

M

THE NATURE AND DANGER OF HERESIES

LIGHTLY EDITED AND MODERNIZED

OBADIAH SEDGWICK

M

THE NATURE AND DANGER OF HERESIES

LIGHTLY EDITED AND MODERNIZED

OBADIAH SEDGWICK

Copyright ©Monergism Books

The Nature and Danger of Heresies

by Obadiah Sedgwick

Opened in a Sermon
BEFORE THE HONOURABLE
House of COMMONS, January 27. 1646. at Margarets Westminster,
being the day of their solemn Monthly Fast

By OBADIAH SEDGWICK, B.D. Minister of Gods Word at Covent-
Garden

2 PET. 2:1

But there were false Prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false Teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction Yee therefore beloved, seeing yee know these things before, beware lest yee also being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastnesse: but grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, 2 Pet. 3:17, 18

LONDON,

Printed by M. F. for SAMUEL GELLIBRAND, at the Brazen serpent
in Pauls Church-yard. 1647

Table of Contents

[To the Honourable](#)

[Introduction](#)

[Of the Nature of Heresy](#)

[Of the Danger of Heresies](#)

[The Greatness of Danger by Heresies](#)

TO THE HONOURABLE

The House of Commons is now assembled in Parliament.

Having received your commands to preach, the first thing that came to my thoughts was the subject of this ensuing discourse. A theme (if I understand the current state of these times) that is both timely and necessary. There are some differences of lesser importance that are farther away from the foundation. I don't deal with these because they are just domestic judgements. However, there are other positions that are pulling at the very foundation and subverting the faith. As Tertullian calls them, "dogmata salutis devoratoria," and as another speaks, "Religionis Christianæ Carcinomata." Against these, as a Christian, as a Minister of Christ, and as your servant, I felt it was my duty to declare myself. And I beseech you, before whom would it be more fitting to open those ulcerous sores than before yourselves, Right Honourable, who, under God, are our most choice and tender physicians?

If any reader is unhappy enough in their charity to criticize this discovery of heresies and blasphemies as an arrow subtly designed against holiness and good people, all I would reply is this:: 1) The surest friends to holiness have always been the sharpest enemies of errors. Christ and his apostles were so. 2) I have never learned what

direct advantage true sanctity ever received from a patient endurance of heresy and blasphemy. 3) I cannot be so uncharitable as to think that anyone who is sincerely holy or pretends to progress in holiness would dare to be a friend to such damnable and soul-destroying errors. The design I would commend to all during this time of reformation is this: truth and holiness, which are so naturally combined and mutually interested, should be promoted with equal zeal. Encourage holiness, but also contend for the truth. Maintain the truth, but also countenance holiness. He who pretends holiness but does not care for truth, and he who pretends the truth but does not care for holiness, neither of these is a true friend to either truth or holiness. For your part, Right Honourable, please continue (as you have started) to vigorously support both. Both of them are necessary for God's glory. Both are necessary for man's salvation. Both are necessary for our current reformation. Both will prove the kingdom's safety, your conscience's comfort, and the crown of all your long and great labors. For both of these, you have the prayers of your most unworthy, yet most faithful servant, Obadiah Sedgwick.

Introduction

And the serpent cast out of his mouth water like a flood after the woman, so that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood that the dragon had cast out of his mouth." - Revelation 12:15, 16.

This text is relevant to the times we live in and the work of today, which should be humbling and reforming work. The text has two parts:

1. A new danger, verse 15.
2. Renewed help, verse 16

The new danger is set forth in four parts:

1. By the author of it [The serpent]. There was a former danger mentioned in verses 12 and 13, which was caused by the wrathful dragon. This is a new danger, contrived by the cunning serpent. Open cruelty is more dreadful, but subtle policy is more pernicious. The cunning devil is a more dangerous enemy to the Church of Christ than the raging devil. Nero and Diocletian were fierce enemies to the Church, but of all, Emperor Julian is considered the worst.
2. By the means of it [The serpent cast out of his mouth]. The schoolmen argue whether peccata oris (sins of the mouth) may be worse than peccata operis (sins of action). But it is certain that the danger that comes out of the serpent's mouth far exceeds the danger that depends on the dragon's sword.

There is a mouth of truth, which is God's mouth. There is a mouth of peace, which is Christ's mouth. There is a mouth of prayer, which belongs to the good man. There is a mouth of cursing, which belongs to the wicked man. And there is a mouth of mischief, which is the serpent's mouth. When the devil tricked Adam and Eve, he used the serpent's mouth. When he deceived Ahab, he became a lying spirit in the false prophets' mouths. And when he wanted to deceive the entire world, he entered the beast's mouth to speak great things. Here, intending to destroy the Church, he uses the serpent's mouth.

