

Monergism



A HEAVENLY CORDIAL

THOMAS BROOKS

Monergism



A HEAVENLY CORDIAL

THOMAS BROOKS

Copyright © Monergism Books

A Heavenly Cordial

by Thomas Brooks

For all those Servants of the Lord that have had the PLAGUE (and are recovered) or that now have it; also for those that have escaped it, though their Relations and Friends have been either visited, or swept away by it.

OR

Thirteen DIVINE MAXIMES or CONCLUSIONS in respect of the PESTILENCE, which may be as so many supports, comforts, and refreshing springs, both to the visited and preserved people of God in this present day.

ALSO

Ten Arguments to prove that in Times of Common Calamity, the people of God do stand upon the advantage ground, as to their outward preservation and protection above all other people under Heaven.

ALSO

Eight Reasons why some of the precious Servants of the Lord have fallen by the Pestilence in this Day of the Lord's Anger.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

[I. The first divine maxim is this—When the pestilence is among a people—it is the Lord alone who sends it.](#)

II. The second divine maxim is this—The pestilence and all other judgments of God are limited as to places.

III. The third divine maxim is this—All the judgments of God are limited, not only to places—but also to people.

IV. The fourth divine maxim is this—No man knows divine love or hatred, by outward dispensations.

V. The fifth divine maxim is this—The Lord sometimes takes away his dearest people by some one judgment, so that he may by that means deliver them from many judgments

VI. The sixth divine maxim is this—None of God's judgments upon his people ever make any change or alteration of God's affections towards his people.

VII. The seventh divine maxim is this—Many times when the poor people of God cannot carry it with God for the preservation of a whole land or nation—yet they shall then be sure to have the honor and the happiness to be so potent and so prevalent with God, as to prevail with him for their own personal preservation and protection.

VIII. The eighth divine maxim is this—Sword, famine, and pestilence can only reach our outward man—they only reach our bodies and our temporal concerns; they cannot reach our souls, nor our spiritual nor our eternal concerns.

IX. The ninth divine maxim is this—There are no people upon the earth that in times of common calamity stand upon such fair grounds for their preservation and protection, as the people of God do.

Ten Particulars

The care that God exercises towards his people is

Eight Answers to a Question

X. The tenth divine maxim is this—That such saints as do fall by the sword or by the pestilence, they receive no loss, no wrong, no injury, by these sad dispensations.

XI. The eleventh divine maxim is this—Though a godly man should die of the plague—yet he shall be certainly delivered from the evil of the plague.

XII. The twelfth divine maxim is this—That God knows how to distinguish his people, and how to difference his people from others, when the pestilence rages in the midst of them

XIII. The thirteenth, and last divine maxim is this—That though the godly are not delivered from the plague—yet they are still delivered by the plague; by it they shall be delivered from all their sins.

1. The first divine maxim or conclusion is this

When the pestilence is among a people, it is the Lord alone that sends it.

2 Sam. 24:15, 'So the Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel, from the morning even to the time appointed: and there died of the people, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, seventy thousand men.' Num. 16:46, 'Wrath is gone out from the Lord; the plague is begun.' Num. 14:12, 'I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them.' Deut. 28:21, 'The Lord shall make the pestilence cleave unto thee, until he hath consumed thee from off the land, whither thou goest to possess it.' Ezek. 14:19, 'Or if I send a pestilence into that land, and pour out my fury upon it in blood, to cut off from it man and beast;' ver. 21, 'For thus saith the Lord God, How much more when I send my four sore judgments upon Jerusalem, the sword, and the famine, and the

noisome beast, and the pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast?' Amos 4:10, 'I have sent among you the pestilence, after the manner of Egypt.' Hence it is called, God's arrow, Ps. 91:5; and when God shoots those arrows into kingdoms, cities, towns, families, Ps. 38:2, none can pull them out but God himself. The plague is more immediately from God than any other sickness or disease, for it is the immediate stroke of God. The scribe is more properly said to write than the pen, and he that maketh and keepeth the clock is more properly said to make it go and strike than the wheels and poises that hang upon it, and every workman to effect his work, rather than the tools which he useth as instruments. So the Lord of hosts, who is the chief agent and mover in all things and in all actions, may more fitly and properly be said to effect and bring to pass all judgments, yea, all things which are done in the earth, than any inferior or subordinate causes: seeing they are but his tools and instruments, which he rules or guides according to his own will, power, and providence. I know some physicians ascribe it to the heat of the air, and sometimes to the dryness of the air, and sometimes to the corruption of the air, and sometimes to the corruption of men's blood, and sometimes to Satan, and sometimes to the malignancy of the planets; but certainly those are 'physicians of no value' that cannot look above second causes to the First Cause, that cannot look to the 'wheel within the wheel,' Ezek. 1. The plague is a hidden thing, a secret thing; it is a sickness, a disease, that more immediately comes from God than any other sickness or disease doth. Exod. 9:3, 'Behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thy cattle which is in the field, upon the horses, upon the asses, upon the camels, upon the oxen, and upon the sheep: there shall be a very grievous murrain.' The word here translated 'murrain' is in chap. 5:3 termed 'pestilence;' and it is one and the same disease. Though when it is applied to cattle it be usually rendered by 'murrain,' yet when it is applied to men, as in the scripture last cited, it is commonly called the 'pestilence.' 'Behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thy cattle,' &c. That is the extraordinary, immediate power and work of God, without the intervening of any second cause or human operation. This open plague, this plague without-doors, that principally fell upon the cattle, was from the immediate hand of God.

It is God alone that singles out the nation, the city, the town, the parish, the family, the person that he will strike with the plague; for all second causes are ordered by the First Cause, as every instrument is ruled or overruled by the will and hand of him that holdeth it. When a man goes with his axe to cut down trees in the wood, there is an equal aptness in the axe to cut down one tree as well as another, an oak as well as an ash, &c.; but it is still ruled by the will of him that handles it. So it is here: the noisome pestilence, or the pestilence of grass, as the Hebrew runs in that Ps. 91:3, hath an equal aptness to cut down one man as well as another, the rich as well as the poor, the honourable as well as the base, the strong as well as the weak, the prince as well as the peasant, the emperor as well as the carter; but it is still overruled by the Lord himself, who gives it a commission to cut off such and such, in this kingdom and that, in this city and that, in this town and that, in this family and that, and to spare, save, and pass by all the rest. In Rev. 6 you shall read of four horses, when the four seals were opened, (1.) a white horse, (2.) a red horse, (3.) a black horse, (4.) a pale horse. After Christ had ridden upon the white horse, propagating the gospel, then follows the red horse, a type of war; then the black horse, a hieroglyphic of famine; and then the pale horse, the emblem of pestilence. Now all these horses, these plagues, were of Christ's sending. From those words, Judges 3:20, 'I have a message from God unto thee, O king,' said Ehud; lo, his poniard was God's message; from whence one well observeth, that not only the vocal admonitions but the real judgments of God are his errands and instructions to the world, Isa. 26:8–10. It was a mad principle among the Manichees, who referred all the judgments, calamities, and miseries that came upon them to the devil for their author, as if there could be 'any evil in the city, and the Lord have no hand in it,' Amos 3:6. Now in that it is the Lord alone that sends the pestilence amongst a people, how should this comfort us and quiet us! how should this cool us and calm us! how should this satisfy us and silence us before the Lord, and cause us to lay our hands upon our mouths, as David did, Ps. 39:9, and as Aaron did, Lev. 10:1–3, and as Eli did, 1 Sam. 3:18, and as the church did, Lam. 3:26–29.

Solinus (cap. 20) writeth of Hypanis, a Scythian river, that the water thereof is very bitter as it passeth through Exampius, yet very sweet in the spring. So the cup of trembling which is this day offered to the children of God, is often very bitter at the second hand, or as it appears in second causes; and yet it is sweet at the first hand, yea, it is very sweet as it is reached to them by a hand from heaven; and therefore they may well say, as their head and husband hath done before them, 'Shall we not drink of the cup that our Father hath given us to drink of?' &c., John 18:11.

II. The second divine maxim or conclusion is this

The pestilence and all other judgments of God are limited as to places.

Hence it comes to pass that God shoots his arrows of pestilence into one city, and not into another; into one town, and not into another; into one family, and not into another; into one kingdom and country, and not into another, Exod. 8:20–23, and 9:22–26; 2 Sam. 24:15. Turn to all these scriptures and ponder upon them.

