverence of his age, it is like, gave authority to his counsel. O, how should this make you watchful, whose long travel and great progress in the ways of God, have gained you a name of eminency in the church, what you say, do, or hold, because you are file-leading men, and others look more on you than their way!

4. Instrument. Satan chooseth persons of relation and interest, such as by relation or affection have deep interest in the persons he would gain. Some will kiss the child for the nurse's sake, and like the present for the hand that brings it. It is like David would not have received that from Nabal, which he took from Abigail, and thanks her. Satan sent the apple by Eve's hand to Adam. Delilah doth more with Samson than all the Philistines' bands. Job's wife brings him the poison, 'Curse God and die.' Some think Satan spared her life, when he slew his children and serv-

8. (...continued)
(1678-84) from Niclaes's writings, many of which were reprinted in the Commonwealth period. By the time of the Restoration (1660), the Familists had all but disappeared.

Quoted from the Funk and Wagnalls online Encyclopedia
—L. B. W.

ants—(though she was also within his commission)—as the most likely instrument, by reason of her relation and his affection, to lead him into temptation. Satan employs Peter, a disciple, to tempt Christ, at another time his friends and kinsfolk. Some martyrs have confessed, the hardest work they met withal, was to overcome the prayers and tears of their friends and relations. Paul himself could not get off his snare without heart-breaking. ‘What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart?’ Acts 21:13.

[Satan’s subtlety as A TEMPTER TO SIN
briefly applied.]

Use First. Affect not sinful policy and subtlety, it makes you but like the devil. There is the wisdom of the serpent, which is commended, and that is his perfection as a creature, in which both the literal and the mystical excel, the one in an ingenious observing nature above the beast of the field, and the other in knowledge as an angel above men; but as the subtlety of the one and knowledge of the other is degenerate, and makes them more able to do mischief, the one of the bodies, the others to the souls of men, this kind of wisdom and subtlety is to be abhorred by us. The serpent’s eye, as one saith, does well only in the dove’s head.

1. Affect not subtlety in contriving any sin. Some are wise to do evil, Jer. 4:22. Masters of this craft, who can as they lie on their beds, cast their wicked designs into an artificial method, showing a kind of devilish wit therein, as the Egyptians who dealt wisely, as they thought, with the Israelites, and Jezebel, who had printed her bloody design in so fair a letter, that some might read her saint while she was playing the devil. This is the black art indeed, and make the soul as black as hell that practiseth it. It is not hard for any, though a fool, to learn. Be but wicked, and the devil will help thee to be witty. Come but a while to his school, and thou mayest soon be a cunning man. No sins speak a higher attainment in wickedness, than those which are of deliberate counsel and deep plottings. Creatures, as they go longer with their young, so their birth is more strong and perfect, as the elephant above all others. The longer a sin is a forming and forging within, and the oftener the head and heart meet about it, the com-

pleter the sin. Here are many litters of unformed sins in one, such, I mean, as are conceived and cast forth in the hurry of extemporary passion. Those sudden acts show weakness, these other deep wickedness.

2. Take heed of hiding sin when thou hast committed it. This is one of the devices that are in man’s heart; and as much art and cunning is shown in this, as in any one part of the sinner’s trade. What a trick had the patriarchs to blind their father’s eye with a bloody coat? Joseph’s mistress, to prevent a charge from Joseph, accuseth him for what she is guilty, like the robber who escaped by crying ‘stop the thief.’ God taught man to make coats to cover his naked body, but the devil learnt him to weave these coverings to hide the nakedness of his soul. The more subtle thou seemest in concealing thy sin, the more egregiously thou playest the fool. None so shamed as the liar when found out, and that thou art sure to be. Thy covering is too short to hide thee from God’s eye, and what God sees, if thou dost not put thyself to shame, he will tell all the world hereafter, however thou escapest in this life.

3. Take heed of subtlety and sinful policy, in compassing that which is lawful in itself; it is lawful to improve thy estate and husband it well for thy posterity but take not the devil’s counsel, who will be putting thee upon some tricks in thy trade and sleights in thy dealing. Such may go for wise men for a while, but the prophet reads their destiny, ‘At his end he shall be a fool,’ Jer. 17:11. It is lawful to love our estate, life, liberty; but beware of sinful policy to save them. It is no wisdom to shuffle with God, by denying his truth, or shifting off our duty to keep correspondence with men. He is a weak fencer that lays his soul at open guard to be stabbed and wounded with guilt, while he is lifting up his hands to save a broken head. Our fear commonly meets us at that door by which we think to run from it. He that ‘will save his life shall lose it.’ As you love your peace, Christians, be plain-hearted with God and man, and keep the king’s highway. Go the plain way of command to obtain thy desire, and not leap over hedge and ditch to come a little sooner to the journey’s end; such commonly either meet with some stop that makes them come back with shame, or else put to venture their necks in some desperate leap. He is sure to come faster, if not sooner, home, that is wil-

ling to go a little about to keep God company. The historian's observation is worth the Christian's remembrance: 'Crafty counsels promise fair at first, but prove more difficult in the managing, and in the end do pay the undertaker home with desperate sorrow.'⁹

Use Second. Is Satan so subtle? O then, think not to be too cunning for the devil, he will be too hard for thee at last. Sin not with thoughts of an after-repentance; it is possible thou meanest this at present, but dost thou think, who sits down to play with this cheater, to draw out thy stock when thou pleasest? Alas, poor wretch! he has a thousand devices to carry thee on, and engage thee deeper, till he hath not left thee any tenderness in thy conscience. As some have been served at play, intending to venture only a shilling or two, yet have by the secret witchery in gaming, played the very clothes off their back before they had done,—O how many have thus sinned away all their principles, yea, profession itself, that they have not so much as this cloak left, but walk naked to their shame! [They are] like children, who, got into a boat, think to play near the shore, but are unawares by a violent gust carried down to the wide sea. O how know you that dally with Satan, but that at last you may (who begin modestly) be carried down to the broad sea of profaneness? Some men are so subtle to over-reach, and so cruel when they get men into their hands, that a man had better beg his bread than borrow of them. Such a merchant is Satan, cunning to insinuate, and get the creature into his books, and when he hath him on the hip, [there is] no more mercy to be had at his hand than the lamb may expect from the ravenous wolf.

Use Third. Study his wiles, and acquaint thyself with Satan's policy. Paul takes it for granted, that every saint doth in some measure understand them; 'We are not ignorant of his devices,' II Cor. 2:11. He is but an ill fencer that knows and observes nothing of his enemy's play. Many particular stratagems I have laid down already which may help a little, and for thy direction in this study of, and inquiry into, Satan's wiles, take the threefold counsel.

1. Take God into thy counsel. Heaven over-

looks hell. God at any time can tell thee what plots are hatching there against thee. Consider Satan as he is God's creature; so God cannot but know him. He that makes the watch, knows every pin in it. He formed this crooked serpent, though not the crookedness of this serpent; and though Satan's way in tempting is as wonderful as the way of a serpent on a rock, yet God traceth him, yea, knows all his thoughts together. Hell itself is naked before him; and this destroyer hath no covering. Again, consider him as God's prisoner, who hath him fast in chains, and so the Lord, who is his keeper, must needs know whither his prisoner goes, who cannot stir without his leave. Lastly, consider him as his messenger, for so he is. An evil spirit from the Lord vexed Saul, and he that gives him his errand, is able to tell thee what it is. Go then and plough with God's heifer; improve thy interest with Christ, who knows what his Father knows, and is ready to reveal all that concerns thee to thee, John 15:15. It was he who described the devil coming against Peter and the rest of the apostles, and faithfully revealed it to them, before they thought of any such matter, Luke 22. Through Christ's hands passes all that is transacted in heaven hell. We live in days of great actions, deep counsels, and plots on all sides, and only a few that stand on the upper end of the world know these mysteries of state; all the rest know little more than pamphlet intelligence. Thus it is in regard of those plots which Satan in his infernal conclave is laying against the souls of men; they are but a few that know anything to purpose of Satan's designs against them; and those are the saints, from whom God cannot hide his own counsels of love, but sends his Spirit to reveal unto them here, what he hath prepared for them in heaven, I Cor. 2:10, and therefore much less will he conceal any destructive plot of Satan from them.

2. Be intimately acquainted with thy own heart, and thou wilt the better know his design against thee, who takes his method of tempting from the inclination and posture of thy heart. As a general walks about the city, and views it well, and then raiseth his batteries where he hath the greatest advantage, so doth Satan compass and consider the Christian in every part before he tempts.

3. Be careful to read the word of God with observation. In it thou hast the history of the most re-

9. *Consilia callida prima specie læta, tractatu dura eventum tristia.*—Livius

markable battles that have been fought by the most eminent worthies in Christ's army of saints with this great warrior Satan. Here thou mayest see how Satan hath foiled them, and how they have recovered their lost ground. Here you have his cabinet-counsels opened. There is not a lust which you are in danger of, but you have it described; not a temptation which the Word doth not arm you against. It is reported that a certain Jew should have poisoned Luther, but was happily prevented by his picture which was sent to Luther, with a warning from a faithful friend that he should take heed of such a man when he saw him, by which he knew the murderer, and escaped his hands. The Word shows thee, O Christian, the face of those lusts which Satan employs to butcher thy precious soul. 'By them thy servant is warned,' saith David, Ps. 19:11.

[SATAN'S SECOND MAIN DESIGN is to accuse, vex, and trouble the saint for sin.]