3. By the content of it [The serpent cast out of his mouth water like a flood]. It's not said that he only cast out water, but

even that coming from the serpent's mouth would be sufficiently dangerous. But he cast out water like a flood. Floods in scripture are metaphors for extreme dangers. When danger is sudden, high, violent, and fast, it is expressed by the metaphor of a flood. David speaks of floods of ungodly men (Psalm 18:4), and the prophet speaks of enemies coming like a flood (Isaiah 59:19).

4. By the aim or intention of it [To cause the woman to be carried away by the flood]. There was a flood that carried the ark, but here is a flood that will overwhelm and drown the ark. No matter how the devil and his angels attack the Church of Christ, their ultimate goal is always its utter ruin. When the devil rages like a dragon, his intent is to destroy it, and when he acts like a serpent, his goal is to sink the Church.

II. Thus you see the Church's new danger: but now behold the Church's renewed support: And indeed it is very remarkable, that this chapter is as full of support as it is of dangers; In v. 7, you may read of the dragon and his angels appearing in the field and fighting, but then you read of Michael and his angels supporting even to victory, v. 8, 9. Again, in v. 13, you find the dragon persecuting the woman who brought forth a man-child, but then also you read that there was given to the woman two great wings of a great eagle, so she could fly into the wilderness, v. 14. And here you see a flood cast out to carry away the woman, but with that, you read of a gracious and present support; [And the earth helped the woman by opening her mouth and swallowing up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.]

Thus you have the distribution of the text. Now I proceed to the propositions that can be observed from it. The whole state and summary of this text may be resolved into these three conclusions:

1. That the harm which Satan cannot achieve through open cruelty, he will attempt against the Church of Christ through subtle tactics: when he fails as a dragon, he will try what he can do as a serpent.
2. That the serpent's flood is the greatest and worst of the Church's dangers.
3. That the Lord has always provided fresh support for the Church against the fresh dangers it faces.

Concerning the first of these, I intended to have demonstrated both the truth of it and its practice in all ages of the Church, as well as the various methods, tricks, strategies, and designs of Satan on and against the Church of Christ. I also intended to show the reasons for shifting his approach, making use of his mouth, desisting from open cruelty, and turning to his tricks of tactics. I also intended to show the incredible harm that has resulted, because whereas his cruelty has killed thousands, his tactics have slain ten thousands. There, I might have discovered: 1. The advantages of tactics over cruelty. 2. The general receptiveness or capacity in men to be caught by the tactics of this serpent. 3. The usual lack of awareness under the influence of the serpent rather than the dragon. 4. The deceptive ways of infiltrating his harm through tactics. But I was taken off my purpose in handling this point (although, in my own opinion, very necessary and excellent) because I would thereby hinder myself in handling the second point, which I especially desired to discuss today before this honorable audience. And so, omitting other things, I address myself to that proposition which will be the only subject of my present efforts: The proposition is this.

The Serpent's flood is the greatest and worst danger facing the church: [The Serpent cast out of his mouth a flood to carry away the woman.]

Interpreters have several opinions about this flood that is cast out to carry away the Church: there is a flood of tears, a flood of reproaches and slanders, a flood to drown our sins, and a flood to drown our names. There is also a flood of persecution, invasion, and false beliefs, which of these three is in question. Some believe that the flood of water represents the blood let out by pagan emperors, but this is not likely because this danger was already mentioned in verse 11. Others believe the flood represents the invasions of the Franks, Vandals, Huns, and Lombards in the 400s who swept over Asia and Europe, but it is unclear whether this is what is implied in the text. Some interpreters believe the flood represents a new form of Antichrist who will send his army into the wilderness and search for the faithful, but this is not worth considering. Some see the flood as related to the Antichrist of Rome, but it is questionable whether it applies to the text's main purpose.

The best interpreters believe that the flood of water represents the spread of false beliefs and heresies that Satan cast out to harm the church and destroy faith. This occurred immediately after the Christian empire obtained a little peace from the cruel sword and began to enjoy some peace. Then, suddenly, the Arian heresy broke out, denying the deity of the son of God, which soon overwhelmed the East and then the West. After that, the Macedonian heresy, which opposed the deity of the Holy Spirit, broke out. Then the Pelagian heresy against the gospel, and the Nestorian and Eutychian heresies against the truth of Christ's person, which continued for nearly 300 years, causing much harm to the Church of Christ.

Now, we can understand what this flood cast out of the Serpent's mouth represents: false and wicked beliefs that corrupting seducers cast out of their mouths to oppose the truth and harm the Church of Christ. In the following paragraphs, I will show you:

1. The nature of heresies and erroneous doctrines that the Serpent casts out of his mouth.

2. The danger of these to the Church of Christ and why they are perilous and hazardous.
3. The magnitude of the danger, it is the greatest and worst.
4. Some relevant and useful applications of all this to ourselves for our present humility and reform.

1. Of the Nature of Heresy

To find this out, you may be pleased to know that the word "heresy" has three different meanings and uses.

