

THE CURSED FAMILY

A SHORT TRACT, SHOWING THE PERNICIOUS
INFLUENCE OF WICKED PRAYERLESS HOUSES

THOMAS RISLEY



 GROWDEDSHIP

THE
CURSED FAMILY

OR

A SHORT TRACT, SHOWING THE PERNICIOUS INFLUENCE OF
WICKED PRAYERLESS HOUSES, UPON THIS CHURCH AND
KINGDOM.

HUMBLY TENDERED BY WAY OF SUBSERVIENCY TO HIS
MAJESTY'S ROYAL PROCLAMATION, AND ACTS OF
PARLIAMENT, FOR PREVENTING AND PUNISHING
IMMORALITY AND PROFANENESS.

BY

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WITH A PREFATORY EPISTLE BY THE REVEREND MR. JOHN
HOWE.

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A PREFACE TO THE READER

Christian reader, the author of this discourse is a person of real value, who has so very low an esteem of himself, as to think my recommendation may give some advantage to this his performance. They are indeed very accidental circumstances that make this difference, very often, between some and others, in the eye of the world. Otherwise, that might well be said, which was in that great instance; I have need to—come to thee, and come thou to me? It is evident to those who know him, that the many years, heretofore, wherein he drew academic breath, and lived an ornament to the society, whereof he was long a member, were not trifled away. There he passed his time as a recluse, more acquainted with his study than the theater. He closely pursued his design; more to acquire solid, useful knowledge, and learning, than fame. And since, in his long rural recess, his design has been the same; and his way of living has little differed, in a chosen obscurity; contented rather to shine to himself, than the world.

Yet the urgency of conscience, and a desire to do good to the souls of men, has wrung from him this short treatise. An off-spring that has much of the parents' image; appearing with no ostentation of learning. But wherein may be seen a pious mind, tinctured by much study, and converse with books, an acquaintance with the literate world, which begot a habit, that is, rather by his speech, unwarily bewray'd, than designedly shewn. The scope and drift of the discourse, shows him a man of thought, and prospect: discovers thoughts intent upon the present age, but not confined to it: making,

from it, an estimate of the sad tendency of things, and their gloomy aspect upon the future. While Christian families, baptized in so great, and venerable names, and that should, if any, be seminaries of religion, and virtue, are so commonly the seedplots of all impiety and wickedness; and the numerous fountains whence miseries and curses are diffused among a Christian people!

My little leisure allowed me not thoroughly to peruse it: But its scope, and the spirit wherewith (by glances) I perceive it is writ, makes me hope, (reader) it may be of much use.

Thine, in our common Savior,

John Howe.

THE AUTHOR'S EPISTLE

To all Heads of Families from the Father of Mercies, through Jesus Christ, in whom all the Families of the Earth are blessed, Holiness here, and Happiness hereafter.

My brethren, hearers, neighbors and relations,

Christ has taught us (who is our Mediator) how far to extend our prayers, not only to our friends, but to our enemies and persecutors. And will Christ (who also is ordained judge of the world) take it well at the Great Day, that parents make not continual prayers, morning and evening for, and with their children, and the rest of their families? Are not children the divided pieces of yourselves? Will not that same natural affection (a tie spun out of your own bowels) move you to take care of their souls as well as their bodies? You are not only parents natural, but Christian, and have promised in the presence of God and his church, that your children should be virtuously brought up to lead a godly and Christian life. O remember your promise made at their baptism, and do not unchristen them by your breach of covenant! O pray, that God would make you instrumental for their spiritual well-being, as he has for their natural being. Beware of poisoning the souls of your children, whose bodies you have nursed at your breasts, and fed at your tables. How can such parents answer it at the great day of appearance, who, by wicked examples, teach their children to curse and swear, lie, cheat, break the sabbath, and to make no reckoning of religion? Be not deceived, for if you be not Christians in your own houses (whatever profession you make in the house of God) your

Christianity is unsound. Assure yourselves, that if Christianity were possessed of your hearts, it would be practised in your houses. Is not sin the plague of the heart? Is it not of an active, infecting, prevailing nature? Is not sin always with us, and diffuses itself into all places where we live? Doubtless sin follows men whithersoever they go, to Church, market, and home again. What would you have religion to be? What is Christianity? Must religion be a stranger, or some soft guest, who comes but seldom to see you, whose company, after a while, becomes fastidious? What would you make of true piety, what would you have Christianity to be? A despised inferior, to stand or fall, to come or go at your pleasure, taken in, cast out, used a little, and then laid aside? It cannot be such a thing. But true religion and Christianity is that thing, which breaths heavenly, regenerating, renewing, recreating influences: It is, that same ancient, sacred, awesome thing, which pierces the soul, the heart, conscience, and by the power of God, changes the whole man. Lastly, (O all you heads of families) be not deceived, if you and your households be religious, and Christians indeed, that religion will bear the image of holiness and righteousness, making not only your houses, but your souls and bodies, temples for the Holy Ghost to dwell in. If what is here written in this short tract [by way of motive] prevail with any one family in a parish, or any one member of a family (so precious is the souls salvation) to become practicers of piety in their houses, I shall rejoice that I have not run in vain, nor labored in vain, through Jesus Christ or Savior, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

T. R.

CHAPTER 1

The General Nature of Families, and of Christian Families
Relatively considered as Members of the Church.

Among the very beasts of the field, fowls of the air, and fish of the sea, some obscure resemblances of government, greater and lesser societies, kingdoms, cities, and families, the great searchers into philosophy have discovered. By God's ordination at first they keep their places, observe their times, do their work, build, furnish, make dens, caves, burrows, nests, set up house, break up house, breed up their young, help, and dispose of them abroad for common good. True it is, these patterns are but imperfectly drawn in these creatures, yet they point at excellent education, laws and virtues, and teach the wisest, sobriety, fidelity, chastity, amity, gratitude, vigilance, diligence, and unwearied care of themselves and those belonging to their charge.

After the Almighty had finished his work, created Adam, and placed him in paradise, he was pleased to say, *It is not good that man should be alone, I will make him a help meet for him.*

Although the word *family*, strictly taken, signifies that order of mankind which is united in marriage, signifying the terms of husband and wife, parents, children, master, servant, yet here it does include households made of kind friends living together for their mutual benefit, as men and Christians: and also, it doth include the superior societies of academical discipline, and the inferior of country

schools. Both which as they be of great use for magistracy and ministry, so they ought to be of special influence to maintain religion and Christian government in church and state.

That famous orator, whose name is turned into a sir-name of eloquence, (as Quintilian has it) speaking of the union of families, has written, that there is a more noble principle of human societies then sense, to wit, the attractive power of reason, which by counsels, precepts, converse, decisions, and judgments, cements and strengthens societies. But God's Word speaking hereof, strikes an higher note, no less a union for marriage then [in the Lord] with the exclusive particle [*tantum*] *in domino, only in the Lord*. If this union were observed, how much more happy would families, relations, parishes, magistrates, ministers, kingdoms and churches be?

It is a most dangerous design, to think of multiplying vice and impiety by gathering into societies, as if the lesser sins of single life, married into company, might take liberty to swell into a flood (Gen 6:25). We may not think that families and societies were constituted for natural and secular ends, but for political and ecclesiastical ends, the good of country and the Church of God. Therefore, that was an excellent answer made to one admiring a fair house, to wit, you look upon the glorious outside of the building, and call that an house, not looking within, how well children are governed and educated, marriage honored, the family and all belonging to it prudently managed. He (saith the author) that has such an house, lives in a palace, though in a pismires hill. From what has been said, it is evident, how much good or hurt may proceed from families. For although this capacity must not contend with greater societies for precedency of honor, yet for priority of nature, and eldership of

time, it carries it from all societies on earth. It being (without dispute) that of families, towns and cities, great states are embodied. Therefore, as in natural bodies, if the first concoction be imperfect, it is hardly corrected in the latter. So, in civil bodies if families and villages, through want of good government, abound in vitious manners, the malignancy presently infects kingdoms and churches to which they do belong. It may be, at the first, that the narrowness of private walls and households send evil manners into the world, with some kind of pusillanimous dullness, which coming into places of public concourse, grow impudent and refuse to be ashamed. Hence it is, that swearing, swilling, debauchery and immorality, contempt of religion and sobriety, become (in a while) popular and all in fashion. If parents give not check to family sins in their children at home, when they go forth, they meet with temptations and patrons, which turn their youthful exorbitances into immoveable habit. It is easy to observe that the want of family-religion is the cause of the visible decay of the welfare of church and state.

CHAPTER 2

Concerning the Church of God.

THe word [*church*] is vulgarly taken for the material place, where the people assemble to worship God, sometimes for the juridical power of church-officers, and sometimes for the Church revenues. But here it is taken for, the visible church of Christ, militant upon the earth, as it comprehends believers of all places and times from first to last; and as it is made up of particular churches or societies of believers; and these made up of believing families. A Christian family should be the epitome and nursery of the church, but (alas) it is far otherwise at this day. A minister may go into divers families in the parish and chapelry, and not a word of Scripture read, nor a prayer made in the family all the week long, as if religion were an enemy not a friend to their house; or, that religion were a duty only on the sabbath-day, and not on the week day.