The second main design in which Satan appears such a subtle enemy is as a troubler and an accuser for sin, molesting the saint's peace, and disquieting the saint's spirit. As the Holy Spirit's work is not only to be a sanctifier, but also a comforter, whose fruits are righteousness and peace, so the evil spirit Satan is both a seducer unto sin, and an accuser for sin, a tempter and a troubler, and indeed in the same order. As the Holy Ghost is first a sanctifier, and then a comforter, so Satan [is] first a tempter, then a troubler. Joseph's mistress first tries to draw him to gratify her lust, [but] that string breaking, she hath another to trounce him and charge him, and, for a plea, she hath his coat to cover her malice; nor is it hard for Satan to pick some hole in the saint's coat, when he walks most circumspectly. The proper seat of sin is the will, of comfort the conscience. Satan hath not absolute knowledge of or power over these, [they] being locked up from any other but God, and therefore what he doth, either in defiling temptations, or disquieting, is by wiles more than by open force; and he is not inferior in troubling, to himself in tempting. Satan hath, as the serpent, a way by himself. Other beasts [have] their motion direct, right on, but the serpent goes askew, as we say, winding and writhing its body; [so] that when you see a serpent creep-

ing along, you can hardly discern which way it tends. Thus Satan in his vexing temptations hath many intricate policies, turning this way and that way, the better to conceal his design from the saint, which will appear in these following methods:

First Wile. He vexeth the Christian by laying his brats at the saint's door, and charging him with that which is his own creature. And here he hath such a notable art, that many dear saints of God are woefully hampered and dejected, as if they were the vilest blasphemers and veriest atheists in the world: whereas indeed the cup is of his own putting into the sack. But so slyly is it conveyed into the saint's bosom, that the Christian, though amazed and frightened at the sight of them, yet being jealous of his own heart, and unacquainted with Satan's tricks of this kind, cannot conceive how such notions should come there, if not bred in, and vomited out by his own naughty heart. So he bears the blame of the sin himself, because he cannot find the right father, mourning as one that is forlorn and cast off by God, or else, saith he, I should never have such vermin of hell creeping in my bosom. And here Satan hath the end he proposeth, for he is not so silly as to hope he should have welcome with such a horrid crew of blasphemous and atheistical thoughts in that soul, where he hath been denied when he came in an enticing way. No, but his design is by way of revenge, because the soul will not prostitute itself to his lust, otherwise therefore to haunt it and scare it with those imps of blasphemy. So he served Luther, to whom he appeared, and when repulsed by him, went away and left a noisome stench behind him in the room. Thus when the Christian hath worsted Satan in his more pleasing temptations, being maddened, he belcheth forth this stench of blasphemous motions to annoy and affright him, that from them the Christian may draw some sad conclusion or other, and indeed the Christian's sin lies commonly more in the conclusion which he draws from them—as that he is not a child of God—than in the motions themselves. All the counsel therefore I shall give thee in this case, is to do with these motions, as you use to serve those vagrants and rogues that come about the country, whom, though you cannot keep from passing through your town, yet you look they settle not there, but whip them and send them to their own home. Thus give

these motions the law, in mourning for them, resisting of them, and they shall not be your charge. Yea, it is like you shall seldomer be troubled with such guests; but if once you come to entertain them, and be Satan's nurse to them, then the law of God will cast them upon you.

Second Wile. Another wile of Satan as a troubler, is in aggravating the saint's sins, against which he hath a notable declamatory faculty—not that he hates sin, but the saint. Now in this, his chief subtlety is so to lay his charge, that it may seem to be the act of the Holy Spirit. He knows an arrow out of God's quiver wounds deep; and therefore, when he accuseth, he comes in God's name. As suppose a child were conscious to himself of displeasing his father, and one that owes him a spite, to trouble him, should counterfeit a letter from his father, and cunningly convey it into the son's hand, who receives it as from his father. Therein he chargeth him with many heavy crimes, disowns him, and threatens he shall never come in his sight, or have penny portion from him; [and] the poor son, conscious to himself of many undutiful carriages, and not knowing the plot, takes on heavily, and can neither eat nor sleep from grief. Here is a real trouble begot from a false and imaginary ground. Thus Satan observes how the squares go between God and his children. Such a saint he sees tardy in his duty, faulty in that service, and he knows the Christian is conscious of this, and that the Spirit of God will also show his distaste for these; both which [reasons] prompt Satan to draw a charge at length, raking up all the aggravations he can think of, and give it into the saint as sent from God. Thus he taught Job's friends to pick up those infirmities which dropped from him in his distress, and shoot them back in his face, as if indeed they had been sent from God to declare him an hypocrite, and denounce his wrath for the same.

But how shall we know the false accusation of Satan from the rebukes of God and his Spirit?

1. If they cross any former act or work of the Spirit in thy soul, they are Satan's, not the Holy Spirit's. Now you shall observe Satan's scope in accusing the Christian, and aggravating his sin, is to unsaint him, and persuade him he is but an hypocrite. Oh, saith Satan, now thou hast shown what thou art. See what a foul spot is on thy coat. This is not the spot of

a child. Whoever, that was a saint, committed such a sin after such a sort? All thy comforts and confidence which thou hast bragged of, were false, I warrant you. Thus you see Satan at one blow dasheth all in pieces. The whole fabric of grace which God hath been rearing up many years in the soul, must now at one puff of his malicious mouth be blown down, and all the sweet comforts with which the Holy Spirit hath sealed up God's love, must be defaced with this one blot, which Satan draws over the fair copy of the saint's evidence. Well, soul, for thy comfort know, if ever the Spirit of God hath begun sanctifying or comforting work, causing thee to hope in his mercy, he never is, will, can be the messenger to bring contrary news to thy soul; his language is not yea and nay, but yea and amen for ever. Indeed, when the saint plays the wanton, he can chide, yea, will frown and tell the soul roundly of its sin, as he did David by Nathan. 'Thou art the man'—this thou hast done. He paints out his sin with such bloody colours, as made David's heart melt, as it were, into so many drops of water. But that shall not serve his turn; he tells him what a rod is steeping for him, that shall smart to purpose—one of his own house, no other than his darling son, shall rise up against him. [This happens in order] that he may the more fully conceive how ill God took the sin of him, a child, a saint, when he shall know what it is to have his beloved child traitorously invade his crown, and unnaturally hunt for his precious life; yet not a word all this while is heard from Nathan teaching David to unsaint himself, and call in question the work of God in his soul. No, he had no such commission from God; he was sent to make him mourn for his sin, not from his sin to question his state which God had so oft put out of doubt.

2. When they asperse the riches of God's grace, and so charge the Christian, that withal they reflect upon the good name of God, they are not of the Holy Spirit but from Satan. When you find your sins so represented and aggravated to you, as exceeding either the mercy of God's nature, or the grace of his covenant¹⁰, this comes from that foul liar. The Holy Spirit is Christ's spokesman to commend him to

10. Hic se aperit diabolus—Here the Evil One reveals himself.

souls, and to woo sinners to embrace the grace of the gospel; and can such words drop from his sacred lips, as should break the match and sink Christ's esteem in the thoughts of the creature? You may know where this is mined. When you hear one commend another for a wise or good man, and at last come in with a but that dasheth all, you will easily think he is no friend to the man, but some sly enemy that by seeming to commend, desires to disgrace the more. Thus you find God represented to you as merciful and gracious, but not to such a great sinner as you. to have power and strength, but not able to save thee; you may say, Avaunt, Satan, thy speech bewrayeth thee.

Third Wile. Another wile of Satan lies in caviling at the Christian's duties and performances, by which he puts him to much toil and trouble. He is at church as soon as thou canst be, Christian, for thy heart; yea, he stands under thy closet-window, and hears what thou sayest to God in secret, all the while studying how he may commence a suit against thee from thy duty. [He is] like those who come to sermons to carp and catch at what the preacher saith, that they make him an offender for some word or other misplaced; or like a cunning opponent in the schools, while his adversary is busy in reading his position, he is studying to confute it. And truly Satan hath such an art as this, that he is able to take our duties in pieces, and so disfigure them that they shall appear formal, though never so zealous; hypocritical, though enriched with much sincerity. When thou hast done thy duty, Christian, then stands up this sophist to ravel out thy work; there, will he say, thou playedst the hypocrite, zealous, but serving thyself, here wandering, there nodding, a little further puffed up with pride. And what wages canst thou hope for at God's hands, now thou hast spoiled his work, and cut it all out into chips? Thus he makes many poor souls lead a weary life; nothing they do but he hath a fling at, that they know not whether [it be] best to pray or not, to hear or not; and when they have prayed and heard, whether it be to any purpose or not. Thus their souls hang in doubt, and their days pass in sorrow; while their enemy stands in a corner, and laughs at the cheat he hath put upon them; as one, who by putting a counterfeit spider into the dish, makes those that sit at table either out of conceit with the meat, that they dare not eat, or afraid of them-

selves if they have eaten, lest they should be poisoned with their meat.

Question. But you will say, What will you have us do in this case to withstand the cavils of Satan, in reference to our duties?

Answer 1. Let this make thee more accurate in all thou doest. It is the very end God aims at in suffering Satan thus to watch you, that you his children might be the more circumspect, because you have one [who] overlooks you, that will be sure to tell tales of you to God, and accuse thee to thy own self. Doth it not behove thee to write thy copy fair, when such a critic reads and scans it over? Doth it not concern thee to know thy heart well, to turn over the Scriptures diligently, that thou mayest know the state of thy soul-controversy in all the cases of conscience thereof, when thou hast such a subtle opponent to reply upon thee?

Answer 2. Let it make thee more humble. If Satan can charge thee with so much in thy best duties, O what then can thy God do! God suffers sometimes the infirmities of his people to be known by the wicked, who are ready to check and frump them for them, for the end of humbling his people. How much more low should these accusations of Satan, which are in a great part too true, lay us before God?

Answer 3. Observe the fallacy of Satan's argument, which discovered, will help thee to answer his cavil. The fallacy is double.

(1.) He will persuade thee that thy duty and thyself are hypocritical, proud, formal, &c., because something of these sins are to be found in thy duty. Now, Christian, learn to distinguish between pride in a duty, and a proud duty; hypocrisy in a person, and a hypocrite; wine in a man, and a man in wine. The best of saints have the stirrings of such corruptions in them and in their services. These birds will light on an Abraham's sacrifice, but comfort thyself with this, that if thou findest a party within thy bosom pleading for God, and entering its protest against thee, thou and thy services are evangelically perfect. God beholds these as the weaknesses of thy sickly state here below, and pities thee, as thou wouldst do thy lame child. How odious is he to us that mocks one for natural defects, a blear eye, or a stammering tongue! such are these in thy new nature. Observable is that in Christ's prayer against Satan, 'And the Lord said

unto Satan, Zech. 3:2, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; is not this a brand plucked out of the fire,'. As if Christ had said, Lord, wilt thou suffer this envious spirit to twit thy poor child with, and charge him for, those infirmities that cleave to his perfect state? He is but new plucked out of the fire. No wonder there are some sparks unquenched, some corruptions unmortified, some disorders unreformed in his place and calling; and what Christ did for Joshua, he doth incessantly for all his saints, for apologizing for their infirmities with his Father.