1. Sometimes it is used to describe any new and unusual opinion that goes against the commonly accepted opinions of others. In this respect, the word "heresy" can sometimes have a positive connotation. For example, the way that Paul worshiped the God of his fathers was considered heresy by the Jews.
2. At other times, it is used to describe any false opinion that leads someone away from divine truth, causing divisions, sects, and conflicts. In this respect, "heresy" is the same as "dissension" according to Isidore.
3. But among theologians, it is strictly used to describe a well-known false and perverted opinion that opposes and subverts the faith that was once given to the saints, as Jude speaks, or overthrows the form of wholesome words, as Paul speaks. Heresy can be described as:

An erroneous or false opinion that is hostile to and undermines the doctrine of faith revealed in the word and is considered necessary for salvation. It is obstinately maintained and persistently adhered to by a professed Christian.

1. Heresy is an erroneous belief, false statement, or false doctrine. There is a difference between a bad act and heresy: a bad act is one thing, heresy is another. In a man's actions, there may be sin, a lot of sin, but properly speaking, there is not heresy. It may be an error, but it is not an error unless it resides in the understanding. The actions of hypocrisy and blasphemy (such as murder, injustice, adultery, theft, etc.) have much wickedness in them, but unless they also become the objects of belief as well as practice, they are not heresies. If, besides the moral practice of these acts, anyone holds an intellectual belief that the practice of them is lawful and not contrary to the Word of God, such a belief becomes heresy. Yes, let me add a little more, though many practical actions may be done with a conscience that is opposed (as Allophones à Castro speaks), the actions (simply considered as actions) are not to be regarded as heresies. For then every sin committed knowingly should be considered a heresy. No, it is not light shining and working against an action or work that makes it heresy, but it must be light from the Word shining against a belief, which must make it heresy.
2. Heresy is an erroneous belief about matters of faith. There are logical questions and questions of faith, as one well distinguishes. Not every erroneous belief is heresy. If the error is about matters beyond faith, it is not heresy, no matter what the error is. To make the erroneous belief amount to heresy, two things must concur.

One, the error must be "circa fidem": about faith. Although a person may err in his own belief within the scope of the object of knowledge, against the rules and principles of various sciences (such as geometry, astronomy, natural philosophy), this error is not heresy. For heresy is an erroneous belief, not about what is knowable, but about what is credible; not about matters of human science, but about matters of divine faith. But if the error is about matters of faith revealed in the Word, such as that Christ is not God or is not man, then the error becomes heresy, for here is a matter of faith.

Another is that the error goes "contra fidem": against the faith, as well as about the faith. If it is an opinion that contradicts sound doctrine and undermines the foundation, it becomes heresy. An opinion may be at odds not only with the Roman Church and various traditions, but also with the judgment of some devout people. However, it becomes heresy only when the opinion contradicts the faith that has been passed down, the doctrine of faith in the Scriptures. Here, we must carefully consider that an opinion can be considered contrary to the faith in two respects: first, when it is not in agreement with every truth revealed in the Scriptures. I dare not say that every error in this respect is heresy; there may be many mistakes, many incautious errors, as one might say, that are discordant with the true chronology or the exact history of some places, yet these are not immediately heresies. Second, when it is incompatible with the truth or any truth that is necessary for salvation, the error is then contrary to the faith and becomes heresy. Heresy is a perverse and adverse opinion. There may be diverse opinions, but none of them are heresies as long as they all come together in the center, as long as each of them unites and remains within the framework of faith. However, it is heresy when the opinion is adverse, contradicts, or undermines the faith revealed as necessary for salvation. This opinion can either:

Explicitly: like when the error clearly undermines the foundation. It is not a debatable interpretation of the truth, but a straightforward plot to destroy, an error that demolishes a fundamental truth. It does not simply remove tiles from the roof, but instead blows up the bottom and support of the house. For example, if a person denies the deity of Christ, redemption through Christ, or salvation through Christ.

Or Reductively: Like when the error overthrows something that, if denied, will inevitably lead to the denial of the foundation and, therefore, the fundamental truth. Or, if it maintains something that, if maintained, will necessarily and unavoidably subvert a fundamental truth. For instance, if someone maintains that human

satisfaction is enough to merit and attain salvation, this error would necessarily subvert man's salvation based solely on the merits of Jesus Christ.

3. If the erroneous belief goes against any one essential doctrine of truth, it would be considered heresy. To be an apostate, one needs to reject the entire truth, but if one denies an essential truth that is necessary for salvation, it amounts to heresy. The heretic grapples with some truths but denies others, so even if a person still holds on to many truths, or even most truths, except one essential truth, if their belief undermines that one truth, it would be considered heresy.
4. For an erroneous belief to be considered heresy, the person holding it must be a professed Christian, bound by the bond of faith. There is a question about whether non-Christians, such as pagans, Jews, and infidels, who hold opinions that are contrary to and undermine the faith, should be considered heretics. The answer is that one can be considered heretical either materially, when the substance of their belief is contrary to the faith and undermines its foundation, or formally, when not only the substance of their belief is heretical and contrary to the Christian faith, but also it is held by someone who has previously committed themselves to the profession and maintenance of the faith. Non-Christians can be considered heretical materially, but only Christians can be considered heretical formally. If a professing Christian denies Jesus Christ as the savior of sinners, it would be considered heresy, while if an infidel or a Jew denies it, it would be considered a great sin, but not heresy, because they never embraced or professed the gospel.
5. Finally, for a belief to be considered heresy, there must be obstinacy or persistence in the belief that is contrary to the faith. A heretic must stick to their erroneous belief, and obstinately adhere to it. There is a debate about whether persistence is an