The Church of God, at the first, was domestical, not national, till the holy line grew strong and populous from good families; as from Adam, Seth, Enoch, Noah, Shem (who lived till Isaac was 50 years old) Abraham the father of the faithful, by promise, &c. And so it came to pass in aftertimes, that as posterity in families degenerated, so the Church degenerated, as in Cain, Ham, Ishmael, Esau. Thus, it is in our days, ungodly families are the decay of God's church. They make thin congregations; they bring a waste upon the solemn assemblies. What an odious thing is it to loiter away the Lord's Day? What an absurdity to indulge the flesh upon the Lord's Day, and give

the flesh no rest upon the weekday? What a piece of wickedness is it, to go forth all the week to serve the world, and refuse to go forth on the Lord's Day to serve him? Who would think that sabbath-profanation were so shameless in families called Christian? Why should a poor excuse hinder men and women from the church, which must not from the market? How many halts do some make, when they should go to the church, to sanctify the Lord's Day in their conscionable attendance upon God's ordinances? What an unseemly thing is it to skulk at home, or at a neighbor's house, to chat and talk away, to feast away, sleep away, surfeit away, bibb and fiddle, smoke and pipe, for carnal pleasure; to visit away, and, for profit, to travel away the Lord's Day, when they should be waiting at the gates of wisdom. O what pity is it, that obscure tippling-houses should pick and pilfer any one member of a congregation from the house of God? These profane families do break covenant which they made in baptism, whereby they were solemnly admitted into the Church of God, engaging to renounce the works of the devil, the world and the flesh and to continue in the communion of saints, to love, fear, and worship that God, who made them for that end, and into whose name they were baptized, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Are not these the notorious enemies to Christianity, whose life is a flat contradiction to their baptism? Are they not enemies to the church, as well as to themselves, who willfully and wickedly excommunicate themselves from God's ordinances? All ungodly families do contract the guilt of that foul sin of separation by their sabbath-breaking. For if they be for real membership with the Church of Christ, why do they not hold fast their Christian profession in public? Why do they not keep their baptismal covenant, to holy and constant fellowship with Christ and his church in their families? Why do they not set up

religion and Christianity in their houses, that they might partake of heavenly promises and blessings of the Spirit of Christ, by prayers and praises, reading the Scriptures and catechizing? All which duties stand obliging them, as they be the genuine and proper fruits and evidence of that mystical union and holy communion, which is between Christ and all sound Christians and church members. For, he is not a good churchman, that is not a good Christian at home. *He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God* (Rom 2:28-29).

What profit will there be at the day of judgment, of names of Christians and live like infidels and heathens? What? Shall God's grace abound to us in this age of his church, by breaking down the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile, to make his Church Catholic: and shall we set up a partition wall, between God's house and our own, and not permit religion to dwell there? O let not any professor confine religion within church walls, seeing, that the congregation of the faithful is made up of believing families, and seeing, that a right belief in the church assembly, will bring forth the fruits of holiness in thy family. And all parents and masters of families now under the gospel, ought to be more useful for the spiritual concerns, of all under their care, then those parents under the law; and that because of clearer discoveries, and more plentiful effusions of grace. *I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophecy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions, also upon the servants and the handmaids, i will pour out my spirit* (Joel 2:28-29). To rule and keep house, as Christians, presupposes,

(1.) The natural ruling of houses; i.e. to do that which nature dictates, namely, to feed, clothe, harbor, and defend those under their charge (2 Cor 8:21).

(2.) It presupposes the ruling of houses in a moral sense, as reason commands, i.e. to govern in a deliberate way, by imparting ingenuous and virtuous education, that children be taught to read, to be just, dutiful, modest, diligent, temperate: that servants partake of free, not servile government, as reasonables, not as animals, which labor in another kind; to pay wages, not only truly, but equally, in a fit proportion to their particular employ. For nature teaches rewards in general, but reason enjoins an equal distribution of rewards.

Therefore,

(3.) To govern families in a Christian manner is most excellent; even as reason is above sense, and faith above both.

Christian family-discipline, must instruct, correct, and govern like itself; namely, to attain unto, promote, and persevere in all Christian duties towards God and man, wholly devoting themselves to Christ, to be his faithful servants forever. And this will cast out two great enemies to all order, as well as domestic, i.e. anarchy and tyranny, O that it might be considered, that God will reckon with all governors of families, both for not using and abusing their talents of authority. Then the blind heads of families, who put out their own eyes, willfully refusing to know their duty, both in single and married life, then the prodigal sensualist, and covetous mammonist, who have wanted no knowledge of their duty, must come to account, for taking no care for the souls of their children. O that parents would consider, whether there be anything in this world, which deserves their care and diligence more, than their own salvation, and their settled and

constant prayers to God, for the salvation of their children's souls. O ye parents, would you be blessings or curses to your families? Would you have your children prosper in this world, and forever perish in the next? Would you dispose well of them here upon earth and not be afraid lest they miss of heaven through your carelessness? The Lord in mercy awaken you, to set up religion and Christianity in your houses, to instruct, correct and rule yourselves first, and then your families, as becometh Christians, lest God's curse, denounced against wicked men's houses, pursue you here and rest upon you forever hereafter: the nature of which curse is handled in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

Of the Curse of the Lord on Wicked Houses.

What it is to Curse, and what is Cursing.

TO curse (according to the general sense of the Hebrew and Greek) imports to abandon, renounce, abdicate, and abhor, as a detestable thing; to excommunicate, and cast out of God's Church from his ordinances, as a vile profane person. Cursing and execration, doth not only signify a subtraction of God's blessing, but an infusion of his curse upon wicked persons and families, (as they have deserved for their sin) both in this life, and in the life to come. To bless, is with God to make blessed, and to curse is to make cursed; to say, and to do is all one with God, to speak a curse and inflict it, a blessing and confer it. And as it is God's peculiar to bless; so to curse. *How shall I curse, whom God has not cursed; or, how shall I defy, whom the Lord has not defied* (Num 23:8).

No heathen gods nor evil spirits nor the Devil himself, whom they invoke as chief, can send curses upon anyone without commission from the Almighty.

What it is for Wicked Houses to be under the Curse of God.

For wicked houses to be under the curse of God is to be without his gracious keeping and fatherly care, to be obnoxious day and night to

his wrath and vengeance for their sins. Or thus, it is to be excommunicated, banished, and rejected from God's love and saving grace here on earth, and hereafter to be shut out of heaven. Among the Jews we read of, *cutting off souls from the congregation* (Lev 17, 18, 20). This abscission, or cutting off, denotes an excommunicating not only from the privileges of the saints here but from their company in heaven.

When Cain was banished from God's presence, it was not only, an exile to him, but an execration upon him, as one bereaved of his gracious protection and mercy forever. This is called by the apostle, *Maranatha*, rendered an excommunication to death; or, till the lord himself come to judgment (1 Cor 16:22).

O sinking families, O houses separated to final destruction! Will it not enter into your hearts, will you not awake to consider that the fire of God's wrath is entered into your houses? Will you not tremble to bring God's curse upon you and your children? *God is angry with the wicked every day* (Psa 7:11). *Upon the wicked he will rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest, this shall be the portion of their cup* (Psa 11:6). *Woe unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands shall be given him* (Isa 3:11).

What is meant by Wicked Houses in Scripture.

Question. Who are these wicked? And what do you mean by wicked houses?

Answer. Wicked houses are plainly described in Scripture, that none in the neighborhood be deceived, and that none take it to be uncharitable, and so offended with what followed.

And, (1) Dark, blind, and ignorant houses are wicked houses (Psa. 53:4; 2 Cor 4:3; Eph 4:18). (2) Houses full of deceit, injustice, swearing, cursing, lying, sabbath-breaking, filthy speaking, slandering (Jer 7:8-9; Zech 5:3-4; Neh 13: 17-18; Col 3:8; Psa 15:3). (3) Covetous and oppressing houses, which have their wiles to entangle the estates of decaying neighbors, which buy and sell them for filthy gain (Mic 2:1-3). (4) Malicious, treacherous, and bloody houses (Rom 1:29; 2 Tim 3:3-4; 2 Sam 21:1). (5) Persecuting houses (whether secretly or openly is all one in the sight of God) under what pretense soever of religion, color of law, justice, and obedience to governors (Acts. 6:10-14, 14:5; 1 Thess 2:15-16; 2 Tim 4:14-15). (6) Voluptuous houses, *whose god is their belly, whose glory is their shame, who mind earthly things* (Phil 3:19). (7) Such families as corrupt, and entice others to sin, in towns and villages (Hab 2:15). (8) Houses of whoredom (Pro 7:27). (9) Houses of worldly pride and ambition, Jeshurun-like, waxen fat, to such an impious greatness, that they forsake God that made them, and lightly esteem the rock of their salvation (Deut 32:15; Psa 10:4). *They will not seek after God; God is not in all their thoughts.* (10) Prayerless houses, who open and shut their eyes and their doors without Scripture read, or prayer made all the days of the week; whose practice saith, *What is the Almighty that we should serve him? And what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?* (Job 21:15). (11) And, lastly, (to name no more) such as have a *form of godliness, but deny the power thereof* (2 Tim 3:5). Gross hypocrites, who profess (in the creed) that they *know God, but in works they deny him, being abominable and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate* (Tit 1:16).

Now to return to the description of [God's curse] on [wicked houses] viz.

To be excommunicated, banished, and rejected from god's love and saving grace here on earth, and hereafter to be shut out of Heaven.

The Greatness of God's Curse on Wicked Houses.

The greatness of this curse is manifest, in three respects, viz. (1) In respect of persons: governors, governed. (2) In respect of things: temporal, spiritual. (3) The greatness of this curse appears from its duration, which is to: time here, eternity hereafter.