III. The third divine maxim or conclusion is this

All the judgments of God are limited, not only to places, but also to persons.

And therefore such and such must fall, when such and such must escape; and such and such must be infected, when such and such are preserved. Hence it is that one is taken in the bed, and the other left;

one smitten at the table or in the house, and all the rest preserved in perfect health, &c. God hath numbered so many to the sword, and so many to the famine, and so many to the pestilence, so many to this disease, and so many to that, 2 Sam. 24:15, 16; Ezek. 11:5–7, 5:12, and 6:11, 12; Exod. 12:13; Ps. 91:3–9; Isa. 65:12; Jer. 15:2; Ezek. 33:27. Turn to all those scriptures and ponder upon them. God marks out those persons that he intends to shoot the arrow of pestilence amongst. God never shoots at rovers; he never draws his bow at a venture, but he singles out the persons that he purposes to hit, and his arrows fly swiftly and suddenly, yet they hit none but those that God hath set up as a mark to shoot at—as Job speaks, chap. 7:20.

IV. The fourth divine maxim or conclusion is this

No man knows divine love or hatred by outward dispensation

Eccles. 9:1, 2; Luke 13:4, 16; Lam. 4:6; Dan. 9:12; Ps. 73:12–22.

In times of great judgments God sometimes spares those whom his soul hates and abhors, Isa. 1:5; Hosea 4:14, 17. God sometimes preserves wicked men from great judgments, that they may fall by greater judgments; as you may see in Sodom and her sisters, which were preserved from the slaughter of the four kings, that God might rain down hell out of heaven upon them. And so Sennacherib escapes the stroke of the destroying angel, that he might fall by the sword of his own sons, Isa. 37:37, 38. And as in times of great judgments God sometimes spares those sinners that his soul hates, so in times of great judgments God takes away those whom his soul dearly loves, 2 Chron. 34:27, 28. Turn to it. In all the considerable plagues that have been in this nation, how many precious Christians have fallen by the sword, and by the hand of the destroying angel, when many thousands of Balaks and Balaams, I mean the worst of men, have

escaped the sword, the plague, &c.! And is there anything more obvious and notorious this day than this? Surely not.

V. The fifth divine maxim is this

The Lord sometimes takes away his dearest people by some one judgment, so that he may by that means deliver them from many judgments

The Lord sometimes takes away his dearest people by some one judgment, that so he may by that means deliver them from many judgments; and sometimes he takes away his people by one great judgment, that so they may escape many other greater judgments that he intends to bring upon the earth.

And thus good Josiah was slain in battle; yet because he lived not to see the woeful miseries of succeeding times, he is said to go to his grave in peace, 2 Chron. 34:27, 28. Turn to it. Enoch lived long in a little time, and God took him to heaven before he brought a sweeping flood upon the world; but he foreseeing the flood, named his son Methuselah, that is to say, 'he dieth,' and the dart or flood cometh, and so it fell out; for no sooner was his head laid, but in came the flood. And so Augustine was taken out of the world before Hippo was taken by the Vandals. And so Pareus was gotten to his better country before Heidelberg and the Palatinate was delivered into the power of the enemies. Ambrose is said to have been the walls of Italy, and when he died the Earl Stilico said, 'that his death did threaten destruction to that country;' and when Luther was laid in his grave, then troubles, wars, desolations, and confusions came in upon Germany like a flood. 'The righteous are taken away from the evil to come,' Isa. 57:1; and their death is a sad presage of sore and signal calamities that are hastening upon the world. Of late many precious servants of Christ are fallen asleep; but who knows what a day of wrath is coming? When a man cuts down his chiefest timber trees, it is an argument that he intends to part with his land; and how many

tall cedars in this our Lebanon hath God lately cut down in the midst of us! Therefore we have eminent cause to be importunate with God, that he would neither part with this nation, nor depart from this nation. When some fatal judgment hovers like a flying fiery scroll over a nation, God many times gathers many of his choice servants unto himself, that he may preserve them from the evil to come.

VI. The sixth divine maxim or conclusion is this

None of God's judgments upon his people ever make any change or alteration of God's affections towards his people.

However his hand may be against them, yet his love, his heart, his favour, his affections in Jesus, is still one and the same to them, Isa. 54:7–10, and 49:14–16; Ps. 89:31–34; Jer. 31:34–37, compared; Mal. 3:6; John 13:3; James 1:17. Ponder seriously upon all those scriptures. So when God sent the plague upon David's people, and that for David's sin too, yet how sweetly, how lovingly, how tenderly, how compassionately, how indulgently, doth the Lord carry it towards David himself! 2 Sam. 24:11–13, 18, 19, and 25 compared. And some learned men are of opinion that Lazarus died of the plague; and yet the text tells us that he was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom. Ecolampadius and many other worthies also died of it. When Munster lay sick, and his friends asked him how he did, and how he felt himself? he pointed to his sores and ulcers, whereof he was full, and said, 'These are God's gems and jewels wherewith he decketh his best friends; and to me they are more precious than all the gold and silver in the world.' God's dear love to his people is not founded upon anything in his people, nor upon anything that is done by his people, but only upon his own free grace and goodness, Deut. 7:7, 8.

The ethnics feign that their gods and goddesses loved certain trees for some lovely good that was in them: as Jupiter, the oak, for

durance; Neptune, the cedar, for stature; Apollo, the laurel, for greenness; Venus, the poplar, for whiteness; Pallas, the vine, for fruitfulness. But what should move the God of gods and the Lord of lords to love us, who are poor, worthless, fruitless fruit-trees, twice dead, and plucked up by the roots, Jude 12; Ezek. 16. This question is best resolved in three words, *amat quia amat*, he loves us because he loves us. The root of his love to us lieth in himself, and by his communicative goodness the fruit is ours. God's love to his people is a lasting love, yea, an everlasting love, Jer. 31:35–37; it is a love that never decays nor waxes cold. It is like the stone asbestos, of which Solinus writes, that being once hot, it can never be cooled again.

VII. The seventh divine maxim or conclusion is this

Many times when the poor people of God cannot carry it with God for the preservation of a whole land or nation, yet they shall then be sure to have the honour and the happiness to be so potent and so prevalent with God as to prevail with him for their own personal preservation and protection.

Jer. 15:1; Ezek. 14:14–21, compared. So Ezek. 9:4, 6.

VIII. The eighth divine maxim or conclusion is this

Sword, famine, and pestilence can only reach our outward man—they only reach our bodies and our bodily concernments, they cannot reach our souls, nor our internal nor our eternal concernments.

No outward judgments can reach the favour of God, or the light of his countenance, or our communion with him, or our spiritual enjoyments of him, or the joys of the Spirit, or the teachings of the Spirit, or the leadings of the Spirit, or the earnest of the Spirit, or the

witness of the Spirit, or the seekings of the Spirit, or the quickenings of the Spirit, or the peace that passeth understanding, or our secret trade with heaven.

IX. The ninth divine maxim or conclusion is this

There are no people upon the earth that in times of common calamity stand upon such fair grounds for their preservation and protection, as the people of God do.

And this I shall make evident by an induction of **ten particulars**:—

[1.] First, They are the only people in all the world that are under divine promises of protection and preservation, Exod. 15:26; Job 5:20, 21; Isa. 4:5, 6, 8:13, 14, 26:20, 21, 31:5, and 32:1, 2; Ps. 91 throughout. Turn to those sweet promises, and remember that there are no men on earth that can or may lay their hands on these precious promises, and say, these promises are mine, but only the godly man. Those promises are God's bonds, which the godly man may put in suit, and urge God with, and plead hard in prayer, which no other men may. The promises of God are a Christian's Magna Charta, his chief evidences that he hath to shew for his preservation, for his protection, for his salvation. Divine promises are God's deed of gift; they are the only assurance which the saints have to shew for their right and title to Christ, to heaven, and to all the glory and happiness of another world. Oh how highly do men prize their charters and privileges! and how carefully do they keep and lay up the conveyances and assurances of their lands! Oh how should saints then treasure up those precious promises, which are to them instead of all conveyances and assurances for their preservation, protection, maintenance, deliverance, comfort, and everlasting happiness! The promises are a mine of rich treasures; they are a garden full of the choicest and sweetest flowers of paradise; in them are wrapped up all celestial contentments and enjoyments; and therefore study them

more than ever, and prize them more than ever, and improve them more than ever.