essential ingredient to make a belief heretical. My opinion (which I submit to better judgments) is that if the erroneous belief appears to be inherently damaging to the foundation of the faith, it would be considered heretical. For example, denying that Jesus Christ is the son of God or denying salvation through him is inherently harmful and damnable. However, in most cases, persistence is necessary to make a person's belief heretical. For this reason, divines distinguish between an infidel, a doubtful believer, and a heretic. An infidel is someone who has never entertained or professed the faith but is obstinately and violently opposed to it. Such a person may be a persecutor, but they are not heretics, despite their belief and obstinacy.

There is uncertainty in faith, one who is doubtful in the belief: one who is wavering and unstable (unclear and fluctuating) their anchor does not hold firm, they are not fully committed to one side or the other, but they stagger and teeter: the equal thoughts of truth and falsehood balance each other so much that they do not fully decide either way: Now although some say that even those who are uncertain in faith are heretics, I do not dare to assert it; Thomas the Apostle had doubts in faith, he was skeptical, yet surely not a heretic; Indeed as Augustine says, those who have doubts are erring: for a person errs when they approve falsehood as truth, or deny truth as falsehood, or take uncertain things for certain truths, or certain truths for uncertain guesses: they are in error, but not in heresy.

There is also one who is a heretic-believer: one who is wrapped up, twisted into, packed into a dangerous error: misled, seduced, follows their leader: holds that which is truly contrary to the faith and destructive: but not out of stubbornness of mind, but due to a perception of truth: not deliberately, but by deceit; they are completely misled by blindly trusting: their erroneous opinion is not fortified with determination, but only crept into them through their simplicity; And therefore, if dealt with candidly and being warned, they do not argue, but yield, and return to the truth: like a bow when

the string is released returns to its original position, so upon warning the seduced person abandons their error and submits to the faith.

But then there is the actual heretic, the Heretic; and they are one who not only holds an error in their opinion (thinks wrongly), but also obstinately maintain that error (stubbornly hold onto it): they do not only hold that which is contrary to the faith (opposite of faith), but also they hold it (with a spirit of opposition) with a determined spirit: There is also in them a boldness in defining and a perverseness in defending; But here now lies in that difficult and complicated question; namely, when a person is to be considered obstinate or determined in holding an error against the faith: The Apostle, I think, resolves this for us, where he says, "Reject a heretic after the first and second warning." So then, when the truth has been clearly presented according to the revealed Scriptures, and yet the erroneous person still clings to their error due to a deep-seated wickedness, and will not allow their understanding to be captivated by the truth, this person is determined in holding onto their erroneous opinion and is clearly a Heretic.

Beloved! When an erroneous person holds onto their opinion against clear evidence, so that they must necessarily deny the truth of God or retract their error: or when they cannot maintain their wicked error, but must necessarily overthrow some other article of faith, which they would not do: or when the person does not care to trample down another truth to uphold their error against a previously held truth, using one article as a stepping stool to bring down another; or when the person moves from one error to a more gross one, not caring what error they plunge themselves into as long as they can maintain their error: or when all solid reasoning is silenced; in fact, if reason and conscience could speak, they secretly condemn them (when their reason and conscience agree with the truth against their error), and having nothing to reply, they fall into proud insults, bitter hostility, and miserable excuses; surely such an erroneous person is obstinate and determined in their corrupt opinion.

And thus briefly for the first question, which contains the Nature of Heresies, I now come to handle the second particular, which represents the danger of heresies:

2. Of the Danger of Heresies

That heresies, or false beliefs and opinions, are dangerous, should not be in doubt for any Christian unless they have become a heretic or an atheist.

Scripture clearly states the dangers of sin and perniciousness and the condemnation of heresies. St. Paul lists heresies among the works of the flesh that prevent individuals from inheriting the Kingdom of God (Galatians 5:20-21), and St. Peter calls them destructive and condemned, saying that the damnation of those who promote them will not sleep (2 Peter 2:1-3). A person's belief can make them sinful, just as much as their actions, and they can be damned for their beliefs just as much as their behavior. It is up for debate whether a sin against the rule of faith can be more sinful and damning than a sin against the rule of life, but for now, it should suffice to say that if heresies and false beliefs are sins that can close the gates of heaven and bring damnation, then there should be no question as to whether they are dangerous or not.

Furthermore, when we look at how heresies and false beliefs are compared to dangerous things in Scripture, and how heretics and false teachers are depicted as dangerous creatures, it should be clear that heresies are indeed dangerous.