From the Extent of it on Persons Governing

This curse is extended to persons; and first to governors, parents, masters, guardians, trustees, tutors, which three last are in the room of parents. Now all these, if profane, careless, ignorant, and wicked governors, are liable to God's curse upon their own persons. *Everyone shall have as his work shall be* (Rev 22:12). *And everyone shall bear his own burden* (Gal 6:5). You that do no good, do hurt, in your places of trust and government over others; what then shall be said of such parents and heads of families that are still doing evil? *Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be cut down and cast into the fire* (Matt 3:10). What then shall be done with those trees that bring forth evil fruit? Parents stand bound, by their baptism, to promote the spiritual as well as temporal good of their posterity; and it were a righteous thing with God to turn those out of his benediction who have turned religion out of their houses, or never suffered it to come in. You would do nothing for God's blessing upon your family, therefore God's curse is like to fall upon you. You have unchristened your children for want of godly education, and excommunicated your servants from God's public ordinances, either straitening their Christian liberty that way,

or not taking care by your pious commands upon them, that they might enjoy it. And were it not just with God to pluck off the abused cognizance of your Christianity and disown you, as not within his gracious protection nor true members of his Church? Think upon it, and tell me what is dear to your own persons. Is it any or all of these particulars that I shall speak of?

O all ye Parents, and all you that are in the Room of Parents: (1) Is it your name and reputation that is dear to you? (2) Is it health? (3) Long life? (4) Friends? (5) Parts and endowments? (6) Is it your vocation or employment? (7) Or, and lastly, is it your posterity?

1. Is it your Name? A wicked man is loathsome and comes to shame: *But by humility and the fear of the Lord, are riches, honor and life* (Pro 13:5 & 22:4). If the parents fear God, and be faithful as Christians towards their children, their names are precious. Conscience towards God and man is the true foundation of honor: where the life is holy and righteous, the name is sweet and comfortable. He is an ill husband of his name that is a wicked liver at home: and though he stands much upon his vulgar honesty for his reputation, yet he acquires no better name thereby, then what a pagan or heathen may easily attain unto. As for secular honors among men, by blood, riches, friendship, and preferments, they weigh not in God's balance. That man, that is a real Christian in his family, bears the image of his maker, and therefore raised to the highest pitch of honor in this world: *The righteous is more excellent then his neighbor* (Pro 12:26). Tell me, can there be a greater reproach to heads of families (in the best part of Christendom) than to be profane and irreligious in their dwellings? What a cursed shame is it, that your house should be an increase of a sinful generation? That wickedness should survive in your posterity,

when you are turned to dust, and that it should be alive in your house, and in hell too? How great is your stain, and stench left behind you? What a plague sore is this, which neither long-lived-time, nor ever-abiding eternity can wear away? What? a parent, a Christian parent, and yet ungodly, careless of heaven, covetous of the earth, and prodigal of your own, as well as your children's salvation? This is to be parent to the bodies of thy children, and destroyer of their souls. Let the world honor its own with monuments and golden letters, *yet know, that the name of the wicked shall rot* (Pro 10:7). What can be more for the raising of your name (O Christian parent) then to serve God in your family; whereas vice and ungodliness is the blot of true honor, and reverse the coat-armor of every dignified person in our English Church and kingdom. If it were possible to be wicked alone, without infecting others, it would not be so infamous, as to make others to sin, as do all wicked families. That Jeroboam made Israel to sin is the standing monument of his infamy. God threatened Baasha to make his house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, i.e. A base, ruined, and vile house (1 Kings 16:3). And may not all wicked heads of families fear, lest the Lord punish them and their posterity after them for their sins, and make them as vile in ages to come, as they have been wicked in times past?

2. Is your health dear unto you (O you wicked prayerless families?)

Is it better than your goods? It is not in mercy to wicked men, it is liable to God's curse. Your body (O wicked man) is a fair house, but the plague is in it, even the plague of your own heart (1 Kings 8:38). Can you not say from your heart, you are in good health, and were never sick of sin, and never knew the physician of souls (Matt 9:12)? Ah! It would be better that your bodily health was turned into a lingering consumption, palsy, dropsy, stone, colic, gout, or any painful

disease, while still having health in your soul, than to live without it, in swearing, cursing, lying, stealing, sabbath-breaking, pride, covetousness, idleness, uncleanness, oppression. Questionless there is a secret curse running in the veins of a healthy body which is spent in the pursuit of sensual contentments.

Health, the best thing, next to grace, for want of the blessing of Almighty God, is the worst thing in the world, next to a life in hell.

How many give the first fruits of their youth to vanity and wildness? How many at ripe age (for want of God's grace) run out of prodigality into covetousness, thinking to make amends by a thrifty sin for an unthrifty life, or mistaking exchange of sins, to be amendment of life? What comfort in that health which is the undoing of the soul to all eternity? What comfort in that health, that cannot, that will not be at leisure, nor spare time, nor a little of its strength and vitals for holiness and heaven? What comfort in that health, which is subject to the inordinacy of sense, and thereby denies the soul its rational and religious liberties, for God's worship, either in his house, or in their own houses? What comfort in that healthy body, which is made a sink of sin, and slave to every noisome lust? Certainly, this corporal health and strength is worse than brutish, for the beast feeds, works, rests, plays for the benefit of man; but a wicked healthy man, is not only an enemy, but a curse to himself, and to all that partake with him in his sin. And now speak, what greater curse than to abuse corporal health, for the sake of which (in time of sickness) so many friends and relations stand weeping and sighing, and so many messengers and doctors are employed?

What a curse is it? What an absurd piece of wickedness and folly, to part with that, at any vile rate, for the recovery of which, you are

willing to have everything, though at the highest rate? What a curse is it, to sacrifice that to the Devil and the world, which in holy baptism you have solemnly dedicated and devoted to God's worship? What a bitter curse is it, to work out your damnation with that health, wherewith God has commanded you to work out your salvation?

3. *The wicked mans prolonged life is a curse to him.* *The sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed* (Isa 65:20). As he fills his days and years, so he fills up the measure of his sins. *His bones are full of the sins of his youth, which shall go down with him into the dust* (Job 20:11). Solomon says, *A wicked man prolongs his life in his wickedness* (Ecc 7:15). Such a life will prove like itself, as heavy of curses as it has made light of sinning. O what a misery is it for an old sinner to begin to live, when he is ready to die? What a woeful thing is it, to find governors of families in their gray hair taking pleasure to discourse of the sins of their youth? Do they not hereby recommend those sins to be committed by their children, which they, by reason of their impotency, cannot commit? And is not this a sign of God's curse, impending over their families, in respect of long life? O what a judgment is it, that long life is still growing riper and riper for destruction to all eternity. *The Amorites were not cut off, because their iniquity was not yet full* (Gen 15:16).

O what a curse is it, to be an old gray-headed sinner, a swearer, drunkard, sabbath-breaker, scorner of religion! O what a sad thing is it to see strong sins in feeble age, sins in the meridian when life is setting? What a deplorable thing is it, that gospel-time (the most precious time in the world) should have ever have suffered so great a loss by you, and, you so great a punishment: *when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on*

them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power (2 Thess 1:7-9)? What a misery is it, that you have lived to see so many gospel-years, with rain and sunshine, have been partaker of the labors of God's husbandmen, and of their seed, and should have come into the barn *as a shock of corn in his season*; yet now at last you prove no better than a bundle of tares. Ah what a curse is it to be thus long-lived! Is it not a sad spectacle to see governors of families in gray hairs, and without the leaves of outward religious duties in their houses (Matt 21:19)? It may be said of such, that they have unhappily improved the stock of sin, as long and as far as they could, and that a long lived eternity of punishment is their desert (Matt 25:41).

4. *The sweetness of friends shall be taken from the wicked,* God withdraws from them spiritual, and they have no better than carnal friends, who are willing to please them in their sins. Although this is accounted (in Scripture) to be hatred to their friends and neighbors (Lev 19:17). *You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you should in any wise rebuke your neighbor and not suffer sin upon him.* O what a curse it is to make choice of such friends, as are hurtful to our souls, to wit, of loose, jovial, vain persons! O what a curse it is to have no better friends than such as be friends to our sins and enemies to our souls! Admit, that a worlding, or a loose liver may carry friendly, from a principle of common honesty, and the interest of his reputation, yet they do not, they cannot, and (while such) they will not show a Christian care over the affairs of greatest moment, namely, the education of the posterity of the deceased in virtue and piety. Compute then, what comfort a wicked man finds in his friend; or, rather come and lament the misery of all such persons and families;

considering, that for the want of this faithful Christian friendship and trust, the children of irreligious worldly families, are in apparent danger, to follow the steps of their parents and friends, and so perpetuate (and as it were entailed) God's curse upon the house still. How should families, in matters of trust for posterity, be careful in choosing feoffees [trustee]! I mean chiefly about religion, that it may not die in a pious family of children, when their parents die. If Seneca esteemed at a high rate, civil or moral friendship, it teaches us to esteem at an higher rate Christian friendship. I (says Seneca) esteemed my friends so much myself, that I thought myself never dead while they lived; that although I lived not on earth with them, yet being dead I lived by them; so that I seemed rather to deposit my life (as well as my cares) with them, than to depart this life. Not unlike one of our late English senators' expressions, viz. A friend is far more than a man's self. Men have their time, and die in the desire of some things, which they principally take to heart, the bestowing of a child, the finishing of a work, or the like. If a man have a true friend, he may rest almost secure, that the care of these things shall continue after him. So that a man has as it were two lives in his desires.