(2.) His other fallacy is in arguing from the sin that is in our duty, to the non-acceptance of them. Will God, saith he, thinkest thou, take such broken groats at thy hand? Is he not a holy God? Now here, Christian, learn to distinguish and answer Satan. There is a double acceptance. There is an acceptance of a thing by way of payment of a debt, and there is an acceptance of a thing offered as a token of love and testimony of gratitude. He that will not accept of broken money, or half the sum for payment of a debt; the same man, if his friend sends him through but a bent sixpence, in token of his love, will take it kindly. It is true, Christian, the debt thou owest to God must be paid in good and lawful money, but for thy comfort, here Christ is thy paymaster. Send Satan to him, bid him bring his charge against Christ, who is ready at God's right hand to clear his accounts, and show his discharge for the whole debt. But now thy performances and obedience come under another notion, as tokens of thy love and thankfulness to God, and such is the gracious disposition of thy heavenly Father, that he accepts thy mite. Love refuseth nothing that love sends. It is not the weight or worth of the gift, but 'the desire of a man in his kindness,' Prov. 19:22.

Fourth Wile. A fourth wile of Satan as a troubler, is to draw the saint into the depths of despair, under a specious pretence of not being humbled enough for sin. This we find singled out by the apostle for one of the devil's fetches. 'We are not ignorant,' saith he, 'of his devices,'¹¹ II Cor. 2.11, his sophistical reasonings. Satan sets much by this sleight; no weapon [is] oftener in his hand. Where is

the Christian that hath not met him at this door? Here Satan finds the Christian easy to be wrought on—the humours being stirred to his hand—while the Christian of his own accord complains of the hardness of his heart, and is very prone to believe any who comply with his musing thoughts; yea, thinks every flatters him that would persuade him otherwise. It is easier to dye that soul into black, which is of a sad colour already, than to make such a one take the lightsome tincture of joy and comfort.

Question. But how shall I answer this subtle enemy, when he perplexeth my spirit with not being humbled enough for sin, &c.?

Answer. I answer as to the former, Labour to spy the fallacy of his argument, and his mouth is soon stopped.

Argument 1. Satan argues thus. There ought to be a proportion between sin and sorrow. But there is no proportion between thy sins and thy sorrow. Therefore thou art not humbled enough. What a plausible argument is here at first blush? For the major, that there ought to be a proportion between sin and sorrow, this Satan will show you scripture for. Manasseh was a great sinner, and an ordinary sorrow will not serve his turn; 'He humbled himself greatly before the Lord,' II Chron. 33.12. Now, saith Satan, weigh thy sin the balance with thy sorrow; art thou as great a mourner as thou hast been a sinner? So many years thou hast waged war against the Almighty, making havoc of his laws, loading his patience till it groaned again, raking in the sides of Christ with thy bloody dagger—while thou didst grieve his Spirit, and reject his grace—and dost [thou] think a little remorse, like a rolling cloud letting fall a few drops of sorrow, will be accepted? No, thou must steep in sorrow as thou hast soaked in sin. Now to show you the fallacy, we must distinguish of a twofold proportion of sorrow.

(1.) An exact proportion of sorrow to the inherent nature and demerit of sin.

(2.) There is a proportion to the law and rule of the gospel. Now the first is not a thing feasible, because the injury done in the least sin is infinite, because done to an infinite God. And if it could be feasible, yet according to the tenor of the first covenant it would not be acceptable, because it had no clause to give any hope for an after-game by repen-

11. νοηματα.

tance: but the other, which is a gospel sorrow, is indeed repentance unto life, both given by the Spirit of the gospel, and to be tried by the rule of the gospel. This is given for thy relief. As you see sometimes in the highway, where the waters are too deep for travellers, you have a foot-bridge or causey, by which they may escape the flood, and safely pass on; so that none but such as have not eyes, or are drunk, will venture to go through the waters, when they may avoid the danger. Thou art a dead man if thou think to answer thy sin with proportionable sorrow; thou wilt soon be above thy depth, and quackle¹² thyself with thy own tears, but never get over the least sin thou committedst. Go not on therefore as thou lovest thy life, but turn aside to this gospel path, and thou escapest the danger. O you tempted souls, when Satan saith you are not humbled enough, see where you may be relieved. I am a Roman, saith Paul, I appeal to Cæsar. I am a Christian, say, I appeal to Christ's law. And what is the law of the gospel concerning this? Heart-sorrow is gospel sorrow: 'they were pricked in their heart,' Acts 2:37. And Peter, like an honest chirurgeon¹³, will not keep these bleeding patients longer in pain with their wounds open, but presently claps on the healing plaster of the gospel — 'Believe on the Lord Jesus.' Now a prick to the heart is more than a wound to the conscience. The heart is the seat of life. Sin wounded there lies a dying. To do anything from the heart makes it acceptable, Eph. 6:6; II Cor. 5:11. Now, poor soul, hadst thou sat thus long in the devil's stocks if thou hadst understood this aright? Doth thy heart clear or condemn thee, when in secret thou art bemoaning thy sin before God? If thy heart be false, I cannot help you, no, not the gospel itself; but if sincere, thou hast boldness with God, I John 3:21.

Argument 2. A second argument Satan useth, is this, He whose sorrow falls short of theirs that never truly repented, he is not humbled enough. But, soul, thy sorrow falls short of some that never truly repented; ergo. Well, the first proposition is true, but how will Satan prove his minor? Thus: Ahab, he

took for his sin, and went in sackcloth. Judas, he made bitter complaint. O, says Satan, didst thou not know such a one that lay under terror of conscience, walking in a sad mournful condition so many months, and every one took him for the greatest convert [in] the country? And yet he at last fell foully, and proved an apostate. But thou never didst feel such smart, pass so many weary nights and days in mourning and bitter lamentation as he hath done, [and] therefore thou fallest short of one that fell short of repentance. And truly this is a sad stumbling-block to a soul in an hour of temptation. Like a ship sunk in the mouth of the harbour, which is more dangerous to others than if it had perished in the open sea; there is less scandal by the sins of the wicked, who sink, as it were, in the broad sea of profaneness, than in those who are convinced of sin, troubled in conscience, and miscarry so near the harbour, within sight, as it were, of saving grace. Tempted souls can hardly get over these without dashing. Am I better than such a one that proved nought at last? Now to help thee a little to find out the fallacy of this argument, we must distinguish between the terrors that accompany sorrow, and the intrinsical nature of this grace. The first, which are accessory, may be separated from the other, as the raging of the sea, which is caused by the wind, from the sea when the wind is down. From this distinction take two conclusions.

(1.) One may fall short of an hypocrite in the terrors that sometimes accompany sorrow, and yet have the truth of this grace, which the other with all his terrors wants. Christians run into many mistakes, by judging rather according to that which is accessory, than that which is essential to the nature of duties and graces. Sometimes thou hearest one pray with a moving expression, while thou canst hardly get out a few broken words in duty, and thou art ready to accuse thyself and to admire him, as if the gilt of the key made it open the door the better. Thou seest another abound with joy which thou wantest, and art ready to conclude his grace more, and thine less; whereas thou mayest have more real grace, only thou wantest a light to show thee where it lies. Take heed of judging by accessories. Perhaps thou hast not heard so much of the rattling chains of hell, nor in thy conscience the outcries of the damned to make thy flesh tremble; but hast not seen that in a bleeding

12. Quackle means to suffocate or choke.

13. This is an archaic variant and form of the word surgeon. — SDB

Christ which hath made thy heart melt and mourn, yea, loathe and hate thy lusts more than the devil himself? Truly, Christian, it is strange to hear a patient complain of his physician, when he finds his physic work effectually to the evacuating his distempered humours, and the restoring his health, merely because he was not so sick as some others with the working of it. Soul, thou hast more reason to be blessing God that the convictions of his Spirit wrought so kindly on thee, to effect that in thee without those errors which have cost others so dear.

(2.) This is so weak an argument, that contrariwise, the more the terrors are, the less the sorrow is for sin while they remain. These are indeed preparatory sometimes to sorrow; they go before this grace as austere John before meek Jesus. But as John went down when Christ went up, his increase was John's decrease, so as truly godly sorrow goes up, these terrors go down. As the wind gathers the clouds, but those clouds seldom melt into a set rain, until the wind falls that gathered them; so these terrors raise the clouds of our sins in our consciences, but when these sins melt into godly sorrow, this lays the storm presently. Indeed, as the loud winds blow away the rain, so these terrors keep off the soul from this gospel sorrow. While the creature is making an outcry, 'it is damned, it is damned,' it is taken up so much with the fear of hell, that sin as sin, which is the proper object of godly sorrow, is little looked on or mourned for. A murderer condemned to die is so possessed with the fear of death and thought of the gallows, that there lies the slain body, it may be, before him, unlamented by him: but when his pardon is brought, then he can bestow his tears freely on his murdered friend. 'They shall look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn.' Faith is the eye. This eye, beholding its sin piercing Christ, and Christ pardoning its sin, affects the heart. The heart affected sighs. These inward clouds melt, and run from the eye of faith with in tears; and all this is done when there is no tempest of terror upon the spirit, but a sweet serenity of love and peace; and therefore, Christian, see how Satan abuseth thee, when he would persuade thee thou art not humbled enough, because thy sorrow is not attended with these legal terrors.

[Brief application of Satan's subtlety as
A TROUBLER AND ACCUSER FOR SIN.]

Use First. Is Satan so subtle to trouble the saint's peace? This proves them to be the children of Satan, who show the same art and subtlety in vexing the spirits of the saints, as doth their infernal father; not to speak of bloody persecutors, who are the devil's slaughter-slaves to butcher the saints, but of those who more slyly trouble and molest the saint's peace.

1. Such as rake up the saint's old sins, which God hath forgiven and forgotten, merely to grieve their spirits and bespatter their names. These show their devilish malice indeed, who can take such pains to travel many years back, that they may find a handful of dirt to throw on the saint's face. Thus Shimei twitted David, 'Come out, thou bloody man,' II Sam. 16:7. When you that fear God meet with such reproaches, answer them as Beza did the Papists, who for want of other matter charged him for some wanton poems penned by him in his youth.¹⁴ These men, saith he, grudge me the pardoning mercy of God.