1. In the Scriptures, heresies are sometimes compared to gangrene or a spreading ulcer that infects more and more, eventually reaching the heart and destroying life (2 Tim. 2:17). At other times, they are compared to a shipwreck where everything is lost (1 Tim. 1:19, 20). Christ calls them yeast, Paul calls them

bewitching, and learned writers refer to them as leprosy, poison, fire, a storm, or a flood.

2. As for heretics, they are described using dangerous creatures such as foxes that spoil the grapes (Cant. 2:15), dogs that tear (Phil. 3:2), wolves that devour flocks (Acts 20:29), and cheaters who mislead unstable souls.

Thirdly, Jesus Christ and his apostles gave specific warnings and cautions against heresies, which they would not have done if they were not dangerous. For example, they warn to "beware of the yeast of the Pharisees" (Mark 8:15), "beware of false prophets" (Matth. 24:4, 5), "take heed that no one deceives you" (Phil. 3:2), "beware of dogs, beware of evildoers" (2 Pet. 3:17). All these warnings clearly show that heresies are dangerous.

But there is more to them than just danger, which will be revealed in the resolution of the third point.

3. The Greatness of Danger by Heresies.

Heretics pose the greatest and highest danger to the Church of Christ. Although the sword, prison, exile, dispersion, spoiling, torments, and even the most cruel deaths faced by the Church in its early days were extremely dangerous, they were not half as dangerous as the flood of heresies and corrupt beliefs. The Church always grew stronger in purity, unity, prayer, zeal, and courage from these experiences, but it never did from heresies and erroneous doctrines.

The text itself illustrates the harm and danger that come from heresies and erroneous beliefs. They are described in the text as a flood from the mouth of the serpent. Consider the fact that:

1. Heresies are a corrupting and defiling flood. Any flood will immediately pollute pure waters, spoil the land, and leave behind

filth and slime. But a flood from the mouth of a poisonous serpent is even worse. There are four valuable things that wicked errors or heresies poison, corrupt, and defile:

The first is the souls of men. What is more valuable and noble in a man than his soul? Our soul is worth more than the whole world, but heresies and wicked beliefs corrupt the soul, even many souls. Babylon was accused of having the souls of men as her slaves, according to Revelation 18:13. Heretics are also called merchants who make merchandise of people with false words, according to 2 Peter 2:3. In this type of trade, people's souls are bought for false words, for low-quality metal, for corrupt errors. Every heretical belief buys or damages a soul, and it continues to harm more souls. It removes the soul from the foundation on which the salvation of souls is built. What will become of a house whose foundation is removed? And what will become of a soul whose foundation for salvation is denied and rejected? Damning heresies make us deny the Lord who bought us, according to 2 Peter 2:1. What will become of a poor sinner who denies Jesus, the Lord who bought him?

The second is the leading faculty of the soul. It's more dangerous to corrupt a captain than to corrupt many private soldiers, and it's most dangerous to corrupt a general who leads the whole army. It's crucial in some places and at some times to cast poison into the spring, as this will poison all the streams. Heresies corrupt the great leader of the soul: judgment. Judgment is the general, admiral, shepherd, overseer, guide, eye, and prime mover for the rest of the spheres in man. If the light in man is darkness, how great is that darkness? If judgment is infected, how dangerous is that infection? If there's darkness in the mind due to ignorance, the soul is in a bad condition. If there's darkness due to misapprehension through error, it's in a worse condition. But when that misleading error affects the leading faculty of the soul and opposes a truth necessary for the person's salvation, and the leading judgment firmly holds on to

it, it will lead astray, and it will continue to do so. Now, the whole soul is in a desperate condition. If it doesn't recover from this error, it will die for it and can never be recovered until judgment is altered. And when will judgment be altered when it defiantly confronts and rejects the light of truth, which is the only thing that can remove it?

The third is, the most active faculty of the soul; they do defile and corrupt the conscience: This is incredibly dangerous. A wicked error blinds judgement, but it is even more harmful when it affects the conscience. Such an error can act like a sophistry in judgement, but it becomes even more dangerous when it takes hold of the conscience. Just like diseases in the vital organs are quick and dangerous, errors are most pernicious when they penetrate the conscience. When the conscience is made to work against the truth, everything a person has and everything they do will also work against the truth. When this happens, a person will act desperately against Christ, just like Paul did. For example, when Paul's conscience was clouded by error, he consented to the death of Stephen and would have likely acted similarly against Jesus Christ if he had met him.

]The fourth is, the conversations of men: Heresy is rarely, if ever, separate from impiety. Hymeneus, who caused the shipwreck of faith, also caused the shipwreck of a good conscience. Those whom Paul called dogs, he also called evil workers. In another place, speaking of some whose minds were defiled, he adds that they were also rejected from every good work. Our Savior, speaking of false prophets, says that you can know them by their fruits. People's lives are consistent with their beliefs and opinions. Truth and goodness are reciprocal, just as falsehood and wickedness are. The doctrine of faith is also a doctrine of holiness, and the doctrine of lies is a doctrine of unholiness. When someone falls from truth to falsehood, they will soon fall from piety to wickedness. Truth has the power to reform as well as inform, just like salt seasons both heart and

life. But error that corrupts the heart will also corrupt the life. The plague will eventually rise and manifest in sores and blemishes.