Objection. But Solomon in one place says, *that the rich has many friends* (Pro 14:20). And in another, *wealth maketh many friends* (Pro 19:4), what matter then, money is my friend, my estate is my friend.

Answer. Solomon, in both places, discovers the covetousness and partiality of men in the world, who, for advantage-sake, sell the truth in witness-bearing, and accept persons in judgment. And who knows not how apt men are to be drawn with silver and gold twist. Of all sorts of friends, money-friends are the worst friends to the purse, not to the person. Hence it is, that if they judge the gift or fee too little,

then they conclude their service and trust too cheap, and they will do far less, or quite neglect their duty. The truth is, a real substantial friend is the conscientious man (Neh 7:2; Dan 6:4-5). It is a true saying, *friendship cannot be there, where goodness is not. He that loveth pureness of heart, for the grace of his lips, the king shall be his friend* (Pro 22:11).

5. Parts and endowments of wicked men are liable to God's curse; and what a sore evil do parents and masters of families bring upon themselves, and those under their charge hereby? What a cursed thing is it, to have their intellectuals poisoned, infatuated and corrupted, with atheistical principles, dangerous opinions, and damnable practices? What a judgment is it to have their gold and silver cankered, and their choicest endowments vitiated? Let no wicked person conclude and presume of God's love to him from gifts: It is not distribution, nor receiving of talents, but grace to employ them well, which is an evidence of God's love (Matt 25:30).

What great pity is it to see men of breeding and quality in the world (whose time of education has been as expensive, as the lives of most men) to strip themselves of their ornaments, and trample upon them in the vomit and sink of luxury and surfeiting? And how sad is it afterwards (instead of ingenuity to acknowledge) to prostitute their gifts and parts to make defenses for their enormities? Is not this treason against heaven, to clip God's coin, his gifts, to guild their own dross, their sins, to make them currant in the world? Namely, to call heathening [*drinking to one's health*] and carousing, good fellowship, loyalty, or civility; to call swearing, hectoring, and dueling, gallantry, or manhood; to call covetousness, good husbandry, and prodigality, generosity.

Ah, what a curse is this, to become panders, and devils, to draw themselves and others into hell more securely? Is it not cursed for knowing persons to hide, extenuate and plead for sin? Is not this to justify that which Christ came to condemn, of which nothing is more vile and abominable? *Woe to them that call evil good, and good evil, that put darkness for light, and light for darkness, that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter* (Isa 5:20). *These are wise to do evil, but to do good have no knowledge* (Jer 4:22). *The light of the body is the eye, therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body is full of darkness. Take heed therefore, that the light which is in thee be not darkness* (Luke 11:34-35).

6. The very works of wicked men's callings are liable to God's curse. First, his natural actions, when he eats or drinks, he feeds a body of sin, and *makes provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof. Every creature of God is good, &c. It is sanctified by the word and prayer* (1 Tim 4:4-5). *The fruit of his body is cursed, &c.* (Deut 28:18).

Second, his civil actions, *the ploughing of the wicked is sin* (Pro 21:4). He is cursed in the city, and in the field (Deut 28:16). His *buying and selling* is cursed, his *building and planting* (Deut 28:30).

Finally, to be sure his religious actions are no better. *The prayers of the wicked are abomination to God* (Pro 15:8). *He that turns away his ear from hearing the Law, even his prayer shall be abomination* (Pro 28:9).

God's Curse Extended to Persons Governed

God's curse is extended to persons governed in wicked houses. In the second commandment (Ex 20:5): *Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and show mercy, &c.* And God justly punishes wicked parents, and wicked

children of wicked parents. There be many instances hereof in Scripture, both in private persons and families, and in whole kingdoms and churches, Ahab and his house, Jeroboam and his posterity (2 Ki 9:7-9 compared with 1 Ki 14:10-11). Gehazi and his seed (2 Ki 5:27). The Egyptians were plagued in their firstborn (Ex 11:5-6). The Jews and their children are under the wrath of God to this day (Matt 27:25). The wrath of God is come upon them to the uttermost (1 Thess 2:16). Achan 's sin brought punishment upon himself and family (Josh 7). Yea, all Israel fares the worse for his sin. And there were three years famine in the end of David's time, for Saul and his bloody house (2 Sam 21:1-2).

A great question answered in many particulars. How this may consist with the justice of God, is thus resolved. (1) The punishments which God brings upon the children for the father's sins, are only temporal and outward punishments. Sometimes they are smitten with infectious diseases, as Gehazies posterity; some come to untimely ends, as Ammon and Absalom, and the little children of Dathan and Abiram. Posterity may fare better or worse, for the virtues, or vices of their ancestors, i.e. outwardly and temporally, but spiritually and eternally they do not: For as never yet any man went to heaven for his father's goodness, so not to hell for his father's wickedness. (2) Children most times tread in their fathers steps, and continue in their sins, and so draw upon themselves their punishments. Certain it is, that most times sins pass along from the father to the son, and so downward, by a kind of lineal descent from parents to children, whole families being tainted with the special vices of their stock; either by nature, example, or education. Therefore parents ought to beware of constitution-sins in themselves, which follow the predominant humors of their bodies and souls, and of showing bad

examples for want of good education. If we should observe some families for several generations descending, we may see whole generations of riotous, drunkards, swearers, sabbath-breakers, worldlings, persecutors, oppressors, unclean and filthy persons, superstitious and idolatrous families, and such like. And thus the curse of God descends upon posterity. (3) It is to be noted (for our better understanding, how justly God punishes children for sins of wicked parents and governors) that between head and members, governors and governed (whether in kingdoms, or churches, or families) there is such an union, that whereas we look upon them severally, they are but one, as one body, magistrates are civil fathers, ministers are ecclesiastical, and parents of families (over and besides) are natural fathers. Now, where there is union, there is communion, suited to the relative state of things and persons, in respect of rewards and punishments. The whole person of man is punished for one part, tongue or hand; for, as they act for the whole, so they make it obnoxious. And so it is with magistrates and rulers, in respect of those under government. For, as in the body natural, there is a locomotive faculty, guided and commanded by superior principles of sense and reason, to go forth and bring home those things which are suitable to it. So in every body politick, there are inferior instruments guided by superior powers, which, by doing their part in an evil work, whether in their own persons, or in their representatives, become guilty, and so liable to punishment. (4) Observe, that Achan 's sin was publicly and solemnly prohibited, and the punishment threatened fully known to all of his family, in which, if there were infants, or children short of years of discretion, yet they cannot be said to suffer unjustly, because of that natural contagion of sin drawn from the loins of their parents, and because of some actual sins committed.

(5) In answer, this punishment, which involved the posterity of Achan, ought not to be looked upon so properly the punishment of children, as the punishment of parents, because the suffering of children, (being so near and dear to them) rendered this dispensation more notable and exemplary to all Israel, and smart and afflictive to Achan, which was the intent of it. (6) God sometimes turns that into a fatherly chastisement, which was a punishment in the predecessor. Innocent posterity sometimes suffers for guilty ancestors, but such visitations may have kindness in them. (7) We must beware of questioning God's judicial proceedings, or examining them by our own measures, of man's reason, laws, or tribunals.

And now having, in seven particulars, shown; that it is consistent with the justice of God to punish posterity for predecessors sins, with temporal punishments; let all parents take heed of showing evil examples to their children, of swearing, cursing, sabbath-breaking, cheating, stealing, oppressing, coveting, lest they, by following their steps (as they are in danger) suffer eternal judgments. O let all parents beware, of breaking their baptismal-covenant, and causing their children to break it, thereby undoing themselves and their children to all eternity, unless mercy prevent them.

The Extent of God's Curse on Things

The curse of God on wicked houses, falls upon things as well as persons. Things are two-fold: temporal and spiritual – which are in order to eternal.

1. On things temporal. God is highly displeased when he punishes sinners with prosperity. The rich man's full table, served up with his music and songs; *Soul, soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years,*

take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry, could not make way for his comfortable departure out of this world: But God said to him, *Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee, then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided* (Luke 12:19-20)? Let it not seem strange, that wicked families prosper in the world, and increase in riches, and yet be cursed in their basket and their store, houses, lands, livings, cattle, corn, in city and country. We may not judge of comfort in temporal things, from the quantity thereof. *A man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses* (Luke 12:15). Look not at the gift so much, as the good will of the giver, not at the bulk, but at the blessing. *In the revenues of the wicked is trouble* (Pro 15:6). What profit or pleasure in that abundance which will not suffer the rich to sleep? And what comfort to feast and surfet thereby? *A little that a righteous man has, is better than the riches of many wicked* (Psa 37:16). If it were possible, that all the delights of men did run into the wicked man's cistern, yet a frown from God's offended countenance would make all bitter to him. The hand-writing set before carousing Belshazzar, made him astonished, and his heart sunk in the height of his mirth. What made Cain's countenance fall, the second man, and heir apparent to the world? Was it not because, God had not respect to him and to his offering (Gen 4:5). If we come nearer, and view the wicked man's life in his wealth and prosperity, we shall find him obnoxious to God's curse in temporal things: (1) by his desire, (2) by his use, and (3) his value of riches.