[2.] Secondly, If you consider their near and dear relations to God. They are his servants, his friends, his children, his members, his spouse, &c. By all which it is evident that they stand upon the advantage-ground, for preservation and protection, above all others in the world.

[3.] Thirdly, If you consider that high value and esteem and price that the Lord puts upon them. He esteems them as the apple of his eye, Zech. 2:8; he accounts them as his jewels, Mal. 3:17; he prizes them as his portion, Deut. 32:9—yea, as his pleasant portion, Jer. 12:10; he accounts them his crown, yea, his crown of glory, and his royal diadem: Isa. 62:3, 'Thou'—speaking of his church—'shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God.' Yea, he prizes one saint above all the world, Heb. 11:38. By all which it is most evident that they stand upon the advantage-ground, as to their preservation and protection, above all other people in the world; for God accounts all the world besides to be but as dirt, as dust, as chaff, as thorns and briers, that are only fit to be cast into the fire to be consumed and destroyed. When pearls grew common at Rome, they began to be slighted; but saints are such pearls of price, that God will never slight.

[4.] Fourthly, If you consider that they are the only people in the world that are in covenant with God, Ps. 89:30–34; Jer. 32:38–40; Ezek. 20:37; Deut. 29:12; Jer. 31:31–34; Heb. 8:6–12. Some do derive the word berith, which signifies the covenant, from a root which signifies to 'purify,' to 'separate,' and to 'select;' and verily, when the Lord makes a covenant with any, he doth separate them from others, he honours them above all others, and he looks on them and owns them for his peculiar people, and delights in them as the chosen and choicest of all others: 'The whole world lies in wickedness,' 1 John 5:19. By this also it is evident that the people of

God stand upon the advantage-ground, for their preservation and protection, above all others in the world.

[5.] Fifthly, If you consider the common carriage and deportment of God towards his people in former times of calamities and great judgments. Did he not provide an ark for righteous Noah, so that Noah was safer in his ark of three storeys high than Nimrod and his crew were in their tower of Babel, raised to the height of five thousand one hundred and forty-six paces, as is reported? And did he not provide a Zoar for righteous Lot? Hesiod speaks of thirty thousand demi-gods that were keepers of men. But what are so many thousand gods to that one God that neither slumbers nor sleeps, but day and night keeps his people as his jewels, as the apple of his eye; that keepeth them in his pavilion, as a prince keeps his favourite, Ps. 121:3–5; Isa. 27:3; Ps. 31:20. Princes have their retiring rooms and withdrawing chambers, which are sacred places; and so hath God his, and there he shelters the favourites of heaven. God's gracious providence is his golden cabinet, where his children are as safe as if they were in heaven. See Isa. 49:2, and 26:20, 21; Jer. 36:26; Ps. 83:3: 'They have consulted against thy hidden ones,'—hidden under the hollow of thy hand, and under the shadow of thy wing, and therefore safe from dangers in the midst of dangers, Jer. 39:16–18. How wonderfully did he preserve the three children, or rather the three non-conformable champions, from burning in the midst of the flames! Dan. 3; and Daniel from being devoured in the lion's den! chap. 6. And so God's mourning ones were his marked ones, and his saved and preserved ones, when the destroying angel slew old and young, &c., Ezek. 9:4, 6. And reverend Beza and his family was four several times visited with the plague, and yet as often preserved as they were visited; and this good man was very much refreshed and comforted, under that and other sore afflictions that befell him, by that Psalm 91, which made him the more highly to prize it, and the more dearly to hug it all his days, as himself witnesseth in his writings on this psalm. There is a dialogue between a heathen and a Jew, after the Jews' return from captivity—all nations round about them being enemies to them. The heathen asked the Jew how he and

his countrymen could hope for any safety, because, saith he, every one of you is a silly sheep, compassed about with fifty wolves. Ay, but, saith the Jew, we are kept by such a shepherd as can kill all those wolves when he pleaseth. Now by all this, also, it is evident that the people of God stand upon the advantage-ground, as to their preservation and protection, above all other people in the world.

[6.] Sixthly, If you consider the life-guard of the saints, the ministry of the blessed angels that always attend them: Ps. 91:11, 'For he shall give his angels charge over thee in all thy ways;' ver. 12, 'They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone:' Ps. 34:7, 'The angels of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them:' Mat. 18:10, 'Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones: for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven:' Heb. 1:14, 'Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?' The world may deprive us of many outward comforts, but they can never deprive us of the ministry of the angels. When the servants of God are hated by all men, persecuted by men, and forsaken of men, yet they are then visited and attended by angels. Princes have their guards; but what poor, what weak, what contemptible guards are theirs to those legions of angels that daily guard the saints! When men can clip the wings of angels, and imprison or pinion these heavenly soldiers, then, and not till then, shall they be able to have their wills upon the poor people of God! Oh the honour, the dignity, the safety and security of the saints, in a life-guard so full of state and strength! Well may we say, 'Come and taste and see how gracious the Lord is' in affording his children so glorious an attendance! Now by this argument as well as the rest, it is evident that the people of God stand upon the advantage-ground of their outward preservation and protection above all other people in the world.

[7.] Seventhly, If you consider that they are the only people that do bear up the name and glory of God in the world, Deut. 4:6–9; John 4:23, 24. They are the only people that worship God in spirit and in

truth; and from such worshippers it is that God hath the incomes of his glory. The holy hearts, the holy lives, the holy examples, the holy ways, the holy walkings, and the holy worship that is performed by the saints, are the springs from whence all divine honour rises to the Lord in this world. The people of God are the only people in the world that have chosen him for their God, and that have given themselves up to his service, and thus they honour his goodness, Deut. 26:17, 18; Ps. 116:16; Ps. 22:30. The people of God are the only people in the world who, in the times of their fears, doubts, darknesses, distresses, straits, trials, dangers, &c., do consult with God as their great counsellor, as their only counsellor; and thus they honour his admirable wisdom and infinite knowledge, Gen. 24:12; Ps. 48:14. The people of God are the only people in the world that do make God their refuge, their strong tower, their shelter, their hiding-place, in stormy and tempestuous days; and thus they honour the power, all-sufficiency, sovereignty, and authority of God, Ps. 46:1, 7, 11; Prov. 18:10; Ps. 32:7, 119:114, and 20:7. Wicked men trust in their chariots and horses, and armies and navies, and revenues and carnal policies, and sinful shifts, devices, and fetches; when the poor people of God do not dare to trust in their swords nor in their bows, nor in their wealth, nor in their wit, nor in their friends, nor in any arm of flesh, as carnal refuges, but in the Lord alone: Isa. 26:3, 4, 'For in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.' The people of God are the only people in the world that do give God the supremacy in their hearts, that do set up God and Christ above themselves and above all their duties, services, privileges, graces, comforts, communions, spiritual enjoyments, and worldly contentments; and thus they honour all the excellencies and perfections of God at once, Ps. 73:25, 26; Phil. 3:6–9; Rev. 4:10, 11. And do you think that God will not have a special care of such that are the only promoters of his honour and glory in this world? Doubtless he will. Now by this argument, it is further evident that the people of God do stand upon the advantage-ground, as to their outward preservation and protection, above all other people in the world.

[8.] Eighthly, If you do but seriously consider what a mighty interest the people of God have in the grand favourite of heaven—viz., the Lord Jesus, who lies in the bosom of the Father, and who is so near and dear unto him, and so potent and prevalent with him, that he can do what he pleaseth with the Father, and have what he will of the Father, John 1:18; Heb. 7:25; 1 John 2:1, 2. Now look, what interest the wife hath in the husband, the child in the father, the members in the head, the subject in his prince, the servant in his lord, the branches in the root, the building in the foundation, that the believer hath in Christ, and much more. Christ is not like the bramble, that receives good but yields none; but he is like the fig-tree, the vine, the olive. All that are interested in him, that pertain to him, are the better for him; they 'all receive of his fulness grace for grace,' John 1:16; Col. 1:19. Now, doubtless, all that interest that Jesus Christ hath in God the Father, he will improve to the utmost for their good that have an interest in him. Now, by this argument, it is also evident that the people of God do stand upon the advantage-ground, above all others in the world, as to their outward preservation and protection.