The authors who tell the story of the Anabaptists start by describing their errors in judgment, but end by showcasing their wickedness in practice. Cyprian, who wrote about the heretic Novatus long ago, said of him that he was eager for new ideas, excessively greedy, intolerably proud, constantly trying to uncover secrets, and always flattering others to deceive them. He was never faithful or loving and was like a firebrand who did not care about the truth or peace and caused chaos in the world just to advance his own opinions.

The apostle Paul speaks of Antichrist, who is the forerunner of all heretics, and calls him the "man of sin." Lyranus explains this as a person completely given over to sin, and Theophylact refers to him as the leader of sin. It is only fair that God gives these people over to corrupt lives because they have rejected his truth and given themselves to corrupt errors and lies.

2. Heretics are like a flooding and overwhelming flood. A flood is a collection of water that raises the rivers above their bounds and covers everything with water. There are three things that heresies overwhelm.

One is the glory of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and divine truths. Heresies turn these glories into lies. They give God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and truth the lie. The person who makes the Word of God a liar, makes God himself a liar. What is God without truth? What is the goodness of the Gospel without truth? What is the framework of a person's salvation without truth? Truth is like a pin that holds everything together. If you pull out the truth, you break the bond of all glory and reduce God to worse than nothing. There is an open or hidden blasphemy in all heresies. No one can condemn the truth of God without condemning the God of truth.

The second is the glory of religion. Religion becomes low and impoverished when it is patched with error. A religion is more excellent the more truth it has, but when it is contaminated with errors, it becomes worthless and its glory departs. If the mixture of human inventions detracts from its glory, how much more so does the mixture of corrupt and faith-subverting doctrines?

The third is the dignity and vital entity of a church. Truth is the soul of the church and falsehood is death to it. Schisms hurt the church, but heresies hurt it even more. Schisms only tear the coat, but heresies tear the heart. Schisms only tear away the children's lace, but heresies bereave the children of their bread. Schisms are like a turbulent sea, but heresies are like a dead sea. Schisms scratch, but heresies kill. People talk much about unchurching and Antichrist, but a church is never closer to dying than when it is close to giving up the truth. The church is never closer to becoming unchurched and essentially Antichristed than when the truth fails and abominable heresies and corrupt doctrines swarm in it. Pay attention to 1 John 4:3, "Every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not from God, and this is the spirit of Antichrist." The spirit of error and false doctrine is the spirit of Antichrist.

3. Heresies are a rapidly rising flood: A flood is not a calm or still puddle, not a slow or sluggish river, but it is a quick and unexpected collection and inundation. And this is truly where the danger to a people and Church by heresies lies; they are rapidly formed, quickly spread, and grow quickly. Although truth takes time to spread due to our lack of understanding of supernatural things, our natural opposition to God, and the cunning interference of the Prince of Darkness, who blinds our minds so that the light of the glorious gospel doesn't shine, false opinions spread with ease. They're like a plague, a flying arrow that spreads quickly. Weeds grow easily, but the ground must be prepared multiple times to receive good seed. Our hearts are naturally inclined to easily embrace errors just as we readily engage in wickedness. False doctrines are compared to yeast

in the scriptures, how fast does a small amount sour the entire lump? Paul was amazed that the Galatians were so quickly swayed to another gospel (Gal. 1:6). A good man slept just one night, and the field was sown with tares by an evil and envious man. How quickly did the world turn Arian? How suddenly did the Anabaptists pose a threat to Germany? Vines that have been growing for months can be torn down and destroyed by foxes and wild boars in just a few hours. Given that false doctrines are highly pernicious and spread quickly, they are by far the most dangerous things to the Church of Christ. A plague that suddenly infects many families is more dangerous, and heresies that can quickly infect many souls are even more dangerous.

4. Heresies are an increasing and swelling flood: A flood initially makes the river only look bigger, run a little thicker and faster, but after some time it causes the river to become unruly, break apart, overflow, and the waters contribute to the rise and mount it from every side and corner, so that it becomes impassable. False doctrines at first seem modest, they may just be questions or doubts, but they then become probabilities, then tolerable conclusions, then unquestionable tenets, and finally public articles that must be held and anything contrary to be scorned and reproached.

This is not all, as false opinions not only increase in their direct line of particular magnitudes by intention, but they also spread in various directions by extension. They're like circles in a pond, one circle begets another, and one heresy begets another, with a smaller one giving rise to a bigger one. Just as one moral sin is only a step to fall lower, this intellectual sin of heresy is just a step to rise higher and to worse errors.