First, by his inordinate desire, which, as it is without measure, so it is without content with his condition. It is a heathenish temper to be set upon the world. It wants neither sin nor misery to haste to be rich. *They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare* (1 Tim 6:9). *And he that hasteth to be rich, has an evil eye, and considers not that poverty shall come upon*

him (Pro 28:22). What a curse is it to make the mammon of this world a Christian's God? Ah what a curse is this projecting for thick clay, and wearying himself for very vanity (Hab 2:6-13). What a curse is it, to be a friend of the world, and the enemy of God (Jam 4:4)? What a curse is it to prefer the creature before the Creator, things seen before unseen, temporal before eternal, the body before the soul, and earth before heaven? Were it not just with God to disinherit all these worldlings of true happiness, who place it here below?

Second, wicked men are neither well full nor fasting, they provoke God, not only in desiring, but in using, and having riches. The truth is, wicked men do not use riches, but their riches use them: And how? why for wantonness, luxury, pride, oppression, pleasures, riot, or ostentation. Thus that which God appointed to help, maintain, and countenance virtue and piety (among men and Christians) is usurped to cherish and entertain vice and ungodliness, to prefer themselves to high places, and make room for them in the world to commit greater sins. Whereas riches are the servants of good men, they are the masters of wicked men. The good man makes his riches subordinate to the glory of God; but the wicked man is in servitude, to the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Wicked men (in the sight of God) have not a sanctified right to these temporal things, while they are out of Christ. And although they have an indulgence, from the common bounty of divine providence, to use temporals and become rich, yet they want a comfortable title to them. And what comfort in the having, or in using of these temporals, without the grace and blessing of God? Is it not a sigh of God's wrath and curse upon men's houses and families, when they suffer the world to lord it over their consciences, time, education, office, reason, souls and bodies and all. When the world has men's

knees, prayers, oaths, strength, wit, parts, memory, when the love of the world has seized on God's worship, sabbaths, ordinances, and ministry, Is there not a curse upon such abused riches? Is it not a sign of God's displeasure, when the world usurps power over spiritual and heavenly things? Is not this the fruit of the forbidden tree (Gen 2:17 compared with 3:17)? Every good man makes use of his riches, as Joshua did of the Gibeonites, makes them *hewers of wood, and drawers of water, for the house of God* (Jos 9:23). When as wicked men prefer the world to chief honor, as Ahab did Benhadad, who caused him to come up to his chariot (1 Ki 20:33). O what a sad account is every wicked man like to make? How will his abused riches rise up in judgment against him? Many were his costly sins which he maintained, many needless visits, many chargeable curiosities and fancies, many extravagant and uncomely fashions in apparel, in meats and drinks; all which are followed, attended and waited on with many temptations to wantonness, and many more vices, potent enemies to the life of nature, and much more to a moral and Christian life. But what little good has this wicked rich man done to church or state, to strangers or relations, or to his own family, where charity should begin? Have not wicked families (of no small quality) adopted their sins (as riot, oppression, pride, covetousness, uncleanness) to inherit their estates, and disinherit their posterity? Where there is more wealth, without more grace to manage this increase, it will prove a curse instead of a blessing. Therefore our Savior exhorts, *To make to ourselves friends of the unrighteous mammon* (Luke 16:9), i.e. to get grace to use riches to the honor of God, not to maintain intemperance and ungodliness. For the day is coming, when God will summon all such persons and families to give an account of their large portion of worldly things, and misimprovement thereof (Luke 16:11; Hos 2:8-

9). Riches are abused one of these two ways; they are either over-valued, or under-valued. The covetous are guilty of the one, and the prodigal of the other sin. And this brings me to the next particular, viz.

Third, and lastly, wicked men provoke God to curse them for the value they make of riches. God placed Man over those sublunary things, and now sinful contemptible man, will stoop as low as hell for them. How strangely are men infatuated, to dote upon dirt and dross! Who would think that a reasonable creature, placed his happiness on thick clay, on wind, on that which is not (Hab 2:6; Ecc 5:16; Pro 23:5). Yet so we find it, *Soul, Soul, take thine ease*, &c. (Lk 12:19). To place God and the creature in the same rank and order, and to worship the creature jointly with the Creator, is no less sin, than idolatry; but to set the creature above the Creator is atheism. If this were not so, the worlds trinity would not have so many votaries and sacrifices of souls and bodies. How can such men and women as these be in God's favor? Can that man or family have the blessing of God upon them and theirs, which bow down to the god's of silver and gold? Ah, What is man without divine grace? How sensual, how base, how brutish in choice and affection? This rate which carnal and earthly men set on temporal things, opens a wide door to all manner of sin, bribery, oppression, dissembling, lying, perjury, flattery, oppressive tyrannical law-suits, temporizing, and unhappy disposing of children, to services, to trades, to preferments, and to marriages.

2. *Liable to God's curse in spiritual things.* But is this all? No, worse is behind; for, wicked men, and their families, are subject to God's curse, not only in temporal things, but in spiritual things, that is, when they perform the outward duties of religion; as prayer, hearing the

Word, coming to the sacrament, reading God's Word, reading good books, and conference about matters of religion.

First, when wicked men pray: their prayers are an abomination; He that turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination (Pro 28:9). *The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination to the Lord, but the prayer of the upright is his delight* (Pro 15:8).

That the actions of wicked men, whether natural, civil, or religious, are obnoxious to God's curse, has been mentioned before, under another Head, namely [the vocation or employments of wicked men.]

Now, as to the matter in hand, concerning outward religious works, of unregenerate men, whether public upon the Lord's Day, or private in the family; take notice of these following particulars, to prevent mistakes, lest any harden their hearts in omission of outward duties.

1. That those persons sin more, who pray not at all in their houses, then such as make prayer. It is better to do that which is materially good, than that which is both materially and formally evil. It is better to have a form of worship and religion, than atheistical profaneness. It is better to have leaves of profession, than nothing but the cursed fruits of a corrupt tree. It is more eligible (*ex natura rei*) to exercise common gifts and operations of the Spirit, and some feeling in the conscience, than to be barren of all gifts, and dead to all outward duties of religion (Isa 43:23; Am 5:25). *You have not brought me the small cattle of your burnt-offerings, &c. Have you offered unto me sacrifice and offerings, &c?*

2. That God is pleased to reward, with temporal blessings, such as pray, and humble themselves for their sins, though they be not true believers, and sincere therein.

God is pleased to encourage all sort of sinners to observe and set up outward duties of religion, and they shall fare the better. It is not without reward to perform some formalities of worship, though done in hypocrisy (1 Ki 21:29). *Seest thou how Ahab humbles himself before me, &c.* Here is a great temporal mercy given to Ahab during his life [*I will not bring the evil in his days.*]

3. Consider that none be hardened in their omission of the externals of religion. I say, let them know, that sin is in the person, before it infect the performance; in the subject, before it corrupt the action. Therefore let the blame be laid where it ought, not upon religion, nor the duties thereof, but upon the professor and his bad life.

4. Seeing the condition of unregenerate and wicked men, is so contagious, that it pollutes all their outward religious actions, let them make hast to get out, by the use of all means of God's appointment, in order to their conversion: as by prayer, hearing the word, reading the word, reading good books, and, by good company, as before-mentioned. For although the prayers of the wicked and unregenerate be displeasing to God, yea, an abomination, yet it is their duty to pray, that they may be turned from their wicked ways, that so their persons and performances, may find acceptance through Christ.

O let all sorts of prayerless families pray, that they may pray in faith, and that they may become sincere, and down-right Christians. If you have any bowels of compassion for your own souls, and the souls of your children, get out of the cursed condition of wicked men. Who would lead a wicked life, if he were sensible of his misery, and the curse of God upon the house of the wicked?

Second, wicked men are subject to God's curse, in hearing the Word. They are the bad ground, which receives seed among thorns and briers, *such earth as bears thorns and briers is rejected and nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned* (Heb 6:8). As they come unprepared to hear, so they depart without profit. The fault is not in the seed but in the ground, which receives it. The life of the wicked is compared to untilled, rough, thorny, fallow ground (Jer 4:3). What fruit can be expected from it, how can the seed of the Word and a wicked heart agree? Who would live in the condition of a wicked man? Who trembles not, to be under God's ordinances without a blessing; what heart dreads not to be subject to God's curse? Who would not be afraid to hear the blessing pronounced, and have no share in it? Come then to the Word for grace, to make a new man, to reform your wicked course of life. Come to Bethesda, there is hope of your cure, of your conversion, though you have a long time been in this case. If you are willing to be made whole, if you are willing to become a new creature, the work will be done (Jn 5:6). Let nothing hinder or discourage you because of your wickedness, or being obnoxious to God's curse in hearing the Word, but let it much more persuade and quicken you, to a constant and conscionable attendance upon the word. There is hope of grace in the use of means of grace, but by refusing the means, thou art sure to perish. Take up then such a like resolution, *as the lepers before Samaria did* (2 Ki 7:3-4). *And there were four leprous men at the entering in at the gate, and they said one to another, Why sit we here until we die, &c? Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, &c.* (Isa 55:7).

Third, wicked and unconverted men are liable to God's curse in reading the Holy Scriptures, and good books. For they are in the dark, and without faith the eye of the soul. They have eyes and see not,

they have ears and hear not. They want a right end, God's glory, the good of their own souls, and of their family, whereunto God has commanded his word and good books to be read in families (Deut 6:1-3).