2. Such as watch for the saints' halting, and catch at every infirmity to make them odious, and themselves merry. It is a dreadful curse such bring upon themselves, though they think little of it; no less than Amalek's, the remembrance of whose name God threatened to blot out from under heaven, Deut. 25:19. Why what had Amalek done to deserve this? They smote the hindermost, those that were feeble, and could not march with the rest. And was it so great a cruelty to do this? Much more to smite with the edge of a mocking tongue the feeble in grace.

3. Such who father their sins upon the saints. Thus Ahab calls the prophet the troubler of Israel, when it was himself and his father's house. What a grief was it, think you, to Moses' spirit, for the Israelites to lay the blood of those that died in the wilderness at his door? Whereas, God knows, he was their constant bail, when at any time God's hand is up to destroy them. And this was the charge which the best of God's servants in this crooked generation of ours

14. Hi homunciones invident mihi gratiam Dei.

lie under. We may thank them, say the profane, for all our late miseries in the nation; we were well enough till they would reform us. O for shame, blame not the good physic that was administered, but the corrupt body of the nation that could not bear it.

4. Such as will themselves sin, merely to trouble the saint's spirit. Thus Rabshakeh blasphemed, and when desired to speak in another language, he goes on the more to grieve them. Sometimes you shall have a profane wretch, knowing one to be conscientious, and cannot brook to hear the name of God taken in vain, or the ways of God flouted, will on purpose fall upon such discourse as shall grate his chaste ears and trouble his gracious spirit. Such a one strikes father and child in one blow; [he] thinks it not enough to dishonour God, except the saint stands by to see and hear the wrong done to his heavenly Father.

Use Second. This may afford matter of admiration and thankfulness to any of you, O ye saints who are not at this day under Satan's hatches. Is he so subtle to disquiet, and hast thou any peace in thy conscience? To whom art thou beholden for that serenity that is on thy spirit? To none but thy God, under whose wing thou sittest so warm and safe. Is there not combustible matter enough in thy conscience for his sparks to kindle? Perhaps thou hast not committed such bloody sins as others. That is not the reason for thy peace, for the least is big enough to damn, much more to trouble thee. Thou hast not grossly fallen, maybe, since conversion, that is rare, if thou beest of long standing, yet the ghosts of thy unregenerate sins might walk in thy conscience. Thou hast had many testimonies of God's favour, hast thou not? Who more than David? Ps. 77. Yet he [was] at a loss, sometimes learning to spell his evidences, as if he could never have read them. The sense of God's love comes and goes with the present taste. He that is in the dark, while there, sees not the more for former light. O bless God for that light which shines in at thy window; Satan is plotting to undermine thy comfort every day. This thief sees thy pleasant fruits as they hang, and his teeth water at them, but the wall is too high for him to climb; thy God keeps this serpent out of thy paradise. It is not the grace of God in thee, but the favour of God, as a shield about thee, [that] defends thee from the

wicked one.

Use Third. Let Satan's subtlety to molest your peace, make thee, O Christian, more wise and wary. Thou hast no a fool to deal with, but one that hath wit enough to spill thy comfort and spoil thy joy, if not narrowly watched. This is the dainty bit he gapes for. It is not harder to keep the flies out of your cupboards in summer from tainting your provision, than Satan out of your consciences. Many a sweet meal hath he robbed the saints of, and sent them supperless to bed; take heed, therefore, that he roams not thine away also.

[Directions tending to entrench and fortify the Christian against the assaults of Satan, AS A TROUBLER AND ACCUSER.]

Question. How shall I stand in a defensive posture, may the Christian say, against these wiles of Satan as a troubler?

Answer First. If thou wouldst be guarded from him as a troubler, take heed of him as a seducer. The haft of Satan's hatchet, with which he lies chopping at the root of the Christian's comfort, is commonly made of the Christian's wood. First he tempts to sin, and then for it. Satan is but a creature, and cannot work without tools; he can indeed make much of a little, but not anything of nothing, as we see in his assaulting of Christ, where he troubled himself to little purpose, because he came and found nothing in him, John 14:30. Though the devil throws the stone, yet it is the mud in us which royles our comforts. It is in vain for the Philistines to fall on Samson till his lock was cut. Take heed, therefore, of yielding to his enticing motions. These are the stumbling-blocks at which he hopes thou [wilt] break thy shins, bruise thy conscience; which once done, let him alone to spin out the cure. Indeed, a saint's flesh heals not so easily as others: drink not of the devil's wassel;¹⁵ there is poison in the cup, his wine is a mocker; look not on it as it sparkles in the temptation. What thou drikest down with sweetness, thou wilt be sure to bring up again as gall and wormwood. Above all sins, take

15. Wassel is an English beverage used at Christmas, and made of apples, sugar, and ale.

heed of presumptuous ones; thou art not out of the danger of such. Sad stories we have of saints' falls, and what follows then? Ps. 19:13. Take him, jailor, saith God, deliver such a one unto Satan. And if a saint be the prisoner, and the devil the keeper, you may guess how he shall be used. O how he will tear and rend thy conscience! Though that dreadful ordinance is not used as it should be in the church, yet God's court sits, and if he excommunicate a soul from his presence, he falls presently into Satan's clutches. Well, if through his subtlety thou hast been overtaken, take heed thou art yet not in the devil's quarters. Shake the viper off thy hand; ply thee to thy chirurgeon. Green wounds cure best. If thou neglectest and the wind get to it, thy conscience will soon fester. Ahab, we read, was wounded in battle, and was loath to yield to it; it is said, he was held up in his chariot, but he died for it, I Kings 22:35. When a soul hath received a wound—committed a sin—Satan labours to bolster him up with flattering hopes, holds him up, as it were, in his chariot against God. What, yield for this! Afraid for a little scratch, and lose the spoil of thy future, pleasure for this? O take heed of listening to such counsel; the sooner thou yieldest, the fairer quarter thou shalt have. Every step in this way gets thee further from thy peace. A rent garment is caught by every nail, and the rent made wider. Renew therefore thy repentance speedily, whereby this breach may be made up, and worse prevented, which else will befall thee.

Answer Second. Study that grand gospel truth of a soul's justification before God. Acquaint thyself with this in all its causes; the moving cause, the free mercy of God, being justified freely by his grace; the meritorious, which is the blood of Christ; and the instrumental, faith; with all the sweet privileges that flow from it, Rom. 3:24. An effectual door once opened to let the soul into this truth, would not only spoil the pope's market, as Gardner said, but the devil's also. When Satan comes to disquiet the Christian's peace, for want of a right understanding here, he is soon worsted by his enemy; as the silly hare which might escape the dogs in some covert or burrow that is at hand, but trusting to her heels is by the print of her own feet and scent, which she leaves behind, followed, till at last, weary and spent, she falls into the mouth of them. In all that a Christian doth, there is

a print of sinful infirmity, and a scent by which Satan is enabled to trace and pursue him over hedge and ditch; this grace and that duty, till the soul, not able to stand before the accusation of Satan, is ready to fall down in despair at his feet. Whereas, here is a hiding place whither the enemy durst not come, 'the clefts of the rock,' the hole 'of the stairs,' which this truth leads unto. When Satan chargeth thee for a sinner, perhaps thou interposest thy repentance and reformation, but soon art beaten out of those works, when thou art shown the sinful mixtures that are in them: whereas this truth would choke all his bullets, that thou believest on him who hath said, Not unto him that worketh, but unto him that believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is imputed for righteousness, Rom. 4:5. Get therefore into this tower of the gospel covenant, and roll this truth (as she that stone on the head of Abimelech) on the head of Satan.

Answer Third. Be sure, Christian, thou keepest the plains. Take heed that Satan coop thee not up in some straits, where thou canst neither well fight nor fly. Such a trap the Egyptians hoped they had the Israelites in, when they cried, They are entangled, they are entangled. There are three kinds of straits where-in he labours to entrap the Christian—nice questions, obscure scriptures, and dark providences.

1. He labours to puzzle him with nice and scrupulous questions, on purpose to retard the work, and clog him in his notion, that meeting with such intricacies in his Christian course, which he cannot easily resolve, thereby he may be made either to give over, or go on heavily. Therefore we have particular charge not to trouble the weak heads of young converts with 'doubtful disputations,' Rom. 14:1. Sometimes Satan will be asking the soul, How it knows its election. And where he finds one not so fully resolved, as to dare to own the same, he frames his argument against such a one's closing with Christ and the promise, as if it were presumption to assume that, which is the only portion of the elect, before we know ourselves of that number. Now, Christian, keep the plains and thou art safe. It is plain, we are not to make election a ground for our faith, but our faith and calling a medium or argument to prove our election. Election indeed is first in order of divine acting, God chooseth before we believe; yet faith is first in our acting. We

must believe before we can know we are elected, yea, by believing we know it. The husbandman knows it is spring by the sprouting of the grass, though he hath no astrology to know the position of the heavens. Thou mayest know thou art elect, as surely by a work of grace in thee, as if thou hadst stood by God's elbow when he writ thy name in the book of life. It had been presumption for David to have thought he should have been king, till Samuel anointed him, but then none at all. When thou believest first, and closest with Christ, then is the Spirit of God sent to anoint thee to the kingdom of heaven; this is that holy oil which is poured upon none but heirs of glory; and it is no presumption to read what God's gracious purpose was towards thee of old, when prints those his thoughts, and makes them legible in thy effectual calling. Here thou dost not go up to heaven, and pry into God's secrets, but heaven comes down to thee, and reveals them. Again, he will ask the Christian what was the time of his conversion. Art thou a Christian, will he say, and dost thou not know when thou commencedst? Now keep the plains, and content thyself with this, that thou seest the streams of grace, though the time of thy conversion be like the head of Nylus, not to be found. God oft betimes, before gross sins have deflowered the soul, and steals into the creature's bosom without much noise. In such a case Satan doth but abuse thee when he sends thee in this errand; you may know the sun is up, though you did not observe when it rose. Again, what will become of thee, saith Satan, if God should bring thee into such an affliction or trial, when thou must burn or turn, or when all thy outward estate shall be rent from thee, no meal in the barrel, no money in the purse? Darest thou have so good an opinion of thyself, as to think that thy faith will hold out in such an hour of temptation? If thou hast but half an eye, Christian, thou mayest see what Satan drives at. This is an ensnaring question; by the fear of future troubles he labours to bring thee into a neglect of thy duty, and indispose thee also for such a state whenever it falls. If a man hath much business to do on the morrow, it is his wisdom to discharge his mind thereof, when composing to sleep, lest the thoughts thereof break his rest, and make him the more unfit in the morning. The less rest the soul hath in God and his promise concerning future events, the less

strength it will find to bear them when the pinch comes. When therefore thou art molested with such fears, pacify thy heart with these three plain conclusions.