If you consult historical antiquity, it is wonderful to behold the great flames born out of small sparks: what monstrous opinions have been built upon errors which seemed but little at the first: how one error has hatched a greater. Those who write of them can distinctly tell us where the man was first planet-struck, (what his first error was) but after a while they are nonplussed in the account, the number of

errors have doubled and trebled; such a maze and labyrinth is error; it is like a whirlpool which first sucks in one part, and then another, and never ceases until it draws in and plunges the whole body. Besides ancient examples, we may see this swelling growth of erroneous opinions in the Church of Rome, where one error still advanced to more errors, and those again to higher errors, and these still running on, until a general corruption ensued from all the particulars: compare the first defections and corruptions with their last and present, how little then, how total now, how particular then, how universal now, and you will easily acknowledge what increasing floods erroneous opinions are. The points at first were rather about private interests of precedence, but they have been so increased to all doctrinal, that they are scarce sound in any. Their errors about the Scriptures, and Traditions, and the offices of Christ, and human satisfactions and merits; and invocation and adoration of saints; and of justification and faith, and good works, and free will, and sacraments, etc. are evident to all the world. I could give you an instance also in the Anabaptists in Germany, whose first author there (says David Chytræus in his Dedicatory Epistle to Ericus King of the Swedes) was Nicolaus Pelargus Cygneus about the year 1523. His erroneous doctrines though bad enough, (for they were laid in the contempt of the Ministry of the Word and Sacraments, and rejection of the Civil Magistrate, and in nova ac cœlesti luce immediate accensain corde (as my author expressly relates) yet were not formerly so numerous, but when these opinions descended to Thomas Munzerus and Andreas Carolostadius, now they began to swell both in the quantity of the opinions, and in the vast number of disciples too.

Lambertus Danæus in his Annotations and Explications of Saint Augustine's Book De hæresibus & quod vult deum, adds to that account, the many derivations and enlarging propagations of heresies from age to age: showing exactly the several heresies flowing from some one capital and original heresy, as from Simon Magus's heresy: and from that of Valentinus, and that of Carpocrates, and that of Artemon, and that of Novatus, and that of Arius, etc. In which

elaborate work of his, you may read of such a strange growth of heresies, that they never left multiplying and breeding, until they had (as much as in them lay) overthrown and cashiered every person in the Trinity: All the Scriptures, Law and Gospel; every distinct moral commandment, every particular article of faith, every ordinance of Jesus Christ, preaching of the Word, baptism, Lord's Supper, etc. There are four general heads to which (usually) we reduce Christian Religion: 1. To the Decalogue of the Law. 2. To the symbol of faith. 3. To the Lord's Prayer. 4. To the sacraments. And that learned author does by name instance the several heretical and erroneous teachers who have invaded each one of these, and in every particular included in them: By all of this, it does most clearly appear how dangerously mischievous heretical opinions are to the Church of God.

5. There is one thing more which I would add in the last place, by which it shall be demonstrated, that these heretical opinions are more dangerous than any other floods, and that is a diverse quality in them: other floods are quickly up, and quickly down: although they grow high and perilous, yet there is a sudden transiency in the height and peril: their principles are inconsistent though violent, and being spent, these ordinary floods sink and wane for lack of supply and feeding. But the floods of false and erroneous doctrines are such, as quickly rise, but do very slowly subside: They are in this respect worse than the great deluge in the days of Noah, which continued many months, but then did slack and sink, and fell completely away. It is not so with heretical errors, but they are like diseases which come upon us suddenly, but go away from us slowly: some erroneous opinions have been maintained for forty years together; indeed, above 100 years together: some of them 300 years: indeed, some of the Antichristian heterodoxies have been kept up for over 1000 years together. O brethren! men do extremely dote upon their own fancies, they are exceedingly pleased with their own creations, especially with the new ideas of their own minds, they dearly like them, and love them, and foster them: For one heretic who has been poisoned by his opinions, you may find a thousand others who have only been stained in their morals: Heresy, or the heretical opinion, is propped

up by all the arguments, subterfuges, learning of carnal reason; and it is upheld by an haughty, disdainful, and proud spirit; and it is so deceptive and fraudulent when you come to examine it; and (which is not the least) it is so entrenched with obstinacy and dogmatism, that it is almost a miracle to change an heretic's mind.

Every heretic is odiously proud: all other men who disagree with him, are far below him; and one says very truly, that no proud man can bear to be thought a fool or a knave: so simple as to be deceived, or so base as to deceive: one of which the heretic thinks he must be, if he recants his heretical and seductive doctrine at any time.

I should now come to show you the reasons why Satan makes use of this dangerous flood against the Church, and why especially at some times more than other: he knows well that there remain in professing Christians many opportunities for him with regard to erroneous opinions, much ignorance, much pride, and self-conceit, much itching vanity, much vain glory, much fraternal envy, much carelessness and inattention, etc. but I must leave this, and conclude all with some appropriate applications to ourselves.