Particularly, wicked men deprive themselves of God's blessing in reading his Word and good books: (1) For want of prayer to God for it (Psa 119:18). *Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.* It may be that some wicked men are of good natural parts to discourse of religion; but what is that without grace in the heart, to relish the spiritual matters thereof? What is a golden head and a stony heart? (2) By reason of ignorance, *the natural man, receives not the things of the Spirit of God, &c.* (1 Cor 2:14). (3) Wicked men in reading God's word, and good books are upon uncertainties, for they fix upon no duty, they are all in generals for want of the applying act of conscience. They as men read maps of foreign countries, without knowledge of the globes. (4) Wicked men expose themselves to God's curse in reading Scripture and good books, by converting their knowledge into empty discourse or unprofitable disputes. And what more vain and carnal in these opinionative times? What Lipsius said of his country-men, is as true of ourselves, *Never any age more abounding with religions, and barren of piety.* We have cause to fear, that interest is the religion of many professors, whereunto they sacrifice their cares, and all their abilities (Acts 19:28). Great is Diana of the Ephesians. Ah, what confusions have opinions wrought among us in England. And, no wonder, seeing they lodge in that wild and restless faculty of the soul, namely, imagination, from whence all perturbations of Church and state proceed.

Fourth, and in the last place, may be added, friendly and neighborly reproof and advice, which (though it be the best of Christian charity (Lev 19:17) is made the worst use of by wicked men. (1) They either make a mock of it, or (2) snuff at it as a piece of censoriousness and impertinency, or (3) count their friend their enemy, and at the next meeting can hardly afford him an ordinary salutation. This is the cursed condition of wicked men, even in respect of spiritual things. *He that reproves a scorner, gets to himself shame, and he that rebukes a wicked man, gets himself a blot* (Pro 9:7).

God's Curse is Extended to Time Here and to Eternity Hereafter.

The third thing in opening the former description of God's curse on wicked men is the extent of it in respect of the duration of it, which is (1) to time here and (2) to eternity hereafter.

1. *To Time here*, in all the fore-mentioned particulars, with relation had to persons, governors and governed, and to things temporal and spiritual, with many particulars under both heads. I come to speak of the latter part of the duration of the curse of God on wicked men, which is extended to eternity hereafter. There is not a day free, nor an hour (so long as they be out of Christ) from the justly deserved curse; *God is angry with the wicked every day* (Psa 7:11). *Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest, this is the portion of their cup* (Psa 11:6). Who could sleep quietly in his bed, with a drawn sword hanging over his head by a twine thread? But ah, poor creatures, hell fire (for ought they know) is kindling for them; while they are treasuring up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and while they say, *peace and safety, sudden destruction is coming upon*

them (1 Thess 5:3). But is this the worst of their misery? Can it end with time, can death and the grave put an end to it? No, no, evil pursues sinners; the curse is extended to eternity. O woeful state of wicked families! O that they would consider of it, before they come out of the low ebb of time, into the vast ocean of eternity!

2. *Therefore, this curse is extended to the longest line of eternity.* This is the amazing sentence full of horror; *depart ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels* (Matt 25:41). Will not this word [*eternity*] pierce the hardest heart? Will it not awaken the most presuming sinner, out of the [*mare mortuum*] or dead sea of security? O the dreadful thoughts of eternity, eternity in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone! Eternity is not made up of millions of years. You may as soon gird the expanded heavens, or drink up the ocean, as measure eternity. Which made one cry out, what years can satiate endless eternity. Men would not live in their houses as they do, if they did truly believe, that (*except they repent*) God's curse, after this wicked life is ended, will abide upon them forever. *The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord* (Rom 6:23), i.e. of sin indefinitely taken, any sort of sin, every sin, unrepented of.

First Question. But sinful man's time upon earth, is but for a while that he sins, compared to eternity. Why should he suffer infinite and eternal punishment, for finite and temporary sins?

Answer. Sin and Punishment may be considered three ways: (1) in respect of themselves, (2) in respect of duration, and (3) in respect of their object.

1. *In respect of themselves.* Sin considered in itself, as it is a privation of holiness and righteousness, is finite not infinite, because that holiness and righteousness, wherein Adam was at the first created, was finite

suitable to the creature. And punishment considered in itself [*intensive*] is finite; but if punishment be considered [*extensive*] it is infinite; that is to say, punishment for its entity (*or its being*) is finite: And for its duration in that being, it is infinite. Or, thus in short, sin is of infinite continuance in hell, and its punishment is answerable. Were the life of sinful men prolonged forever upon earth, they would sin forever. The guilt and filth of sin descends into hell with the impenitent, and the damned are ever living and ever sinning, therefore it is just, that their punishment run parallel with their sinning.

2. *In respect of duration*, sin and punishment may be considered, and in this respect they both are infinite, i.e. the malignity, enmity and contrariety of sin to God's purity and goodness remains forever, and the punishment is inflicted forever. God's Word has placed rewards and punishments one against another. *And these shall go into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal* (Matt 25:46). *The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord* (Rom 6:23). As rewards are eternal, so punishments are eternal, as life is eternal, so death is eternal. By the rule of contraries these illustrate one another.

3. *Sin and punishment are considered in respect of the object*, or against whom sin is committed, i.e. against the Majesty of heaven and earth, the supreme Lawgiver, of infinite justice and holiness. Sin in this respect may be said to be infinite, being the transgression of the law of an infinite majesty.

Observe, that although man's time of sinning be but short compared to eternity of suffering, yet this does not appertain to the nature of sin, being [*extrinsical*] to it, for the sin of apostate angels, presently

after the commission, was in itself, (*abstractively* taken, for that malicious defection and deformity from the chief good) as hateful and contrary to God, as it was afterwards and farther on. In like manner, the sin of our first parents, deserved eternal punishment, the very first day, as well as in future time. The reason hereof is this, we ought in this matter inquire into the moral evil, internal principles, and roots of sin, the formality of it, enmity, privation, separation, and aversion from man's chief end, the enjoyment of God himself, the Being of Beings, and Fountain of Happiness.

Second Question. But seeing that there be some that die in their infancy, some in their childhood, others in youth, ripe age, old age. And seeing there be greater and lesser sins, as they admit of aggravations, against the light of nature, and against the gospel, How can it be said that they suffer justly, in case all suffer eternally?

Answer. Punishment hereafter is proportionate to wicked men's sins committed in this life, and all sorts shall have their just deserts. Christ Jesus the Judge of all the world, will reward everyone according to his work (Matt 16:27).

The greater and lesser sins shall have greater and lesser punishment, but all shall have eternal punishment. There are degrees of punishment in hell, as of sinning on earth, but eternity of suffering is the portion of all.

The least sin deserves eternal death. There are not physical degrees in this death. There is no diminution in infiniteness, nor brevity in eternity.

O let every wicked man be upon his knees, and pray for true faith in Christ and repentance of his sins, let him give no sleep to his eyes,

nor slumber to his eye-lids till he partake of the mercy of God, and infinite merits of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who alone delivers, from this dreadful wrath to come (1 Thess 1:10).

CHAPTER 4

The Pernicious Influence of the Sins of Wicked Families,
upon this Church and Kingdom, from seven Aggravations.

1. It depopulates kingdoms.

There was never any nation well and peaceably governed, in the which religion, and a persuasion of a divine providence, was not well and soundly planted in the minds of men. And the more that any one was privately devoted to religion, and the reverencing of a divine spirit, the more illustrious and famous he became in all innocence and probity of life. As the secret atheism of men's judgments, so the known atheism of their practice, opens the door to all wickedness, injustice, pride, perjury, tyranny, sacrilege, or any other villany (Psa 14:1-2), *they profess they know God, but in works they deny him, being abominable and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate* (Ti 1:15). It is observable, that the book called the [*Practice of Piety*] was dedicated to King Charles the First, then heir apparent of these kingdoms; intimating, that true religion is the best crown imperial, the undoubted glory and safety of Church and state. Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one sinner destroys much good (Ecc 9:18). The good of the commonalty depends upon the exercise of religion. If you have true loyalty in your heart, live with an awe of religion in your family, the want whereof will render you unjust abroad, as well as at home. Those that are without devoted service to God, will not be subject to rulers for conscience sake.

He that is subject only upon the account of wrath and the power of the sword which is over him will be no longer so when he has an opportunity of escaping or resisting that power. Nor is there any possible way to secure men in their quiet subjection and obedience but by their being obliged for conscience sake. And therefore such kind of persons as by their open profaneness and contempt of religion do endeavor to destroy conscience from amongst men, may justly be esteemed as the worst kind of seditious persons, and most pernicious to civil government.

Was it not hence that the Roman empire suffered so much, namely, from their Cateline, Brutus, Cassius, Sylla, Marius, and such like wicked fellows? Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people (Pro 14:34). It is the observation of Josephus in his *Antiquities*, that the Jews were grown very profane and careless of religion, before the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. The Lord has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, *because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. By swearing and lying, and killing and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood touches blood. Therefore shall the land mourn and everyone that dwelleth therein, &c.* (Hos 4:1-3). The abominable wickedness of Canaan provoked the Lord to visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land vomited out her inhabitants. You shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments, &c. That the land spew you not out also, when ye defile it, &c. (Lev 18:25-28). Personal sins quickly become popular, and as sin goes not alone, so it goes not without its contagion. It is a plague and infects others when we see them not; it is as diffusive as the air which we breath in. There is much danger in a contagious conversation. One person infects a family, one family a whole street, one street a whole city, one city a whole country, one country a whole

world. If sin begin with one angel it infects legions, if with one woman, it inserts all the mass of mankind. You sit at home, and think that you do no hurt to the kingdom or Church, but sure is, that your family sins will abroad, and as its said of those that are infected with plague sores, so it may be said of sinners, that they strive to infect others. Sin never goes alone whether considered as criminal or penal.