[9.] Ninthly, If you consider God's tender and fatherly care of his people, and his singular indulgence towards them, of which you may read much in the blessed Scripture. Among the many choice scriptures which might be produced, take these as a taste: Ps. 103:13, 14, 'Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.' There is an ocean of love and pity in the father's heart towards his children; but it is but a drop to that which is in God. He hit the mark [Bernard] that said, *Tam pius nemo, tam pater nemo*, No father is like our Father. God is *pater miserationum*, He is all bowels. Let God carry it how he pleaseth towards us, yet we must still acknowledge that he is a propitious Father, and say with him, [Augustine,] 'Lord, thou art a Father both when thou strokest and when thou strikest; thou strikest that we may not perish, and thou strokest that we may not faint.' Pity is as essential to God as light is to the sun, or as heat is to the fire. Hence he is called the Father by an eminency, as if there were no father to him, none like him, nor

none besides him, as indeed there is not originally and properly, James 1:27. So Exod. 19:4, 'Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.' It is an elegant expression to set forth God's admirable care over his people. The eagle fears no bird from above to hurt her young, only the arrow from beneath; therefore she carries them up upon her wings: Deut. 32:9–11, 'The Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings:' ver. 12, 'So the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him.' The eagle carries her young ones upon her wings—not in her talons, for fear of hurting them—openly, safely, choicely, charily, speedily; and so did God his Israel, of whom he was exceeding choice and chary.

The care that God exercises towards his people is,

(1.) An extensive care: a care that reaches, that extends itself to all the saints, whether rich or poor, high or low, bond or free, &c., 2 Chron. 16:9; Zech. 1:10, 11.

(2.) It is an intensitive care: he cares for all as if he had but one to care for, Zech. 1:14.

(3.) It is a pleasant and delightful care, Isa. 31:5; and not a wearying, tearing, tormenting care. It is such a pleasant care as an indulgent father exercises towards a son, an only son, a son that serves him, Mal. 3:17.

(4.) It is an effectual care, a prosperous care, a successful care, a flourishing care. Men many times rise early and go to bed late, and take a great deal of care at home and abroad, and all to no purpose; but the care of God is always successful, Deut. 11:12.

(5.) It is a singular care, a peculiar care. God cares more for them than he doth for all the world besides. The father's care over the child is a peculiar care, and the husband's care over the wife is a peculiar care, and the head's care over the members is a peculiar care, and so is the Lord's care over his people a peculiar care. God's general care extends to the whole creation; but his special care centres in his saints Zeph. 3:16–20; Ps. 36:6; Isa. 40:31.

(6.) It is a very tender care: Isa. 40:11, 'He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.' Zeph. 2:8, 'He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye,' or the 'little man' that is in the eye, or the black of the eye, which is the tenderest piece of the tenderest part, to express the inexpressible tenderness of God's care and love towards his people.

(7.) It is an abiding care, a lasting care; and not a transient care, a momentary care: Ps. 125:1, 2, 'They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people, from henceforth even for ever.' Jerusalem was surrounded with many great high mountains, which were a great safeguard to it against all winds and storms. Such a shelter, such a safeguard, yea, and a better, will God be to mystical mount Zion, the church, Zech. 2:5, against all winds and storms of affliction or persecution: Ps. 121:3, 4, 'He that keepeth thee will not slumber: behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.' He repeats the promise, and sets it forth with a 'behold,' that it may stick the closer, and warm our hearts the better. The phrase is taken from watchmen, who stand on the walls in time of war to discover the approaching enemies, and accordingly give warning. Now though they may be careless, treacherous, or sleepy; yet the Lord will be so far from sleeping, that he will not so much as slumber, no, he will not so much as fetch one wink of sleep. It hath been a tradition that lions sleep not, yet to think or say that they sleep not at all were absurd; indeed, their eyelids being too little to cover their great eyes, they do

sleep with their eyes somewhat open and shining, which hath occasioned some to think that they sleep not at all. But sure I am that the Lion of the tribe of Judah, who is the keeper of Israel, doth neither slumber nor sleep. He never shuts his eyes, but hath them always open upon his people for good; he winks not so much as the twinkling of an eye; he always stands sentinel for his people's safety: Isa. 27:2, 3, 'In that day sing ye unto her, A vineyard of red wine; I, the Lord, do keep it, I will water it every moment'—or, as the Hebrew runs, 'at moments,' or 'by moments'—'lest any hurt it; I will keep it night and day,' that is, constantly, continually, without intermission. And this constant care of God over his people was signified by those two types, the pillar of fire and the pillar of a cloud, that left not Israel till they were in the possession of the land of Canaan, which was a type of heaven, Exod. 13:21, 22.

(8.) And lastly, It is an active care; a care that puts the Lord upon preserving his people, and protecting of his people, and making provision for his people, and standing by his people, and pleading the cause of his people, and clearing the innocency of his people. God is above his people and beneath them, Deut. 33:26, 27; he is under them and over them, Cant. 2:6; he is before them and behind them, Exod. 33:1, 2; Isa. 52:12, and 58:8, God is in the front of his people, and God is in the rear of his people, he is on the right hand of his people and he is on the left hand of his people, Ps. 16:8, 121:5, and 118:15, 16; Exod. 14:22. God made the waters as a wall on their right hand and on their left. God is round about his people, Ps. 34:7, and 125:1, 2; and in the midst of his people, Zech. 2:5; Ps. 46:5; 'God is in the midst of her,' Isa. 12:6, Oh how safe are they that are under such a glorious care! God is above his people and beneath them, he is under them and over them, he is before them and behind them he is in the front and in the rear, he is round about them and in the midst of them. Now what doth all this speak out, but that the care of God toward his people is an active care? If the philosopher could say, being in danger of shipwreck in a light, starry night, 'Surely I shall not perish, there are so many eyes of providence over me,' oh, then, what may the saints say! Now by this argument it is evident that the

people of God stand upon the advantage-ground, as to their outward preservation and protection, above all other people in the world.

[10.] Tenthly, and lastly, If you do but consider God's great anger and deep displeasure against those that afflict, oppose, or oppress his people. God sent his people into Babylon, and their enemies added to all their sorrows and sufferings; but will God put this up at their hands? No: Zech. 1:15, 'And I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease; for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction.' 'I am very sorely displeased,' &c., or, as the Hebrew runs, 'I am in such a heat as causeth fuming and foaming.' I am boiling hot, and even ready to draw upon them, and to cut them off from the land of the living. For the original word here used hath great affinity with another word that signifieth 'to cut down and to destroy,' 2 Kings 6:6, and importeth a higher degree of displeasure, a greater height of heat than either anger or wrath, as may be seen in that signal gradation, Deut. 29:28, 'The Lord rooted them out of their land,' beaph, 'in anger,' ubechemah, 'and in wrath,' ubeketseph, 'and in great indignation.' The last of these three is the word in the text, and notes a higher degree of anger than the two former. So Mal. 1:4, 'Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the Lord of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them the border of wickedness, and the people against whom the Lord hath indignation for ever.' The Edomites were very great enemies to the Israelites; they stood looking on, laughing and rejoicing at Israel's destruction. God saw this, and it greatly displeased him, he being highly sensible of the least indignity done to his people; and therefore he is resolved to pay them home in their own coin, Obad. 8th to 19th verse. The very name and memory of the Edomites have long since been extinct and blotted out from under heaven; they were a people of his wrath, Isa. 10:6; and of his curse, Isa. 34:5. So Amalek was a bitter enemy to God's Israel, but God utterly blots out his remembrance from under heaven; and laying his hand upon his throne, he swears that he would have war with Amalek for ever, Exod. 17:14–16; Nahum 1:2, 'God is jealous, and the

Lord revengeth; the Lord revengeth, and is furious; the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies.' The people of God ought to rest satisfied and assured that God sees and smiles, and looks and laughs, at all the counsels and combinations of wicked men against his Son and against his saints, Ps. 2:2; and when they have done their worst, the counsel of the Lord shall stand, and Christ shall reign in the midst of his enemies, Prov. 19:21. And that the stone cut out of the mountains without hands shall bring down the golden image with a vengeance, and make it like the chaff of the summer-floor: Dan. 2:35. Some write of lions, that as they are mindful of courtesies received—witness the story of Androcles, that fugitive servant of Rome—so they will be sure to revenge injuries done to them; they will prey on them that would make a prey of them. When Juba, king of the Moors, marched through the desert of Africa, a young man of his company wounded a lion; but the year following, when Juba returned, the lion again meets the army, and from among them all singles out the man that hurt him, and tears him in pieces, suffering the rest to pass by in peace and safety. And thus the Lord Jesus, who is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, Rev. 5:5, is always ready to revenge the cause of his people, and to take vengeance on all that have wounded his people or made a prey of his people, as you may clearly and fully see in Ezek. 25 and 35. Now by this argument, as well as by all the rest, it is evident that the people of God stand upon the advantage-ground, as to their outward preservation and protection, above all other people in the world.