(1.) Every event is the product of God's providence; not a sparrow, much less a saint, falls to the ground by poverty, sickness, persecution, &c., but the hand of God is in it.

(2.) God hath put in caution he 'will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,' Heb. 13:5. He that enables thee in one condition, will in another. God learns his servants their whole trade. Grace is a universal principle. At the first moment of thy spiritual life, suffering grace was infused as well as praying grace.

(3.) God is wise to conceal the succours he intends in the several changes of thy life, that so he may draw thy heart into an entire dependence on his faithful promise. Thus to try the metal of Abraham's faith, he let him go on, till his hand was stretched forth, and then he comes to the rescue. Christ sends his disciples to sea, but stays behind himself, on a design to try their faith, and show his love. Comfort thyself therefore with this, though thou seest not thy God in the way, yet thou shalt find him in the end.

2. Satan perplexeth the tender consciences of doubting Christians, with obscure scriptures, whose sense lies too deep for their weak and distempered judgments readily to find out, and with these he hampers poor souls exceedingly. Indeed as melancholy men delight in melancholy walks, so doubting souls most frequent such places of Scripture in their musing thoughts, as increase their doubts. How many have I known that have looked so long on those difficult places, Heb. 6:6; 10:26, which pass the understanding, as a swift stream the eye, so that the sense is not perceived without great observation, till their heads have turned round, and they at last, not able to untie the difficulties, have fallen down in despairing thoughts and words of their own condition, crying out, O they have sinned against knowledge of the truth, and therefore no mercy remains for them. [Now] if they have refreshed their understandings by looking off these places, whose engraving is too curious to be long pored on by a weak eye, they might have found that in other scriptures plainly expressed, which would have enabled them, as through a glass, more safely to have viewed these. Therefore, Chris-

tian, keep the plains; thou mayest be sure it is thine enemy that gives thee such stones to break thy teeth, when thy condition calls rather for bread and wine—such scriptures, I mean, as are most apt to nourish thy faith, and cheer thy drooping spirit. When thou meetest such plain scriptures which speak to thy case, go over where it is fordable, and do not venture beyond thy depth. Art thou afraid because thou hast sinned since the knowledge of truth, and [that] therefore no sacrifice remains for thee? See David and Peter's case, how it patterns thine, and [is] left upon record that their recovery may be a key in thine hand to open such places as these. Mayest thou not safely conclude from these, [that] this is not their meaning, that none can be saved the sin after knowledge? Indeed in both these places, it is neither meant of the falls of such as ever had true grace, nor of a falling away in some particular acts of sin, but of a total universal falling away from the faith, the doctrine as well as seeming practice of it. Now if the root of the matter were ever in thee, other scriptures will first comfort thee against those particular apostasies into which thou hast relapsed, by sweet promises inviting such to return, and [giving] precedents of saints, who have had peace spoken to them after such folly, and also they will satisfy thee against the other, by giving full security to thy faith, that thy little grace shall not die, being immortal, though not in its proper essence, because but a creature, yet by covenant, as it is a child of promise.

3. Dark providences. From these Satan disputes against God's love to, and grace in, a soul. First, he got a commission to plunder Job of his temporal estate, and bereave him of his children, and then labours to make him question his spiritual estate and sonship. His wife would have him entertain hard thoughts of God, saying, 'Curse God and die;' and his friends as hard thoughts of himself, as if he were an hypocrite; and both upon the same mistake, as if such an afflicted condition and a gracious state were inconsistent. Now, Christian, keep the plains, and neither from this, charge God foolishly for thine enemy, nor thyself as his. Read the saddest providence with the comment of the Word, and thou canst not make such a harsh interpretation. As God can make a straight line with a crooked stick, be righteous when he useth wicked instruments; so also gracious when he dispen-

seth harsh providences. Joseph kept his love, when he spake roughly to his brethren. I do not wonder that the wicked think they have God's blessing, because they are in the warm sun. Alas! they are strangers to God's counsels, void of his Spirit, and sensual, judging of God and his providence, by the report their present feeling makes of them like little children, who think every one loves them that gives them plums. But it is strange that a saint should be at a loss for his afflicted state, when he hath a key to decipher God's character. Christian, hath not God secretly instructed thee by his Spirit from the Word, how to read the shorthand of his providence? Dost not thou know that the saint's afflictions stand for blessings? Every son whom he loves he corrects; and prosperity in a wicked state, must it not be read a curse? Doth not God damn such to be rich, honourable, victorious in this world, as well as to be tormented in another world? God gives them more of these than they seem to desire sometimes, and all to bind them faster up in a deep sleep of security, as Jael served Sisera: he shall have milk though he asked but water, that she might nail him surer to the ground—milk having a property, as some write, to incline to sleep, Jud. 5:25.

Answer Fourth. Be careful to keep thy old receipts which thou hast had from God for the pardon of thy sins. There are some gaudy days, and jubilee-like festivals, when God comes forth clothed with the robes of his mercy, and holds forth the sceptre of his grace more familiarly to his children than ordinary, bearing witness to their faith, sincerity, &c., and then the firmament is clear, not a cloud to be seen to darken the Christian's comfort. Love and joy are the soul's repast and pastime, while this feast lasts. Now when God withdraws, and this cheer is taken off, Satan's work is how he may deface and wear off the remembrance of this testimony, which the soul so triumphs in for its spiritual standing, that he may not have it as an evidence when he shall bring about the suit again, and put the soul to produce his writings for his spiritual state, or renounce his claim. It behoves thee therefore to lay them safely; such a testimony may serve to nonsuit thy accuser many years hence; one affirmative from God's mouth for thy pardoned state, carries more weight, though of old date, than a thousand negatives from Satan's. David's songs of

old spring in with a light to his soul in his midnight sorrows.

Question. But what counsel would you give me, saith the distressed soul, who cannot fasten on my former comforts, nor dare to vouch those evidences which once I thought true? I find indeed there have been some treaties of old between God and my soul; some hopes I have had, but these are now so defaced and interlined with backslidings, repentances, and falls again, that now I question all my evidences, whether true or counterfeit; what should one in this case do?

Answer First. Renew thy repentance, as if thou hadst never repented. Put forth fresh acts of faith, as if thou hadst never believed. This seriously done, will stop Satan's mouth with an unexpected answer. Let him object against thy former actions as hypocritical; what can he say against thy present repenting and believing? which, if true, sets thee beyond his shot. It will be harder for Satan to disprove the present workings of God's gracious Spirit, whilst the impression thereof are fresh, than to pick a hole in thy old deeds and evidences. Acts are transient, and as wicked men look at sins committed many years since as little or none, by reason of that breadth of time which interposeth; so the Christian upon the same account stands at great disadvantage, to take the true aspect of those acts of grace, which so long ago passed between God and him, though sometimes even these are of great use. As God can make a sinner possess the sins of his youth, as if they were newly acted, to his terror in his old age, so God can present the comforts and evidences which of old the saint received, with those very thoughts he had then of them, as if they were fresh and new.

Answer Second. And therefore, if yet he haunts thee with the fears of thy spiritual estate, ply thee to the throne of grace, and beg a new copy of thy old evidence, which thou hast lost. The original is in the pardon office in heaven, whereof Christ is master, [and] if thou beest a saint, thy name is upon record in that court. Make thy moan to God, hear what news from heaven, rather than listen to the tales which are brought by thine enemy from hell. Did such reason less with Satan, and pray over their fears more to God, they might sooner be resolved. Can you expect truth from a liar, and comfort from an enemy? Did

he ever prophesy well of believers? Was not Job the devil's hypocrite, whom God vouched for a non-such in holiness, and proved him so at last? If he knew thou wert a saint, would he tell thee so? If an hypocrite, he would be as loath thou shouldst know it. Turn thy back therefore on him, and go to thy God; fear not, but sooner or later he will give his hand to thy certificate. But look thou dost not rashly pass a censure on thyself, because a satisfactory answer is not presently sent at thy desire; the messenger may stay long, and bring good news at last.

Answer Third. Shun battle with thine enemy while [until] thou art in a fitter posture, and that thou mayest draw into thy trenches, and make an honourable retreat into those fastnesses and strengths which Christ hath provided for his sick and wounded soldiers. Now there are two places of advantage into which deserted souls may retire—the name of God, and the absolute promises of the gospel. These I may call the fair havens, which are then chiefly of use, when the storm is so great that the ship cannot live at sea. O, saith Satan, dost thou hope to see God? None but the pure in heart shall be blessed with that vision. Thinkest thou to have comfort? That is the portion of the mourners in spirit. Now, soul, though thou canst not say in the hurry of temptation [that] thou art the pure and the mourner in spirit, yet then say thou believest God is able to work these in thee; yea, hath promised such a mercy to poor sinners; it is his covenant [that] he will give a new heart, a clean heart, a soft heart; and here I wait, knowing, as there was nothing in the creature to move the great God to make such promises, so there can be nothing in the creature to hinder the Almighty his performance of them, where and when he pleaseth. This act of faith, accompanied with a longing desire after that grace thou canst not yet find, and an attendance on the means, though it will not fully satisfy all thy doubts, may be, yet will keep thy head above water, that thou despairest not; and such a shore thou needest in this case, or the house falls.

Answer Fourth. If yet Satan dogs thee, call in help, and keep not the devil's counsel. The very strength of some temptations lies in the concealing of them, and the very revealing of them to some faithful friend, like the opening and pricking of some impost-

hume¹⁶, gives the soul present ease. Satan knows this too well; and therefore, as some thieves, when they come to rob a house, either gag them in it, or hold a pistol to their breast, frightening them with death, if they cry or speak; thus Satan, that he may more freely rifle the soul of its peace and comfort, overawes it so, that it dares not disclose his temptation. O, saith Satan, if thy brethren or friends know such a thing by thee, they will cast thee off; others will hoot at thee. Thus many a poor soul hath been kept long in its pangs by biting them in. Thou lovest, Christian, a double help by keeping the devil's secret—the counsel and prayers of thy fellow-brethren. And what an invaluable loss is this!