Your sabbath-breaking, idleness, pride, prodigality, backbiting, drunkenness, covetousness, and such like, breed more sins first at home, then in your neighbor's house, then afterwards, both yourself, your untoward posterity and your corrupted neighbors, carry them into company, in villages, market towns and cities, and in process of time, the whole land where you live, is defiled thereby. This fire of family sins, being once kindled, finds more fuel among sinful men, and so going from one to another, at last, it breaks forth into consuming flames. A whole tribe was corrupted with idolatry, which first came from Micah's family (Jdg 17 and 18). Achan's sin brought God's hand, not only upon himself and family, but all Israel smarts for it (Jos 7:13). And a long time after, Achan is called the *Troubler of Israel* (1 Chro 2:7), but especially the families of great persons, as of princes, magistrates, nobility, gentry, clergy, bring judgments upon whole nations and countries. As in Saul's time, Jeroboam's, Baasha's, Ahaz', and Manasseh's time. The sins of nobility and gentry are of a more spreading infection, then the sins of inferior persons. And as to the contagion of the sins of the ministry; it is said, *from the prophets of Jerusalem, is profaneness gone forth into all the land* (Jer 23:15). There be some sins which are domestic and private which grow quickly into national and politick sins, as sabbath-breaking, whoredoms, murder, perjury, rebellion against parents whether natural or civil parents, oppression, idolatry, heresy (Deut 13, 19, 21), showing the

punishment of idolatry, murder, rebellion against parents. And touching the punishment of whoredoms (Deut 22:21-22). All which texts show the national epidemical malignity of those sins; and therefore all Israel must hear and fear, and do no more any such wickedness as this among them.

2. It overthrows churches.

Consider that ungodly families overthrow churches. Profane hands in parishes pull down God's house. It is unbelief, impenitency, sabbath-breaking, common prodigious swearing, reveling at wakes, merry nights, greens, May games, healthing; inlets to debauchery and all impiety, to atheism, blasphemy, whoredom, contempt of religion and morality. These are the boars of the wood and beasts of the field which waste and devour the Lord's vineyard. These are the sins which the prince of darkness and his infernal rabble strive to maintain and propagate, to the overthrow of Christianity, yea, and (I had almost said) humanity itself. The tabernacles of Edom, and the Ishmaelites, of Moab, and the Hagarens, Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek, the Philistines with the inhabitants of Tyre (I mean wicked families) say, Come, let us cut them off from being a nation (a Church) that the name of Israel (the name of the Reformed Church of England) may be no more in remembrance (Psa 83). The general, ignorant, and scandalous sins of too many called Christians is like unto the abomination of desolation in the Holy Place (Dan 11:31). Parochial sins which rise out of irreligious households (as persecuting Saul's) make havoc of the Church. And are, in effect, the bloody Haman's against God's church: Family-wickedness of princes, priests, and people brought destruction upon Jerusalem, and demolished the Temple, the wonder of the world for building, a type of Christ in the

flesh, and of his Church upon earth. Joshua a good ruler, at a full and honorable assembly of elders, heads, judges and officers, delivers this weighty charge in his speech, namely to fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and truth: and not only in cities and towns but in all families, as the principal means for the prosperity of Church and state (Josh 24:1, 14-15, 20). *Go ye now to my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it. For the wickedness of my people Israel* (Jer 7:13). It is most certain that the Church cannot flourish unless the parts and members of it perform holy duties and offices in their capacities, both in Church and family. The want of religion in families is the decay of Churches. The difference between a Christian family and a Church is that of parts and whole. If the parts be wicked and profane, the constitution of the whole is vitious and depraved, more or less, according to the proportion of the parts.

Is it likely, that heads of families should be truly devout in the church, and exercise no religion at home? How shall we judge of the churches increase, if not from parochial religion in families? Wickedness of families makes the *glory of Jacob thin* (Isa 17:4). *Wicked families eat up Jacob, devour, consume, and make his habitation desolate* (Jer 10:25). As by appearance at musters we judge of the military strength and population of kingdoms; so from piety in families the strength and prosperity of the church and Christ's kingdom.

The life of religion, and the welfare and glory of church and state, depends much on family government and duty. If there be any hope of the amendment of a wicked, miserable, distracted world, it must be mostly done by family religion and the Christian education of youth. What country groans not under the confusions; miseries and

horrid wickedness which are all the fruits of family neglects, and the careless and ill education of youth?

In the preface to the record for dissolution of lesser monasteries, the reasons returned were, *the vitious living of those houses*.

Another says, that fornication, adulteries, treachery, sodomy, incest, were committed and brooded in those houses. And the reverend author goes on saying, *an hundred thousand whores made by the unmarried clergy*. Every stone has a tongue to accuse of superstition, hypocrisy, idleness, luxury, the late owners.

How soon would the best part of the world decay, upon the corruption of families? As in the body politick, so in the mystical, it thrives or wastes, according to the good or bad temperament of the parts constituent. If families of nominal Christians were real living members of the church, succeeding posterity would increase it. But we have cause to lament the weakness of it by reason the wickedness thereof. It is most evident from Scripture that such professors are not true members of God's church, which are not *living members of Christ*. *He is not a Jew which is one outwardly neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men but of God* (Rom 2:28-29). He is not a sound Christian that is baptized, except he be inwardly renewed and sanctified by the Holy Ghost. The real Christian *is a new creature, old things are past away, behold all things are become new* (2 Cor 5:17). And the new creature has put off his former conversation, the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and is renewed in the spirit of his mind, and has put on the new man, *which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness* (Eph 4:22-24). It is for want of religious government in households that the

Lord's Day is not better observed, that few profit under the Word, and that there are so few prepared communicants at the Lord's Table. It is from hence that ministers have slender congregations, and that taverns, alehouses, walks, fields, gardens, tattling-houses in the neighborhood, are more resorted to, then the places of God's worship.

Oh! All you careless, ignorant, worldly, and loose heads of families, let not this aggravating consideration (namely, that your family-wickedness overthrows churches) pass out of your thoughts, till it please God to change you and reform your families. Are you friends to the church? Set up the practice of piety in your families, which are the nurseries of the church. This duty is of great weight and importance to the interest of reformed religion, and of the Church of England. If professing Christians live in their houses in due conformity to their covenant in baptism, this (through God's mercy) will render our church beautiful as the garden of the Lord; and our land, as the smell of a field, which the Lord has blessed. The Romans were as careful to maintain their vestal fire, as to preserve the Palladium, as pledges of felicity to the empire; signifying to us Christians that, if religion and virtue, piety and policy, be countenanced, and defended, and their contraries, profaneness and immorality suppressed, and punished, then the Lord will build us and not pull us down, plant us, and not root us up. If we entertain the life and power of Christianity and honesty in our families, *upon all the glory shall be a defense* (Isa 4:5).

Question. What think you of errors and heresies, tending to the subverting of Christianity? And what may we think of parties and

sectaries, are they not greater enemies to the church than profane families?

Answer. (1) Here is not intended a comparative enquiry, whether damnable errors and heresies, do more mischief in our church, than wicked families, but the main business in hand, is to show, that profane and wicked families, are pernicious enemies to both church and state. Sabbath-breaking, swearing, drunkenness, filthiness, covetousness, oppression, pride, treachery, perjury, cursing, cheating, killing, stealing, lying, and such like black infernal sins in families, will (without reformation) ruin kingdoms and churches.

(2) Profane scandalous livers are practical atheists and heretics. *They profess that they know God, but in good works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient and to every good work reprobate* (Tit 1:16).

(3) Moral evils of sin and intellectual are conjunct; a foul stomach has an aching head, and corrupt streams come from a corrupt fountain, St. Paul, in Titus 3:10 and 1 Corinthians 5:11 joins together heretics, and sensualists, or scandalous persons in families and parishes, as fatal and capital enemies to the church, and equally obnoxious to ecclesiastical and civil punishments.

(4) We have sad experience what mischief, parties and sectaries, rents and schismatical causes and instruments, have wrought among Christians, even to oppose, that great article of our faith [*The Communion of Saints*].

(5) He is no better than a wicked man, that hatches divisions, and covets to make separations, and will not admit of healing. Such were the Donatists, whose tumults were suppressed by the magistrate.

O that all scandalous profane families in parishes, would sit down, and set themselves as in God's presence, seriously considering, that they are no more living members of God's church, than the dead bodies in the church yard, are living members of that family, whence they came to be interred.

3. It Renders the Ministry of God's Word Unprofitable.

Consider that profane families are great enemies to the ministry. If heads of families would perform their duties, according to God's command, that is, to set up religion in families, prayer, reading the Word of God, catechizing, showing good examples, in the week day, and upon the Lord's Day, causing their families to keep it holy, both publicly and privately. I say were their families thus governed, the word preached would take better effect upon them. Is it likely that preachers should do any good, when parents by open profaneness, pull down what they set up? As if they were resolved to live as they do, let the minister say what he will. Is it likely that the ministry should prosper in a congregation, when most families will do nothing towards it themselves, by keeping holy the Lord's Day, and serving and worshipping him in the week day? Would masters of families take hold with the minister, religion would enter into families through God's blessing. But O what little is done to help forward the salvation of souls by good parents! They ought to prepare and break up the fallow ground of their families, they ought to root out the weeds of vice, and pluck up corrupt principles out of this little spot of ground, that it may be fit to receive the seed of the word with profit (Jer 4:3; Hos 10:12).