Quest. But, if this be so, how comes it to pass that in this time of great mortality, many of the precious people of the Lord have been taken away as well as others, the raging pestilence having carried many pious souls out of this world, 'of whom the world was not worthy'? Heb. 11:38. The saint as well as the sinner hath fallen by the hand of the destroying angel. In this day we have seen that word made good in Eccles. 9:2, 'That all things come alike to all; there is One event to the righteous and to the wicked, to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean, to him that sacrificeth and to him that

sacrificeth not; as is the good, so is the sinner, and he that sweareth as he that feareth an oath.'

To this question I shall give these eight short answers:—

(1.) First, God hath smitten some good men of all persuasions, that none might be proud, secure, or censorious, and that all might take the alarm and prepare to meet their God, and that all may keep humble and tremble, because of his righteous judgments: Ps. 119:120, 'My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments.'

(2.) Secondly, The number of those that feared the Lord that have been taken away by the pestilence are but few, very few, if compared with the many thousands of others that never knew what it was to set up God as the main object of their fear, and that never knew experimentally what a changed nature, a sanctified frame of heart, an interest in Christ, or a title to heaven, meant. Oh that we had not cause to fear that hell hath had a very large harvest within these few last months!

(3.) Thirdly, Sometimes God's own people sin with others, and therefore they smart with others when God takes the rod into his own hand. Thus Moses and Aaron sinned with others, and therefore their carcasses fell in the wilderness as well as others, Num. 20. This may sometimes be the reason why some good men fall in a common calamity; but I dare not say that it is always the reason why some good men fall in a common calamity. I believe there are several choice Christians that have been swept away in this day of the Lord's wrath, who have not sinned with the wicked, though they have fallen with the wicked. Many have fallen by this dispensation who yet have kept their garments pure and clean, and are now walking with Christ in white, Rev. 3:4. I do not think that those saints that have died by the plague were greater sinners than those that have escaped the plague; yea, I have several reasons to persuade me that several of those precious servants of the Lord that have died of the plague, had

more grace in their hearts, and less sin in their lives, than many other saints that have been pitied and spared in this day of the Lord's anger, &c.

(4.) Fourthly, No godly man dies in any common calamity till his glass be run, and his work done, and he prepared and fitted for another world: Job 14:5, 'Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee; thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass,' Job 5:26; Rev. 11:6, 7; Acts 13:25, 36. God hath set every man both his time and his task. In this scripture, as in a glass, you may see the true reason why some likely to live long die soon, even whilst their bones are 'full of marrow, and their breasts are full of milk;' and others that are more weak and infirm live long, yea, very long. The reason is, because God hath set bounds to every man's life, to a very day, ay, to a very hour: ver. 14, 'All the days of my appointed time of warfare will I wait till my change come,' i.e., till my death. Job calls death a 'change.' Death is not an annihilation or extinction, but a mutation.

[1.] It is the last change that we shall meet with till the resurrection.

[2.] It is a lasting, yea, an everlasting change. It puts every one into an eternal condition of happiness or misery.

[3.] It is a universal change—1. In respect of persons; all must meet with it: 'it is appointed for all men once to die,' Heb. 9:27. 2. In respect of the whole man, body and soul. Death lodges the body in the grave, and puts the soul into heaven or hell.

[4.] It is a different change according to the quality of the person changed. It is terrible to a sinner: for,

First, It will put a full period to all his outward mercies, comforts, contentments, and enjoyments, Job 1:21. Saladin, a Turkish emperor, the first of that nation that conquered Jerusalem, lying at the point of death, after many glorious victories, commanded that a white sheet should be borne, before him to his grave upon the point

of a spear, with this proclamation, 'These are the rich spoils which Saladin carrieth away with him; of all his triumphs and victories, of all the riches and realms that he had, now nothing at all is left him but this sheet.'

Secondly, It will put a full period to all his hopes. Now he shall never hope for mercy more, nor never hope for pardon more, nor never hope for heaven more.

Thirdly, It will put a full period to all the means of grace. Now he shall never hear sermons more, nor never read the word more, nor never enjoy the prayers of the people of God more, nor never taste any of the dainties of God's store more, &c.

Fourthly, It will put a full period to the patience, forbearance, and long-suffering of God, Rom. 2:4, 5.

Fifthly, It will put a full period to all the pleasures of sin. Now the sinner shall never have one merry day more. In hell there is no singing, but howling; no music, but madness; no sporting, but sighing; no dancing, but wringing of hands and gnashing of teeth for evermore, &c.

Sixthly, It will put a full period to all gracious reprieves. The sinner in his lifetime hath had many a reprieve, from many executions of wrath and judgment. Oh! but now he shall never have one reprieve more.

Seventhly, It will put a full period to all the strivings of the Holy Spirit. Now the Spirit shall never strive with the sinner more, 1 Sam. 6:3; nor Christ will never knock at the sinner's door, at the sinner's heart, more, &c.

Eighthly, and lastly, It will put a full period to all gracious examples. Now the sinner shall never cast his eye upon one gracious example more. The sinner in his lifetime hath had many gracious examples before his eyes, which it may be at times have had an awakening,

convincing, silencing, and restraining power in them. Oh! but now he shall never have his eye upon one pious example more. All hell will not afford one good example. In a word, now the sinner shall find by woeful experience that death will be an inlet to three dreadful things: 1. To judgment, Heb. 9:27; 2. To an irreversible sentence of condemnation, Mat. 25:41; 3. To endless, ceaseless, and remediless sufferings. Not many years since, in the town of Yarmouth, there was a young man, who, being very weak and nigh to the grave, and under the apprehensions of the wrath of God, and supposing that he was presently going down to the pit, to hell, he cried out, 'Oh that God would spare me but two days! Oh that God would spare me but two days!' This poor creature trembled at the very thoughts of wrath to come. Oh who can dwell with everlasting burnings! who can dwell with a devouring fire! Isa. 33:14. And as death is terrible to the sinner, so it is desirable, comfortable, and joyful to a child of God: Cant. 8:14; Luke 2:27–32; 2 Cor. 5:1–8; Phil. 1:23; Rev. 22:20. 'I desire death,' saith Melanchthon, 'that I may enjoy the desirable sight of Christ.' And 'when will that blessed hour come? when shall I be dissolved? when shall I be with Christ?' said holy Mr Bolton when he lay on his dying-bed. Jewel was offended at one that in his sickness prayed for his life. One whom I knew well, a little before his death, after a sharp conflict, cried out three times, Victory! victory! victory! He breathed out his soul and his doxology together, 'Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ,' and so conquered Satan in his last encounter. The dying words of my young Lord Harrington were these: 'O my God, when shall I be with thee?'² 'Shall I die ever?' saith Austin; 'Yes; or shall I die at all? Yes,' says he: 'Lord, if ever, why not now?' When Modestus, the emperor's lieutenant, threatened to kill Basil, he answered, 'If that be all, I fear not; yea, your master cannot more pleasure me than in sending of me unto my heavenly Father, to whom I now live, and to whom I desire to hasten.' Mr Dereing, a little before his death, being raised up in his bed, and seeing the sun shine, was desired to speak his mind; upon which he said, 'There is but one sun that giveth light to the whole world, but one righteousness, one communion of saints. As concerning death, I see⁴ such joy of spirit, that if I should have