BRANCH SECOND.

[The certainty of standing against all his wiles
if we be thus armed.]

The second branch of the apostle's argument follows, to excite them the more vigorously to their arms; and that is from the possibility yea, certainty of standing against this subtle enemy, if thus armed, 'That ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.' So that this gives the apostle's argument its due temperament; for he meant not to scare them into a cowardly flight, or sullen despair of victory, when he tells them that their enemy is so subtle and politic, but to excite them to a vigorous resistance, from the assured hope of strength to stand in battle, and victoriously after it; which two I perceive are comprehended in that phrase, standing against the wiles of Satan. Sometimes to stand implies a fighting posture, ver. 14. sometimes a conquering posture: 'I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth,' Job 19:25. That earth which was the field where all the bloody battles were fought betwixt him and Satan, on it shall he stand, when not an enemy shall dare to show his head. So that taking both these in, the observation is—

[Satan shall never vanquish a soul
armed with true grace.]

DOCTRINE. Satan with all his wits and wiles, shall never vanquish a soul armed with true grace; nay, he that hath this armour of God on shall vanquish him. Look into the Word; you shall not find a saint but hath been in the list with him, sifted and winnowed more or less by this enemy, yet at last we find them all coming off with an honourable victory: as in David, Job, Peter, Paul, who were the hardest put to it of any upon record; and lest some should attribute their victory to the strength of their inherent grace above other of their weaker brethren, you have the glory of their victories appropriated to God, in whom the weak are as strong as the strongest. We shall give a double reason of this truth, why the Christian who seems to be so overmatched, is yet so unconquerable, II Cor. 12:9; James 5:11.

First Reason. The curse that lies upon Satan and his cause. God's curse blasts wherever it comes. The Canaanites with their neighbour nations were bread for Israel, though people famous for war; and why? They were cursed nations. The Egyptians [were] a politic people; let us deal wisely, say they; yet being cursed of God, this lay like a thorn at their heart, and at last was their ruin. Yea, let the Israelites themselves, who carry the badge of God's covenant on their flesh, by their sins once become the people of God's curse, and they are trampled like dirt under the Assyrian's feet. This made Balak beg so hard for a curse upon Israel. Now there is an irrevocable curse cleaves to Satan from Gen. 3:14, 15, 'And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed,' &c., which place, though partly meant of the literal serpent, yet chiefly of the devil and the wicked—his spiritual serpentine brood—as appears by the enmity pronounced against the serpent's seed and the woman's, Gen. 3:15¹⁷, which clearly holds forth the feud between Christ with his seed, against the devil and his. Now there are two things in that curse which may comfort the saints. 1. The curse prostrates Satan under their feet: Upon thy belly shalt thou go; which is no more than is elsewhere

16. Imposthume is an archaic term meaning an abscess.
— SDB

17. Citation was originally Isa. 10:5 — SDB

promised, that God will subdue Satan under our feet. Now this prostrate condition of Satan assures believers that the devil shall never lift his head, that is, his wily policy, higher than the saint's heel. He may make thee limp, but cannot bereave thee of thy life; and this bruise which he give thee shall be rewarded with the breaking of his own head, that is, the utter ruin of him and his cause. 2. His food is here limited and appointed. Satan will not devour whom he will. The dust is his food; which seems to restrain his power to the wicked, who are of the earth earthy, mere dust; but for those who are of a heavenly extraction, their graces are reserved for Christ's food, Song. 7:13, and their soul's are surely not a morsel for the devil's tooth.

Second Reason. The second reason is taken from the wisdom of God, who as he undertakes the ordering of the Christian's way to heaven, Ps. 37:24, so especially this business of Satan's temptations. We find Christ was not led of the evil spirit into the wilderness to be tempted, but of the Holy Spirit, Matt. 4:1. Satan tempts not when he will, but when God pleaseth, and the same Holy Spirit which led Christ into the field, led him off with victory. And therefore we find him marching in the power of his Spirit, after he had repulsed Satan, into Galilee, Luke 4:14. When Satan tempts a saint, he is but God's messenger, II Cor. 12:7. 'There was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me.' So our translation. But rather as Beza, who will have it in [the nominative case¹⁸], the messenger Satan, implying that he was sent of God to Paul; and indeed the errand he came about was too good and gracious to be his own, lest I should be exalted above measure. The devil never meant to do Paul such a good office, but God sends him to Paul, as David sent Uriah with letters to Joab; neither knew the contents of their message. The devil and his instruments, both are God's instruments, therefore the wicked are called his sword, his axe; now let God alone to wield the one and handle the other. He is but a bungler that hurts and hackles his own legs with his own axe; which God should do, if his children should be the worse for Satan's temptations. Let the devil choose his way,

God is for him at every weapon. If he will try it by force of arms, and assault the saints by persecution, as the Lord of hosts he will oppose him. If by policy and subtilty, he is ready there also. The devil and his whole council are but fools to God. Nay, their wisdom, foolishness, cunning, and art, commend everything but sin. The more artificial the watch, the picture, &c., the better; but the more wit and art in sin, the worse, because it is employed against an all-wise God, that cannot be outwitted, and therefore in the end but pay the workmen in greater damnation. 'The foolishness of God is wiser than men;' yea, than the wisdom of men and devils, that is, the means and instruments which God opposeth Satan withal. What weaker than a sermon? Who sillier than the saints in the account of the wise world? Yet God is wiser in a weak sermon, than Satan in his deep plots, wherein the state heads of a whole conclave of profound cardinals are knocked together—wiser in his simple ones, than Satan in his Ahithophels and Sanballats. And truly God chooseth on purpose to defeat the policies of hell and earth by these, that he may put such to greater shame, I Cor. 1:21. How is the great scholar ashamed to be baffled by a plain countryman's argument? Thus God calls forth Job to wrestle with Satan and his seconds—for such his three friends showed themselves in taking the devil's part—and sure he is not able to hold up the cudgels against the fencing-master, who is beaten by one of the scholars. God sits laughing while hell and earth sit plotting, Ps. 2:4; 'He disappointeth the devices of the crafty,' Job 5:12, he breaketh their studied thoughts and plots, as the words import, in one moment pulling down the labours of many years' policy. Indeed as great men keep wild beasts for game and sport, as the fox, the boar, &c., so doth God Satan and his instruments, to manifest his wisdom in the taking of them. It is observed, that the very hunting of some beasts affords not only pleasure to the hunter, but also more sweetness to the eater. Indeed God, by displaying of his wisdom in the pursuit of the saint's enemies, doth superadd a sweet relish to their deliverance at last. He brake the heads of leviathan in pieces, and gave him to be meat to his people. After he had hunted Pharaoh out of all his forms and burrows, now he breaks the very brains of all his plots, and serves him up to his people, with the garnishment of his wisdom

18. in casu recto.

and power about.

[How God doth outwit the devil
in his tempting of saints to sin.]

Question. But how doth God defeat Satan, and outwit his wiles in tempting his saints?

Answer. This God doth by accomplishing his own gracious ends for the good and comfort of his people out of those temptations from which Satan designs their ruin. This is the noblest kind of conquest, to beat back the devil's weapon to the wounding of his own head, yea, to cut it off with the devil's own sword. Thus God sets the devil to catch the devil, and lays, as it were, his own counsels under Satan's wings, and makes him hatch them. Thus the patriarchs helped to fulfil Joseph's dream, while they were thinking to rid their hands of him. To instance in a few particulars,

[The ends Satan propounds.]

First Particular. Satan by his temptations aims at the defiling of the Christian's conscience, and disfiguring that beautiful face of God's image which is engraven with holiness in the Christian's bosom; he is an unclean spirit himself, and would have them such that he might glory in their shame; but God outwits him, for he turneth the temptations of Satan to sin, to purging them from sin; they are the black soap with which God washes his saints white.

1. God useth the temptations of Satan to one sin, as a preventive against another; so Paul's thorn in the flesh to prevent his pride. God sends Satan to assault Paul on that side where he is strong, that in the meantime he may fortify him where he is weak. Thus Satan is befooled, as sometimes we see an army sitting down before a town, where it wastes its strength to no purpose, and in the meantime gives the enemy an advantage to recruit; and all this by the counsel of some Hushai, that is a secret friend to the contrary side. God, who is the saint's true friend, sits in the devil's council, and overrules proceedings there to the saint's advantage. He suffers the devil to annoy the Christian with temptations to blasphemy, atheism, and with these, together with the troubles of spirit they produce, the soul is driven to duty, is humbled

in the sense of these horrid apparitions in its imagination, and secured from abundance of formality and pride, which otherwise God saw invading him. As in a family, some business falls out, which keeps the master up later than ordinary, and by this the thief, who that night intended to rob him, is disappointed. Had not such a soul had his spirit of prayer and diligence kept awake by those afflicting temptations, it is likely that Satan might have come as a seducer, and taken him napping in security.

2. God purgeth out the very sin Satan tempts to, even by his tempting. Peter never had such a conquest over his self-confidence, never such an establishment of his faith as after his soul-fall in the high-priest's hall. He that was so well persuaded of himself before, as to say, 'Though all were offended with Christ, yet would not he,' how modest and humble was he in a few days become, when he durst not say he loved Christ more than his fellow-brethren, to whom before he had preferred himself! John 21:15. What an undaunted confessor of Christ and his gospel doth he prove before councils and rulers, who even now was dashed out of countenance by a silly maid, and all this the product of Satan's temptation sanctified unto him! Indeed a saint hath a discovery by his fall, what is the prevailing corruption in him, so that the temptation doth but stir the humour, which the soul having found out, hath the greater advantage to evacuate, by applying those means, and using those ingredients which do purge that malady [with a choice¹⁹]. Now the soul sure will call all out against this destroyer? Paul had not taken such pains to buffet his body, had he not found Satan knocking at that door.

3. God useth these temptations for the advancing the whole work of grace in the heart. One spot occasions the whole garment to be washed. David overcome with one sin, renews his repentance for all, Ps. 51. A good husband when he seeth it rain at one place, sends for the workman to look over all the house. This indeed differenceth a sincere heart from an hypocrite, whose repentance is partial, soft in one plot, and hard in another. Judas cries out of his treason, but not a word of his thievery and hypocrisy.

19. Cum delectu.

The hole was no wider in his conscience than where the bullet went in; whereas true sorrow for one, breaks the heart into shivers for others also.