Governors of families ought to make their families nurseries for the church, i.e. well husbanded, well disciplined, and well taught. In their own houses. Parents are both magistrates and ministers, in a subordinate way, to the training up an hopeful generation, for church and kingdom. Why do ignorant, loose, worldly, careless, prayerless families, cast off their duty upon sureties for the Christian education of their children? Whereas they themselves stand bound as they are believers, not only to dedicate them to the Lord by baptism, but as their children's sponsors, *to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord* (Eph 6:4).

4. It is a Great Discouragement to the Office of the Ministry.

The barrenness of the ground, upon which the seed of the word is sowed is cause of sorrow as well as discouragement to a faithful minister. Is it not matter of discontent and sorrow that the seedtime for corporal bread is stopped by some rude wicked fellows in the neighborhood? And do you think (O wicked families) that it is not greater sorrow to godly ministers in their office that the seed-time for the bread of souls is hindered by you? Is not Christ himself Lord of this harvest, who is judge of the world? Are not you the tares, and must not they be cast into the fire, not only for being tares, but for hindering the wheat (Matt 13:40-41)? It was the great grief of that holy man and famous divine, Mr. Ric. Greenham (about the 35 Y. of Q. Eliz.) That notwithstanding his preaching, prayers, tears, he had a barren, obstinate, ignorant parish.

Greenham had pastures green,
But sheep full lean.

Is it not matter of sorrow that the good minister finds little more show of religion in his congregation than what comes in course upon the sabbath-day, or that most in the parish part with religion as soon as they turn their backs on the place of God's worship? This troubles the good minister, that most heads of families deny that at home which they seem to like well in the congregation; that some (it may be) bring their Bibles to the church, and never take them up all the week after; that they join in public prayers, and will not pray in their families. And lastly, this discourages and troubles the good minister that many carry it like Christians in God's house and live like heathens in their own. Our blessed Savior wept over Jerusalem, saying, *Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who killed the prophets, and stoned those that are sent to you, how often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not* (Matt 23:37)? *When he beheld the city he wept over it, saying, If you had known, even thou, at least in this your day, the things which belong unto your peace, but now they are hid from your eyes* (Luke 19:41-42). After this sort the prophet is affected, *If you will not hear it, my soul will weep in secret places for your pride, &c.* (Jer 13:17). O you irreligious families, what will you do? Will you be obstinate and impenitent because your good minister, nay, your blessed Lord and Savior is tender and compassionate? Will you be careless and secure because your minister is commanded to watch for your souls? And will you be cruel to the souls of your families because ministers are sent of God to preach faith and repentance, mercy and forgiveness to you? Will you harden your hearts, and stand it out because God by his ministers is praying you in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God?

5. It Provokes God to Take Away the Gospel from Us.

Consider, that profane families do provoke God to take away the gospel from us and give it to a nation that will bring forth the fruits thereof (Matt 21:43). God has been pleased to plant his vineyard in England, which since, the Reformation has taken root and spread her branches in abundance. And blessed be the Almighty, the wall thereof (our good laws) is not broken down. But where are the fruits? We hear of common scandalous sins of drunkenness, swearing, whoredom and pernicious doctrines. And the sin of sabbath-breaking in towns and villages is notorious: notwithstanding his majesty's royal proclamation for the suppressing and preventing of profaneness, dissolute living and all immoralities, and for the countenancing of virtue and piety in this church and kingdom. What shall we say of loiterers, travelers, tattlers going from house to house? What shall we say of debauched prodigals, harlots, hectors at drunken and filthy meetings? How few families in cities, towns, or villages do make any better account of the Lord's Day, than almanac Holy Days? How few Christians keep holy the Lord's Day after service in the public assembly? It were just with God to translate the gospel to another people and to put a bill of divorce into our mothers hand, for the too common disgust of the power of Christianity and practice of piety. It were just with God to deliver his strength into captivity and his glory into the enemies hand (Psa 78:61). Referring to the sins of Eli his sons, in the priesthood (1 Sam 2), and to the punishment (ch. 4), not only of the priests but people also. And, we of this our church, both ministers and people, for our sins of other kinds, have cause to fear least God deprive us of our strength and glory, i.e. his gracious and influxive presence.

6. It Brings the Greatest Reproach upon Such Families.

Consider that this profaneness of families is the greatest reproach upon them. As sin leaves behind it the forest wound upon conscience; So, it marks the person, with the vilest brand. What can expiate that guilt which stains the heavens, curses the earth, has cast down angels from their glory, and made man as vile as the beasts that perish? Who can blot out that which is written in heaven in God's book, on earth in the consciences of men, and unhappily copied out, to be written in the memory of succeeding posterity? Who can purge that away which defiles the souls of men? It is not devouring time, nor flight, nor banishment, nor change of climate, nor strange inhabitants, no, nor death itself of the infamous sinner, that can free his conscience from the guilt of his sin and wipe off the reproach and everlasting shame thereunto belonging (Dan 12:2). And those that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. *The seed of evil doers shall never be renowned* (Isa 14:20). *The memory of the just is blessed, but the name of the wicked shall rot* (Pro 10:7). You have consulted shame to your house, by cutting off many people and have sinned against your soul (Hab 2:10). Are not Ahab's and Jezebel's sins upon the file of reproach? There was none like Ahab who sold himself to work wickedness, whom Jezebel his wife that cursed woman stirred up. Add hereunto Jeroboam the son of Nebat who made Israel to sin: and this is, that king Ahaz, Simon the Sorcerer, Elymas the Sorcerer, Judas the Traitor. These persons to this day have their brand of infamy. Man never came to lose his honor but by sin, then he marred his creation-robe, and was clad with guilt, shame and amazement. To this ancient estate of honor and communion with God, none but the

anointed of the Lord can restore, investing with a new-creation robe of righteousness and holiness. Well then, grace is the foundation of pristine glory. The way to raise yourself and family is by the steps of piety and virtue, down then with wickedness and vice, and set up religion in your family. *Them that honor me I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed* (1 Sam 2:30). It is said, that the valiant Roman Marcellus, built two temples of *Honor* and *Virtue*, in such manner that none could enter into that of *Honor*, but he must first pass through the other of *Virtue*. By the laws of armory, none ought to be promoted to civil honor, unless they be loyal, temperate, religious, valiant, charitable to the poor, and ready to attend their sovereign to the wars: And can any hope that God will honor any such families or persons as trample upon his holy laws, blaspheme his name, renounce their allegiance in holy baptism, and give no honor and service to that God, who has condescended to take them for his covenant servants. Can we say properly that such as these are Christians? Are they not the scandal and shame of Christianity? Are they members of God's Church, Are they not of the synagogue of Satan (Rev 2:9)? It's very excellently said, by a learned divine to this matter, as follows: All the members of the body have their proper and distinct offices, according as they have their proper and distinct faculties. As in the body, that indeed is no member, which cannot call itself by any other name, then by a common name of a member: So in the church, he that cannot style himself by any other name than a Christian, doth indeed but usurp that too. If you say, you are of the body: I demand then, what is your office in the body? If you have no office in the body, then you are at the best, but [*Tumor praetur naturam*] a scab, or botch, or wen (as Physicians call them) or some other monstrous excrescency upon the body, but certainly you are no true member of

the body. And if you are no part of the body, how dare you make challenge to the head, by miscalling thyself a Christian? Therefore oh Christian beware of having a name to live, and yet dead. As a dead man is no man, so the nominal Christian is no Christian.

7. It is Condemned by Heathens.

Why will you O professor of Christianity, live in your family, as without God in the world? Why will you heathenize yourself and posterity? Idolaters condemn you for your course of life, as they did (by the prophets testimony) the professing people of the true God under the law. *Pass over the Isles of Chittim, and see and send to Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there be any such a thing. Has a nation changed their god's, which are yet no god's, but my people have changed their glory, for that which doth not profit?* (Jer 2:30-31). All people will walk, everyone in the name of his god, and why wilt not thou walk in the name of the Lord thy God (Mic 4:5)? O Christian, you are not only condemned by idolaters, for your irreligion in your family, but condemned by your own self. *As Joshua said unto Israel, you are witnesses against yourselves, that you have chosen you the Lord to serve him, and they said, we are witnesses* (Josh 24:22). You, O Christian, have chosen the Lord to serve him, and to put away the idols of the flesh and the world, by thy covenant in baptism. Therefore take up Joshua's resolution; and say, *as for me, and my house, we will serve the Lord* (Josh 24:15). O therefore, be households of faith, govern your families in the fear of God, and hope of his mercy. O you worldly, ignorant, carnal parents, masters and heads of families, will it be comfortable parting at death from your children and from your servants, when you go out of this world, not only with the guilt of your own sins, but of your children and servants? You say you believe in Christ and yet live without repentance. This faith

the scripture calls historical, and it is the faith of devils. Such believers are mockers and impostors. And as one saith excellently, *more than men in the articles of their belief, and worse than swine in their lives.* The Lord have mercy upon all such families that call not on his name, and grant them grace to reform their houses as becomes Christians for their own comfortable account and the benefit of succeeding posterity at the great day of appearance; so that God may put his name in their houses and leave an entail of a blessing and not of a curse upon the surviving generation. *For the Lord our God is a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate him, and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love him and keep his commandments.*

To him, the habitation of whose throne are justice and judgment, and before whose presence are mercy and truth, be glory and worship from all families for evermore. *Amen*, and *Amen*.

FINIS.