pardon of life on the one side, and sentence of death on the other, I had rather choose a thousand times to die than to live.' So Mr John Holland, lying at the point of death, said, 'What brightness do I see?' and being told it was the sunshine; 'No,' saith he 'my Saviour shines. Now farewell world, welcome heaven; the day-star from on high hath visited me. Preach at my funeral. God dealeth comfortably and familiarly with man: I feel his mercy! I see his majesty! whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell, God he knoweth; but I see things that are unutterable.' Mr Knox found so much comfort from the Scriptures upon his death-bed, that he would have risen and have gone into the pulpit to tell others what he had felt in his soul. And by that information that I have had from some good hands, several precious Christians that have lately died of the plague have gone to heaven under as high a spirit of joy, of comfort, of assurance, and of a holy triumph, as any of the last-mentioned worthies, or as any other that ever I heard of or read of: the remembrance of which hath been, and still is, a singular cordial to all their relations and friends that yet survive them. But as I was saying, no godly man falls in any common calamity till his glass be run and his work done; so I say of all those dear servants of the Lord that have fallen by the pestilence in the midst of us, their hour was come, and their course was finished, John 7:30, and 8:19, 20; 2 Tim. 4:6, 7. Had God had any further doing-work, or suffering-work, or bearing-work, or witnessing-work for them in this world, it was not all the angels in heaven, nor all the malignant diseases in the world, that could ever have cut them off from 'the land of the living.' When Lazarus was dead, his two sisters, Martha and Mary, came to Christ with tears in their eyes and sad complaints in their mouths: John 11:21–32, 'Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died,' said Martha: and 'Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died,' said Mary. And is not this the common language of many this day, when such and such precious Christians have fallen by the pestilence? Oh! if such a physician had been here they had not died; or if they had been let blood they had not died; or if they had taken such a potion they had not died; or if they had ate but of such or such meats they had not died; or if they had not lived in such a foggy air they had not

died; or if they had not been shut up in such close, narrow, nasty rooms and places they had not died; or had they been but so wise and happy as to have applied such or such a remedy, they might have been alive to this day! not considering with Job that 'the days of man are determined, and his bounds appointed, which he cannot pass,' Job 14:5. The time and place, and every circumstance of his dissolution, is decreed from all eternity. That one man dies in the field, another in his bed, one at sea, another on the shore, one of an apoplexy in the head, another of a struma in the neck, one of a squinacy in the throat, another of a cough and consumption of the lungs; that so many thousands dies of obstructions, inflammations, dropsies, gouts, pestilence, it is foreordained in heaven. The hand of the Lord is in all, and he it is that, having brought us into the world at his pleasure, will take us hence at his appointment. The Jews have a saying that 'God hath four keys under his own girdle: 1. The key of the clouds; 2. The key of the womb; 3. The key of the heart; and 4. The key of death, the key of the grave.

(5.) Fifthly, God sometimes takes away his dearest children in the common calamity in judgment to wicked men. Because the hand of the Lord hath touched some of his dearest servants in this sore visitation, how do the wicked insult, rejoice, and triumph! They say, Aha! so would we have it! As the fire-fly leaps and dances in the fire, so do wicked men rejoice in the sufferings and death of the people of God. How do many wicked men bless themselves because they have escaped the hand of the destroying angel, when such and such have fallen by it! Oh, how proud, how obdurate, how impudent, are many grown, because they have escaped the present judgment, when many others that have been a thousand times better than themselves have been sent to their graves! Eccles. 8:11. The Alcoran saith, God created the angels of light, and the devils of the flame. Certainly God's children are of the light, but Satan's children are furious, wrathful children; they are children of the flame. Oh, in what a flame now are many wicked men against the people of God—since the hand of the destroying angel hath not yet reached them—over what they were in when the destroying angel first drew his sword in the midst of us! as

if they were spared on purpose to oppress, persecute, and scatter the people of God more than ever. Oh that all such would be but so favourable to their own souls, as seriously to ponder upon Ezek. 25 and 35.! Obad. 8–19; Nahum 1:9–15.

Felix, earl of Wurtemberg, one of the captains of Charles the Fifth, burning in rage and anger against the people of God, he swore, in the presence of divers at supper, that 'before he died he would ride up to the spurs in the blood of the Lutherans;' but God soon cooled his courage, for that very night he was choked and strangled in his own blood. Paul prayeth that he might be delivered from 'unreasonable and wicked men,' 2 Thes. 3:2. The word is ἀτόποι, absurd men, such as put themselves upon ways of opposition against all reason and common sense; yea, such who in their rage and bitterness of spirit make no bones of breaking all the laws both of God and men, so they may but have their wills and lusts satisfied in afflicting, scattering, and tormenting of the people of God. 'Absurd' men, with Judas, kiss Christ, and betray him. They kiss the head and stab the body; or, as one wittily expresseth it, they kiss the mouth and tread upon the toes. Reader, remember this, when the people of the Jews made use of Philo to apologise for them unto Caius the emperor, Caius used him very ruggedly; but when he was come out of his presence the Jews came round about him. 'Well,' saith he, to encourage them, 'surely Caius will arm God against himself for us.' Let the reader apply it as he pleaseth.

(6.) Sixthly, God sometimes takes away some of his dearest children in the common calamity, that he may deliver them from greater calamities that are coming upon the world. The Jews have a saying that, 'When good men die it is an ill sign to the world.' When the luminaries of heaven are eclipsed, Deus avertat omen! Paulinus reports of Ambrose that he would weep bitterly when he heard of any godly minister's death. Whilst Calvin lives, Beza's life is sweet; but when Calvin dies, death is the more acceptable unto Beza. It is dark night when the lights are put out, and when the curtains are drawn, and the windows close shut. Ah, England, England! if this is not thy

present case, I know nothing! The clouds gather more and more, and every day they look blacker and blacker, and bloodier and bloodier! Happy are those souls that are now in heaven, and blessed are those souls that are now waiting for the redemption of Israel.

(7.) Seventhly, Notwithstanding any outward promises that the Lord hath made concerning the protection and preservation of his children, yet he still reserves a liberty to himself to chastise his children with what rod he pleaseth, Ps. 89:30–34; Heb. 12:6–9; Rev. 3:19. Notwithstanding all the gracious engagements that are upon the Lord to his people, yet he reserves a freedom to himself to make use of the very lives of his people in such ways as may make best for the bringing about of his own ends, and as may make most for the advance of his own glory; and hence it comes to pass that God delights so to carry it towards his dearest people, as that sinners and saints shall be forced to say that 'his judgments are unsearchable,' and that his 'ways are past finding out,' Rom. 11:33. 'And that his way is in the sea, and that his paths are in the great waters, and that his footsteps are not known,' Ps. 77:19. If you take a straight stick and put it into the water, it will seem crooked. Why? Because we look upon it through two mediums, air and water. There lies the *deceptio visus*; thence it is that we cannot discern aright. Thus all the proceedings of God in his righteous judgments, which in themselves are just, righteous, and straight, without the least obliquity, seem to us strange and crooked. That the wicked should prosper, and the righteous be afflicted; that good men should be in bonds, when bad men walk at large; that the Israelites should make the bricks, and the Egyptians dwell in the houses; that some of the best of Christians should fall by the pestilence, when many of the worst of sinners have their lives for a prey—these are some of those mysterious providences that many times make some of the best of Christians to stagger in their judgments and why so, but because they look upon God's proceedings through a double medium, of flesh and spirit; and hence it comes to pass that all things seem to run cross, and that God's most just and righteous proceedings are not so clearly and fully discerned as otherwise they might be. The wheels in a watch or

in a clock move contrary one to another—some one way, some another; yet all shew the skill and intent of the workman, to shew the time, or to make the clock to strike; so in this world divine providences seem to run cross to divine promises; the wicked are spared, and the righteous are taken away; yet, in the conclusion, all issues in the will, purpose, and glory of God.

(8.) Eighthly and lastly, God hath taken several of his own dear children away by the pestilence, to wipe off that reproach which atheists and wicked men are apt to cast upon the Lord, as if he were partial, and his ways not equal, Ezek. 18:25, 29. God, to stop the mouth of iniquity, the mouth of blasphemy, hath taken away several of his dear servants by the raging pestilence, when the wicked walk on every side, yea, when hell seems to be broke loose, and men turned into incarnate devils; and all because they have not been plagued as other men, nor visited as God hath visited some of his dearest children, Ps. 73:5; 2 Pet. 2:9; Job 24:12; Ps. 50:21.