[How Satan is prevented in all.]

Second Particular. Satan by tempting one saint hath a mischievous design against others, either by encouraging them to sin by the example of such a one, or discouraging them in their holy course by the scandal he hath given; but God here befools him.

1. By making the miscarriages of such, a seasonable caveat to others to look to their standing. Dost thou see a meek Moses provoked to anger; what watch and ward hast thou need keep over thy unruly heart! Though loud winds do some hurt by blowing down here a loose tile, and there a turret, which was falling before—yet the common good surmounts the private damage of some few, these being a broom in God's hands to sweep and cleanse the air. So, though some that are wicked are by God's righteous judgment for the same hardened into further abominations by the saints' falls, yet the good which sincere souls receive by having their formality and security in a further degree purged, doth abundantly countervail the other, who are but sent a little faster, whither they were going before.

2. God makes his saints' falls an argument for comfort to distressed consciences. This hath been, and is as a feather—when the passage seems so stopped that no comfort can be got down otherwise—to drop a little hope into the soul, to keep the creature alive from falling into utter despair. Some have been revived with this, when next door to hell in their own fears. David's sin was great, yet [he] found mercy. Peter fell foully, yet [is] now in heaven. Why sittest thou here, O my soul, under the hatches of despair? Up and call upon thy God for mercy, who hath pardoned the same to others.

3. God hath a design in suffering Satan to trounce some of his saints by temptation, to train them up in a fitness to succour their fellow-brethren in the like condition. He sends them hither to school—where they are under Satan's ferula and lash—that his cruel hand over them may make them study the Word and their own hearts, by which they get experience of Satan's policies till at last they commence

masters in this art of comforting tempted souls. It is an art by itself, to speak a word in season to the weary soul. It is not serving out an apprenticeship to human arts [that] will furnish a man for this. Great doctors have proved very dunces here, knowing no more how to handle a wounded conscience than a rustic the chirurgeon's instrument in dissecting the body when an anatomy lecture is to be read. It is not the knowledge of the Scripture—though a man were as well acquainted with it, as the apothecary with his pots and glasses in his shop, and able to go directly to any promise on a sudden—[that] will suffice. No, not grace itself, except exercised with these buffetings and soul conflicts. Christ himself we find trained up at this school. 'He wakeneth mine ear, to hear as the learned,' Isa. 50:4. Even as the tutor calls up his pupil to read to him. And what is the lecture which is read to Christ, that he may have the tongue of the learned to speak a word in season to the weary souls? 'The Lord hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned I away back; I gave my back to the smiters,' &c., ver. 5, 6. His sufferings (which were all along mingled with temptations), were the lecture from which Christ came out so learned, to resolve and comfort distressed souls. So that the devil had better let Christ alone, yea, and his saints also, who do him but the greater disservice in comforting others. None will handle poor souls so gently as those who remember the smart of their own heart sorrows. None [are] so skilful in applying the comforts of the Word to wounded consciences, as those who have lain bleeding themselves; such know the symptoms of soul-troubles, and feel others' pains in their own bosoms, which some that know the Scriptures, for lack of experience do not, and therefore are like a novice physician, who perhaps can tell you every plant in the herbal, yet wanting the practical part, when a patient comes, knows not well how to make use of his skill. The saints' experiences help him to a sovereign treacle made of the scorpion's own flesh—which they through Christ have slain—and that hath a virtue above all other to expel the venom of Satan's temptations from the heart.

[The gracious issue God puts
to Satan's temptations.]

Third Particular. Satan, in tempting the saint to sin, labours to make a breach between God and the soul. He hates both, and therefore labours to divide these dear friends. If I can, thinks he, get such a one to sin, God will be angry, and when angry he will whip his child soundly; this will be some sport; and when God is correcting the saint, he will be questioning the love of God to him, and cool in his love to God. So though I should not keep him from heaven at last, yet he shall have little joy thither in the way. In this case God and the soul will be like man and wife fallen out, who neither of them look kindly one upon another. Now see how God befools Satan in both these.

1. God useth his saints' temptations, as his method by which he advanceth the communications of his love unto them. The devil thought he had got the goal when he got Adam to eat the forbidden fruit; he thought now he had man in the same predicament with himself, as unlikely ever to see the face of God, as those apostate spirits. But, alas! this was by God intended to usher in that great gospel-plot of saving man by Christ, who (as soon as this prologue of man's fall is done) is brought upon the stage in that grand promise of the gospel made to Adam, and, at God's command, undertakes the charge of recovering lost man out of Satan's clutches, and reinstating him in his primitive glory, with an access of more than ever man had at first, so that the meanest lily in Christ's field exceeds Adam in all his native royalty. And as Satan sped in his first temptation, so he is still on the losing hand. What got he by all his pains upon Job, but to let that holy man know at last how dearly God loved him? When he foiled Peter so shamefully, do we not find Christ owning Peter with as much love as ever? Peter must be the only disciple to whom by name the joyful news of the resurrection is sent. 'Go tell my disciples and Peter;' as if Christ had said, Be sure let his sad heart be comforted with this news, that he may know I am friends with him for all his late cowardice.

But doth not this seem to countenance sin, and make Christians heedless whether they fall into temptation or no? If God do thus show his love to the saints after their falls and foils, why should we be so

shy of sin, which ends so well at last? Two things will prevent the danger of such an inference.

(1.) We must distinguish between a soul who is foiled through his own infirmity, and his enemies' subtlety and power over-matching him; and another thorough a false heart doth voluntarily prostrate himself to the lust of Satan, Though a general will show little pity to a soldier that should traitorously throw down his arms, and run to the enemy, yet if another in fighting receives a wound and be worsted, it will be no dishonour for him to express his pity and love, no, though he should send him out of the field in his own coach, lay him in his own bed, and appoint him his own chirurgeon. God doth not encourage wickedness in his saints, but pities weakness. Even when the saints fall into a sin, in its nature presumptuous, they do not commit it so presumptuously as others; there is a part true to God in their bosoms, though over-voted. Moses spake unadvisedly, but the devil had his instruments to provoke him, quite against the good man's temper. David numbers the people, but see how the devil dogged and hunted him, till at last he got the better: 'Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel,' 1 Chr. 21:1. How bravely did Job repel Satan's darts! No wonder if in such a shower someone should get between the joints of his armour! And for Peter, we know—good man!—with what a loyal heart, yea, zealous, he went into the field, though when the enemy appeared his heart failed him.

(2.) Consider but the way how God communicates his love after his saints' falls, not in sinning, or for sinning, but in mourning and humbling their souls for their sins. Indeed did God smile on them while acting sinfully, this might strengthen their sin, as wine in a fever would the disease; but when the fit is off, the venom of the disease spent, and breathed out in a kindly humiliation, now the creature lies low. God's wine of comfort is a cordial to the drooping spirit, not fuel for sin. When David was led into temptation first, he must be clad in sackcloth and mourning, and then God takes it off, and puts on the garment of joy and praise, 1 Chr. 21:10, 15. Job, though he expressed so much courage and patience, yet, bewraying some infirmities after he was baited long by so many fresh dogs, men and devils, he must cry Peccavi [I have sinned], and abhor himself in dust

and ashes, before God will take him into his arms, Job 42:6. And the same way God takes with all his children. Now to his saints in such a posture, God may with safety to his honour and their good, give a larger draught of love than ordinary. Their fears and sorrows which their sin hath cost them, will serve instead of water to dash this strongwine of joy, and take away its headiness, that it neither fume up into pride, nor occasion them to reel backward into apostasy.

But why doth God now communicate his love?
(a) From his own pitiful nature; 'You have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful, and full of tender mercy.' God loves not to rake in bleeding wounds; he knows a mourning soul is subject to be discouraged. A frown or an angry look from God, whom the saint so dearly loves, must needs go near the heart, therefore God declares himself at hand to revive such, Isa. 57:15. And if he gives the reason: 'For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me,' ver. 16. Whose spirit is there meant? Not [that] of the presumptuous sinner; he goes on, and never blinks; but of the contrite and humble ones. As the father observes the disposition of his children; one commits a fault and goes on rebelliously, despising his father's anger; another, when offending him, lays it to heart, refuseth to eat, gets into some corner to lament the displeasure of his father; the father sees it, and his bowels yearn toward him. Indeed should he not put his child out of fear by discovering his love, the spirit of such a one would fail. It is not possible there should be a long breach between such a father and such a son, the one relenting over his sin, the other over his mourning son.
(b) God doth thus, to pour the greater shame upon Satan, who is the great makebate²⁰ between God and the soul. How is the man ashamed that hath stirred up variance between husband and wife, father and son, to see the breach made up, and all set themselves against him! It went ill on Christ's side when Herod and Pilate were made friends; and can it go well with Satan to see all well between God and his children? If Esther be in favour, Haman her enemy shall have

his face covered. Indeed, this covers Satan's face with shame, to see a poor saint, even now his prisoner, whom he had leave to rob and plunder, tempt and disquiet, now sitting in the sunshine of God's love, while he like a ravening lion takes on for the loss of his prey.

2. Satan's aim is to weaken the saint's faith on God, and cool his love to God, but [he is] befooled in both.

(1.) God turns their temptations, yea, their falls to the further establishment of their faith, which, like the tree, stands stronger for its shaking; or like the giant Anteus, who, in his wrestling with Hercules, is feigned to get strength by every fall to the ground. False faith, indeed, once foiled, seldom comes on again; but true faith riseth and fights more valiantly, as we see in Peter and other Scripture examples. Temptation to faith, is like fire to gold, I Pet. 1:7. The fire doth not only discover which is true gold, but makes the true gold more pure; it comes out, may be, less in bulk and weight, because severed from that soil and dross which embased it, but more in value and worth. When Satan is bound up, and the Christian walks under the shines of divine favour, and [the] encouragement of divine assistance, his faith may appear great, if compared with another under the withdrawals of God and buffetings of Satan, but this is not equal judging. As if to try who is the bigger of two men, we should measure one naked, and the other over his clothes; or in comparing two pieces of gold, [we] weighed one with the dross and dirt it contracts in the purse, with the purged from these in the fire. Faith before temptation hath much heterogeneous stuff that cleaves to it, and goes for faith; but when temptation comes these are discovered. Now the Christian feels corruption stir, which lay as dead before; now a cloud comes between the soul and the sweet face of God—the sense of which latter, and the little sense of the other bore up his faith before—but these bladders [being] pricked, he comes now to learn the true stroke in this heavenly art of swimming on the promise, having nothing else to bear him up but that. And a little of this carries more of the precious nature of faith in it, than all the other; yea, is, like Gideon's handful of men, stronger when all these accessories to faith are sent away, than when they were present. And here is all the devil gets; instead of destroying his

20. Makebate:—One that excites contentions and quarrels. — SDB

faith which he aims at, he is the occasion of the refining of it, and thereby adding to its strength.