Sometimes God's manner is to begin with his own people: 1 Pet. 4:17, 'Judgment must begin at the house of God;' and the Lord commands his destroying angel to begin at the sanctuary, Ezek. 9:6. Sometimes when God intends to bring a common and general destruction upon the enemies, oppressors, haters, and persecutors of his people, he is wont first to scourge his own till the blood comes. 'I took the cup at the Lord's hands'—he means the cup of God's fury, Jer. 25:17—'and made all the nations to drink'—that is, prophesied that they should certainly drink of it—'unto whom the Lord hath sent me.' But who were to drink first of this cup? Mark, he tells us, ver. 18, 'Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, and the kings thereof, and the princes thereof.' These were to begin in this cup to Egypt and the Philistines, to Edom, and Moab, and the Ammonites, as he shews in the verses following. Now all these were bitter and implacable enemies to the Israel of God. Ah, sinners, sinners! do not insult over the poor people of God because here and there the hand of the Lord hath touched them, and God hath given the cup into their hands; for if God be God, the cup must go round, and he will make good that word, Isa.

5:22, 23, [see ver. 17,] 'Thus saith the Lord, the Lord and thy God, that pleadeth the cause of his people: Behold, I have taken out of thy hand the cup of trembling, even the dregs of the cup of my fury; thou shalt no more drink it again; but I will put it into the hands of them that afflict thee; which have said to thy soul, Bow down, that we may go over; and thou hast laid thy body as the ground, and as the street to them that went over.' And that word, Jer. 49:12, 'For thus saith the Lord, Behold, they'—meaning his own peculiar people—'whose judgment was not to drink of the cup'—that is, the cup of my wrath—'have assuredly drunken; and art thou he that shalt altogether go unpunished? thou shalt not go unpunished, but thou shalt surely drink of it,' or 'drinking drink,' as the Hebrew runs. I have not spared my own dear people, saith God, who might have expected this favour at my hands before any people under heaven, upon the account of my relation to them, my affections for them, and my covenant with them all; and do you think that I will spare you? No! drinking you shall drink—that is, you shall certainly drink of this cup of my wrath; and you shall signally and visibly drink of this cup of my wrath. And that word, Isa. 49:25, 26, 'But thus saith the Lord, Even the captains of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered; for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children; and I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh; and they shall be drunken with their own blood, as with sweet wine; and all flesh shall know that the Lord is thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob.' Oh that those men would lay these scriptures to heart, who rejoice and glory in the sufferings of the poor people of God, and because some of them have fallen by the hand of the destroying angel, considering that the design of God herein is to stop the mouth of iniquity, and that none may say that he is either partial or fond! Such men that have been eye-witnesses of God's impartial dealing with his own people in this day of his wrath should rather be down-in-the-mouth than up in their spirits; they should rather be silent than raving against the people of the Lord; they should rather tremble than rejoice—for if God deal thus with his green trees, how will he deal with the dry? When God cuts down his best timber, will he not either grub up or

burn up the old stumps? Surely he will, Luke 23:31. 'If judgment begin at the house of God, where shall the sinner and the ungodly appear?' 1 Pet. 4:17, 18. If God deal thus with his best friends, how will he deal with his enemies? If God deal thus with his dearest children, servants and slaves have cause to tremble. And thus much for the reasons why some of God's dearest children have fallen by the pestilence in this day of the Lord's anger.

X. The tenth divine maxim or conclusion is this

That such saints as do fall by the sword or by the pestilence, they receive no loss, no wrong, no injury, by these sad dispensations; they gain much, but they lose nothing; for by these sad providences they are but hastened to heaven, to their Father's house, to their eternal homes, and to those blessed mansions that Christ hath prepared for them, John 14:1–4.

Elijah went to heaven in a fiery chariot, 2 Kings 11:12; and many thousand of the martyrs went to heaven in fiery chariots, and in bloody chariots; and doubtless many worthies in this day are gone to heaven in a pestilential chariot, as in a chair of state. Heaven is a place of so much pleasure and delight that they are happy that can get thither anyhow. There is laid up in heaven 'an incorruptible crown,' a 'crown of life,' a 'crown of righteousness, a 'crown of immortality,' a 'crown of glory,' 1 Cor. 9:25; 2 Tim. 4:8; James 1:12; 1 Pet. 5:4; Rev. 2:10; and who would not shoot any gulf to come to these crowns? *Nec Christus, nec cœlum patitur hyperbolem*—Neither Christ nor heaven can be hyperbolised. The good things of heaven are so many that they exceed number, and so great that they exceed measure, and so precious that they are above all estimation. What will that life be, or rather what will not that life be, since all good either is not at all, or is in such a life? Here is light which place cannot comprehend, voices and music which time cannot ravish away, odours which are never dissipated, a feast which is never

consumed, a blessing which eternity bestoweth, but eternity shall never see at an end; and who would not wade through a Red Sea to come to this heavenly Canaan? What are all the silks of Persia, and all the spices of Egypt, and all the gold of Ophir, and all the treasures of both Indies; yea, what is the glory of ten thousand worlds, to that glory that those saints are now enjoying who have died by the pestilence in the midst of us? When Cyneas, the ambassador of Pyrrhus, after his return from Rome, was asked by his master what he thought of the city and state, he answered that 'it seemed to him to be *respublica regum*—a state of none but great statesmen, and a commonwealth of kings.' Such is heaven—no other than a commonwealth of kings. Every saint in that kingdom is co-heir with Christ, and hath a robe of honour, and a sceptre of power, and a throne of majesty, and a crown of glory, Rom. 8:17. Now what doth that Christian lose who dies of the pestilence, and by that means is brought to the fruition of all this glory? 'Death,' saith Mr Brightman, 'that was before the devil's sergeant to drag us to hell, is now the Lord's gentleman-usher to conduct us to heaven.'

In the ceremonial law (Lev. 25) there was a year they accounted the year of jubilee, and this was with the poor Jews a very delightful and acceptable year, because that every man that had lost or sold his lands, upon the blowing of a trumpet, returned, and had possession of his estate again; and so he was recovered out of all those miseries and extremities in which he lived before. Now our whole life in this world is made up of troubles and trials, of calamities and miseries, of crosses and losses, of reproaches and disgraces; but death is the Christian's jubilee; it wipes away all tears from his eyes, it turns his miseries into mercies, his crosses into crowns, and his earthly hell into a glorious heaven. Though death, though the pestilence be to the wicked as the rod in Moses' hand that was turned into a serpent, yet to the godly, death, the pestilence, is like to the wand in Elijah's hand, a means to waft them over into a better life. The heathen gods held death to be man's *summum bonum*, his chiefest good. Solomon upon his throne extolled his coffin above his crown. Death is a fall that came in by a fall. For a saint to die is for a saint to be no more

unhappy. By death the saints come to a fixed and invariable eternity. Death is but an entrance into life. That is not death but life, which joins the dying man to Christ; and that is not life but death, which separates the living man from Christ. Death will blow the bud of grace into the flower of glory. Death is a saint's quietus est. All fearful disasters, saith Gregory, which rob the saints of life, do but serve as a rough wind to blow them suddenly into their desired haven—I mean heaven. It matters not, saith Austin, whether a burning fever or flash of lightning, or whether a stone in the bladder, or a thunder-stone in thy head, sends thee out of this miserable world; for God minds not, saith he, the immediate occasion of thy coming to him, but the condition and posture that thy soul is in when it cometh before him. The great thing that God will look at is, whether thou art a sheep or a goat, a sinner or a saint, a friend or an enemy, a son or a slave, a believer or an infidel; whether thou art growing on the crab-stock of old Adam, or art engrafted into Christ; whether thou art clothed with the righteousness of his Son, or whether thou standest before him in the ragged righteousness of thine own duties.

XI. The eleventh divine maxim or conclusion is this

Though a godly man should die of the plague, yet he shall be certainly delivered from the evil of the plague.

The smartest rod that God lays upon his own people is from a principle of love. Though he be angry with his people's sins, yet he loves their persons, Rev. 3:19; Prov. 3:11, 12; Heb. 12:5–9. Though the pestilence comes as a judgment upon wicked men, yet it comes only as a chastisement upon the people of God. When the plague comes upon wicked men, it comes upon them by virtue of the first covenant, and as a fruit of the curse; but when it comes upon the godly, it comes upon them by virtue of the second covenant—I mean the covenant of grace—and as a fruit of his love, Ps. 89:30–34. Hence God is called 'The great and terrible God that keepeth covenant,'

Neh. 1:5. But why is he called 'the terrible God that keepeth covenant,' but because as he hath covenanted to keep them from the evil of the world, and to purge away their sins, and to save their souls, and to preserve them to his heavenly kingdom, Ps. 119:75; John 17; 2 Tim. 4:17, 18; so he stands bound by his covenant to make use of any terrible dispensations to effect those great and glorious things. As we sometimes preserve those things in salt that we cannot preserve in sugar; so sometimes God preserves his poor people in the salt of afflictions, in the salt of terrible dispensations, when they would not, when they could not, be preserved in the sugar of mercies, &c. Though the plague should come into a godly family, yet God will deliver that family from the evil of the plague: Ps. 91:10, 'There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.' Beloved, though the plague should come into a godly man's house, yet there shall not be any evil in it to the godly man. When the plague comes into a wicked man's family, it always comes in the quality of a curse, Lev. 26; but it never comes into a godly man's family in the quality of a curse, for Christ was made a curse for them, Gal. 3:13. It never enters into a godly man's family as a fruit of God's revenging justice or wrath, Rom. 8:18; Jer. 24:5; Isa. 54:7–10; Jer. 31:3, and 33:3–7. When the plague comes upon the wicked, it comes upon them as a fruit of God's judicial wrath; but when it comes upon the godly, it only comes upon them as a fruit of God's fatherly anger. When it comes upon the wicked, it comes upon them as a fruit of God's everlasting wrath; and therefore where it proves fatal, it is but an inlet to eternal torments. But when it comes upon a child of God, it comes upon him but as a fruit of God's momentary wrath, Isa. 54:7–10. Look, as David gave charge to his soldiers, that they should not kill Absalom, his son, but only restrain his unnatural rebellion, and reduce him to his former obedience; so when God sends the pestilence amongst his people, he lays a law of restraint upon it that it shall not hurt his people, that it shall not destroy their graces, nor ruin their souls. The full commission that God gives to the pestilence is to restrain the sins of his people, and to destroy the soul-rebellions of his people. I have read of a loadstone in Æthiopia which hath two corners; with the one it draws the iron to it, with the other it puts the

iron from it; so God hath two arms, the one of mercy, and the other of judgment; two hands, the one of love, the other of wrath; with the one he draweth, with the other he driveth; the one stroketh, the other striketh; and as he hath a right hand of favour wherewith to lead the saints, so he wants not a left hand of fury wherewith to dash the wicked in pieces.

XII. The twelfth divine maxim or conclusion is this

That God knows how to distinguish his people, and how to difference his people from others, when the pestilence rages in the midst of them: as he did between the Israelites and the Egyptians, Exod. 8:21–23, 9:22–26, and 11:7.

That of the apostle is a great truth: 2 Tim. 2:19, 'The Lord knoweth them that are his.' The Lord knows all his people by name; he doth not only know how many be elected, but he also knoweth who they are. He knows the very numerical persons upon whom he hath set his electing love. Though the pestilence doth not know a saint from a sinner, yet the Lord knows a saint from a sinner; though the pestilence doth not know the righteous from the wicked, yet the Lord knows the righteous from the wicked; though the pestilence doth not know him that feareth an oath from him that sweareth, yet the Lord knows him that feareth an oath from him that sweareth; though the pestilence doth not know the clean from the unclean, yet the Lord knows the clean from the unclean; though the pestilence doth not know him that sacrificeth from him that sacrificeth not, yet the Lord knows him that sacrificeth from him that sacrificeth not; though the pestilence doth not know the oppressed from the oppressor, yet the Lord knows the oppressed from the oppressor; though the pestilence doth not know the persecuted from the persecutor, yet the Lord knows the persecuted from the persecutor: 2 Peter 2:9, 'The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation,' that is, afflictions. Though the godly man do not know how to deliver

himself out of temptations, though others do not know how the godly man should be delivered out of temptations, yet the Lord knows how to deliver the godly man out of temptations; and his time is always the best. The physician turns the hour-glass, and resolves the physic shall work so long; the impatient patient cries out, Oh, I am in pain! oh, how I am tormented! oh, what would I not give for a little ease! oh, methinks every hour is a year! but the wise physician, knowing the fittest time, will not suffer him to have any rest or comfort till the physic hath had its proper operation. Thus many times God's dear children, when they are under sore trials, they cry out, How long, Lord, how long shall this rod lie upon our backs? how long shall thy anger smoke? how long shall the judgment continue? but God will turn a deaf ear, and make them wait his time, which is always the best time. And therefore though God knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations, yet he will take his own time to deliver them out of temptations, &c.

XIII. The thirteenth, and last divine maxim or conclusion, is this

That though the godly are not delivered from the plague, yet they are still delivered by the plague; by it they shall be delivered from all their sins.

Death is not mors hominis, but mors peccati, not the death of the man, but the death of his sin. When Samson died, the Philistines died together with him; so when a believer dies, be it the pestilence or any other disease, his sin dies with him. As death came in by sin, so sin goes out by death. As the worm kills the worm that bred it, so death kills sin that bred it. The Persians had a certain day in the year wherein they used to kill all serpents and venomous creatures; such a day as that will the day of death be to every believer. When the pestilence hath put a period to a Christian's days, then he shall never be proud more, nor passionate more, nor unbelieving more, nor worldly more, nor neglective of duty more, nor grieve the Spirit of

God more, nor wound conscience more, nor break the peace with God more, nor sad the hearts of the righteous more, nor open the mouth of blasphemy more. The death of the body shall quite destroy the body of death; so that as sin was the midwife that brought death into the world, so death shall be the grave that shall bury sin in. When the pestilence takes away a godly man, it doth not take him away in his sins, but it takes him away from his sins; and as death, as the pestilence when it kills, rids the believer of all his sins, so it will rid him of all his troubles. Death cures all diseases, the aching head and the unbelieving heart; *ultimus morborum medicus mors*. At Stratford-Bow were burned in Queen Mary's days at one stake a lame man and a blind man; the lame man, after he was chained, casting away his crutch, bade the blind man be of good comfort, for death would cure them both. It will cure thee, saith he, of thy blindness, and me of my lameness. The way to glory is by misery. In this world we are all Benonis, the sons of sorrow. The way to heaven is by Weeping-cross. Christ's passion-week was before his ascension-day. None passes to paradise but by burning seraphims. We cannot go out of Egypt but through the Red Sea. The children of Israel came to Jerusalem through the valley of tears, and crossed the swift river of Jordan before they came to the sweet waters of Siloam. If a godly man die of the pestilence, he shall never be haunted, tempted, and buffeted by Satan more; he shall never see a cloud, a frown, a wrinkle in the face of God more. The chair of pestilence shall be to him a chair of state, by which he shall be brought into the presence of the King of kings. If the plague prove mortal to a godly man or woman, it shall do that for them which all ordinances could never do, and which all their duties could never do, and which all their graces could never do, and which all their experiences could never do for them, and which all the assistances, influences, and incomes of the Holy Spirit could never do for them, &c. It shall at once free them from all their sins, sorrows, tears, temptations, oppressions, oppositions, vexations, and persecutions. Death will cure the believer of all his bodily diseases and distempers at once. And thus I have done with these divine maxims and conclusions: the Lord make them as so many heavenly cordials to the Christian reader!

READER,

If thou art so ingenuous as to be desirous to know what those special lessons are that thou art to learn by that severe rod, the pestilence, that hath been so long amongst us, I must refer thee to my first Epistle before my Treatise on 'Closet Prayer,' where thou wilt find twenty lessons that we are to learn by the smarting rod.

MONERGISM BOOKS

A Heavenly Cordial by Thomas Brooks, Copyright © 2021

All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. By payment of the required fees, you have been granted the non-exclusive, non-transferable right to access and read the text of this e-book on-screen. No part of this text may be reproduced, transmitted, downloaded, decompiled, reverse engineered, or stored in or introduced into any information storage and retrieval system, in any form or by any means, whether electronic or mechanical, now known or hereinafter invented, without the express written permission of Monergism Books.

ePub,.mobi & .pdf Editions May 2021. Requests for information should be addressed to: Monergism Books, PO Box 491, West Linn, OR 97068