(2.) The love of tempted saints is enkindled to Christ by their temptations, and foils in their temptations. Possibly in the fit there may seem a damp upon their love, as when water is first sprinkled upon the fire, but when the conflict is a little over, and the Christian comes to himself, his love to Christ will break out like a vehement flame. (a) The shame and sorrow which a gracious soul must needs feel in his bosom for his sinful miscarriage while under the temptation, will provoke him to express his love to Christ above others; as is sweetly set forth in the spouse, who, when the cold fit of her distemper was off, and the temptation over, bestirs her to purpose; her lazy sickness is turned to love-sickness; she finds it as hard now to sit, as she did before to rise; she can rest in no place out of her Beloved's sight, but runs and asks every one she meets for him. And whence came all this vehemency of her zeal? All occasioned by her undutiful carriage to her husband; she parted so unkindly with him, that bethinking what she had done, away she goes to make her peace. If sins committed in unregeneracy have such a force upon a gracious soul, that the thought of them, though pardoned, will still break and melt the heart into sorrow (as we see in Magdalene), and prick on to show zeal for God above others (as in Paul), how much more will the sins of a saint, who, after sweet acquaintance with Jesus Christ, lifts up the heel against that bosom where he hath lain, affect, yea, dissolve the heart as into so many drops of water, and that sorrow provoke him to serve God at a higher rate than others? No child so dutiful in all the family as he who is returned from his rebellion. (b) Again, as his own shame, so the experience which such a one hath of Christ's love above all others will increase his love. Christ's love is to fuel ours²¹; as it gives its being, so it affords growth. It is both mother and nurse to our love. The more Christ puts forth his love, the more heat our love gets; and next to Christ's dying love, none greater than his succouring love in temptation. The mother never hath such advantage to show her affection to her child as when in distress, sick, poor or imprisoned; so

neither hath Christ to his children as when tempted, yea, worsted by temptation. When his children lie in Satan's prison, bleeding under the wounds of their consciences, this is the season he takes to give an experiment of his tender heart in pitying, his faithfulness in praying for them, his mindfulness in sending succour to them, yea, his dear love in visiting them by his comforting Spirit. Now when the soul hath got off some great temptation, and reads the whole history thereof together (wherein he finds what his own weakness was to resist Satan, nay his unfaithfulness in complying with Satan, which might have provoked Christ to leave him to the fury of Satan), now to see both his folly pardoned and ruin graciously prevented, and that by no other hand but Christ's coming unto his rescue (as Abishai to David, when that giant thought to have slain him, 11 Sam. 21.) This must needs exceedingly endear Christ to the soul. At the reading of such records the Christian cannot but inquire—Ahasuerus concerning Mordecai, who by discovering a treason had saved the king's life—What honour hath been done to his sweet Saviour for all this? And thus Jesus Christ, whom Satan thought to bring out of the soul's favour and liking, comes in the end to sit higher and surer in the saint's affections than ever.

[Use or Application.]

Use First. This affords a reason why God suffers his dear children to fall into temptation, because he is able to outshoot Satan in his own bow, and in the thing wherein he thinks to outwit the Christian to be above him. God will not only be admired by his saints in glory for his love in their salvation, but for his wisdom in the way to it. The love of God in saving them will be the sweet draught at the marriage-feast, and the rare wisdom of God in effecting this, as the curious workmanship with which the cup will be enamelled. Now wisdom appears most in untying knots and wading through difficulties. The more cross wards there are in a business, the more wisdom to fit a key to the lock, to make choice of such means as shall meet with the several turnings in the same. On purpose therefore doth God suffer such temptations to intervene, that his wisdom may be the more admired in opening all these, and leading his saints

21. Ex iisdem nutrimur quibus constamus.

that way to glory, by which Satan thought to have brought them to hell. The Israelites are bid remember all the way that God led them in the wilderness for forty years, Deut. 8:2. The history of these wars, Christian, will be pleasant to read in heaven, though bloody to fight on earth. Moses and Elias talked with Christ on Tabor—an emblem of the sweet communion which shall pass between Christ and his saints in glory,—and what was their talk, but of his death and sufferings? Luke 9:30. It seems a discourse of our sufferings and temptations is not too low a subject for that blissful state. Indeed this left out, would make a blemish in the fair face of heaven's glory. Could the damned forget he way they went into hell, how oft the Spirit of God was wooing, and how far they were overcome by the conviction of it; in a word, how many turns and returns there were in their journey forward and backward, what possibilities, yea, probabilities they had for heaven, when on earth; were but some hand so kind as to blot these tormenting passages out of their memories, it would ease them wonderfully. So, were it possible, glorified saints could forget the way wherein they went to glory, and the several dangers that intervened from Satan and their own backsliding hearts, they and their God too would be losers by it, I mean in regard to his manifestative glory. What is the glory wherein God appears at Zion's deliverance—those royal garments of salvation, that make so admired of men and angels—but the celebration of all his attributes, according to what every one hath done towards their salvation? Now wisdom being that which the creature chiefly glories in, and that which was chosen by Satan for his first bait, [when he] made Eve believe she should be like God in knowledge and wisdom, therefore God, to give Satan the more shameful fall, gives him leave to use his wits and wiles in tempting and troubling his children, in which lies his great advantage over the saints, that so the way to his own throne—where his wisdom shall at last, as well as his mercy, sit in all its royalty—may be paved with the skulls, as I may so speak, of devils.

Use Second. This gives a strong cordial to our fainting faith, in the behalf of the church of Christ. If all the devil's wits and wiles will not serve him to overcome one single soldier in Christ's camp, much less shall he ever ruin the whole army. These are the

days of great confusion in the Christian world, and the chief fear of a gracious heart is for the ark, lest that should fall into the enemies' hand; and when this palladium is taken, [lest] the city of God, his church, be trod under the feet of pride. I confess Satan seems to get ground daily; he hath strangely wriggled into the bosoms and principles of many, who, by the fame of their profession and zeal, had obtained, in the opinion of others, to be reckoned among the chief of Christ's worthies in their generation. He hath sadly corrupted the truths of Christ; brought a disesteem on ordinances, [so] that by this, and as a judgment for this, the womb of the gospel is become in a great measure barren, and her children which hang upon her breasts thrive not in love and holiness as of old, when the milk was not so much, nor that so spiritul. He hath had advantage by the divisions of the godly, to harden those that are wicked into a further disdain of religion; and by the bloody wars of late years, to boil up the wrath of the popish and profane crew to a higher pitch of rage and fury against Christ's little remnant than ever: so that if ever God should suffer the sword to fall into their hand, they are disciplined and fitted to play the bloody butchers on Christ's sheep above their forefathers. Neither are they so crest-fallen, but that they can hope for such a day, yea [they] take up some of those joys upon trust beforehand, to solace themselves, while the rest follow. And now, Christian, may be their confidence, together with the distracted state of Christ's affairs in the world, may discompose thy spirit, concerning the issue of these rolling providences that are over our heads; but be still, poor heart, and know that the contest is not between the church and Satan, but between Christ and him. These are the two champions. Stand now, O ye army of saints, still, by faith, to see the all-wise God wrestle with a subtle devil. If you live not to see the period of these great confusions, yet generations after you shall behold the Almighty smite off this Goliath's head with his own sword, and take this cunning hunter in the toil of his own policies; that faith which ascribes greatness and wisdom to God, will shrink up Satan's subtlety into a *nigrum nihil*—a thing of nothing. Unbelief fears Satan as a lion, faith treads on him as

a worm²². Behold therefore thy God at work, and promise thyself that what he is about, is an excellent piece. None can drive him from his work. The pilot is beaten from the helm, and can do little in a storm, but lets the ship go adrift. The architect cannot work, when night draws the curtain, yea, is driven off the scaffold with a storm of rain. Such workmen are the wisest counsellors and mightiest princes on earth. A pinch may come, when it is as vain to say, Help, O king; as, Help, O beggar. Man's wisdom may be levelled with folly, but God is never interrupted. All the plots of hell and commotions on earth, have not so much as shaken God's hand, to spoil one letter or line that he hath been drawing. The mysteriousness of his providence may hang a curtain before his work, that we cannot see what he is doing, but when darkness is about him, righteousness is the seat of his throne for ever. O, where is our faith, sirs? Let God be wise, and all men and devils fools. What though thou seest a Babel more likely to go up, than a Babylon to be pulled down; yet believe God is making his secret approaches, and will clap his ladders on a sudden to the walls thereof. Suppose truth were a prisoner with Joseph, and error the courtier, to have

its head lift up by the favour of the times; yet dost [thou] not remember that the way to truth's preferment lies through the prison? Yea, what though the church were like Jonah in the whale's belly, swallowed up to the eye of reason by the fury of men, yet dost [thou] not remember [that] the whale had not power to digest the prophet? O be not too quick to bury the church before she be dead. Stay while Christ tries his skill before you give it over; bring Christ by your prayers to its grave, to speak a resurrection word. Admirable hath the saints' faith been in such straits; as Joseph's, who pawned his bones that God would visit his brethren, willing them to lay him where he believed they should be brought; Jeremiah purchaseth a field of his uncle, and pays down the money for it, and this when the Chaldean army [was] quartered about Jerusalem, ready to take the city, and [to] carry him with the rest into Babylon. And all this by God's appointment, Jer. 32:6-8, that he might show the Jews by this, how undoubtedly he, in that sad juncture of time, did believe the performance of the promise for their return out of captivity. Indeed God counts himself exceedingly disparaged in the thoughts of his people, though at the lowest ebb of his church's affairs, if his naked word, and the single bond of his promise, will not be taken as sufficient security to their faith for its deliverance.

22. *Increduli timent diabolum quasi leonem, qui fide fortes despiciunt quasi vermiculum.*—Bern.