Are heresies, erroneous and false doctrines, such a dangerous and pernicious flood to the Church of God? Is there so much wickedness in them? so much dishonor to Christ? so much injury to the truth of God? so much hazard to the immortal souls of men? Oh then, what cause, what reason, what cause for lamentation do we all have (today)? There are many floods that call for our tears: 1. The flood of innocent blood in Ireland. 2. The flood of cries from poor widows and orphans. 3. The flood of needy and wounded soldiers; and there is yet another flood, a worse flood, the flood of heresies and blasphemies: one deep calls for another, the flood of wicked and ungodly opinions

We are (by God's mercy and goodness) rescued from the cruelty of dragons; oh but now we are as much endangered with the flood of the serpent: the bodies of people are (to some extent) protected from

the edge of the sword, but what of this, while the souls of people are endangered with the poison of errors? If the danger moves from the body to the soul: if the physical danger is transformed into a spiritual danger, where is our happiness, what is our safety in this?

Beloved! there are four notable reasons for our most solemn humiliation for the spiritual wickednesses, for the false and abominable doctrines, which (like a flood) are now overflowing this nation.

First, The extent of some of them: They amount to no less than execrable blasphemies: to ignominious, contemptuous, disgraceful reproaches of God, Christ, and the Holy Scriptures. Believe me, blasphemy is a daring sin: it presses very close and too hard on God. He that blasphemes the Name of the Lord shall surely be put to death, Lev. 24:16. The words in the original are, "He that strikes through the Name of Jehovah": blasphemy is that bold sword that hacks at God himself, which is as if it is splitting him in two. The Schoolmen tell us that blasphemy breaks out in three ways.

1. *Cùm attribuitur Deo, quod ei non convenit*, when we attribute to God what is not becoming of God, which is incompatible with his holy and divine nature: such as to make him a creature, or a liar, or cruel, unjust, unmerciful, sinful, or the cause of sin.
2. *Cum à Deo removetur, quod ei convenit*: when we deny that which indeed belongs to God: it is called blasphemy in the King of Assyria, when he said that the Lord was not able to deliver Jerusalem from his hand, 2 Chron. 32:17.
3. *Cum attribuitur creaturæ, quod Deo appropriatur*: when we put upon a creature what is proper to God: thus when the Israelites made a molten calf and said, "This is your God that brought you up out of Egypt," it is added, "and they wrought great provocations," Nehem. 9:18. In the Hebrew it says, "and they committed great blasphemies."

Now compare this short discourse of the kinds of blasphemies, with the many expressions let fall in the speeches of some, and set down in the writings of others, and then judge whether some of our modern errors rise not as high as blasphemy. For example:

1. That God is the author of sin, not only of the actions to which sin clings, but of the very sinfulness itself: of the disorder, wickedness, and irregularity.
2. That the saints in this life are fully perfect, as omniscient as God.
3. That the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily in every saint, in the same measure as it did in Jesus Christ while he lived on earth.
4. That when the fullness of the Godhead is manifested in the saints, they will have more power than Christ did, and they will do greater works than he did, and they will be given divine honor.
5. One person has been complained about for saying that Jesus Christ was a bastard.
6. Another person claimed to be Jesus Christ, the Messiah.
7. That Jesus Christ is not God essentially, but only nominally.
8. That his human nature was defiled with original sin, just like ours.
9. That he is not of a holier nature than people.
10. That it is as possible for Jesus Christ to sin as it is for a child of God to sin.

11. That there is no such thing as a trinity of persons.
12. That the scriptures are nothing more than a human invention, a mere shadow, a false history, and should not be the foundation of anyone's faith, any more than the Apocrypha or other books, etc.

When Hezekiah heard the blasphemy of Rabshekah, he tore his clothes and covered himself with sackcloth. He went into the house of the Lord and sent for the prophet Isaiah, saying, "This is a day of trouble, rebuke, and blasphemy." That day of blasphemy was a source of trouble and vexation for him, even though the blasphemy came from an Assyrian. How much more should we be troubled and vexed when there are many blasphemy from professing Christians? No Christian can hear, or bear, such indignities and reproaches being cast upon their God and Christ without feeling a strong emotional reaction.

II. The breadth or number of false and erroneous opinions: so many, so grievous, as quis fando temperet à lachrymis? Verily they grow so thick, so abundant, that they will leave us neither church, nor state, neither ministry, nor ordinances, neither duties, nor worship. There are some who have printed large catalogues of them, I will but pick a few of the more notorious of them, and spread them before you this day, viz.

1. The scriptures of the Old Testament do not bind us Christians, nor those of the New neither, any further than the Spirit (for the present) reveals unto us, that such a place is the word of God.
2. That God never loved one person more than another before the world, and that the decrees are all conditional.
3. That there is no original sin.
4. That the will of man is still free, even to supernatural things.

5. That the saints may fall totally and finally from grace.
6. That Christ died alike for all: yes, that the salvific power of his death extends to all reprobates, as well as to the elect: yes, to the very devils as well as to men.
7. That Jesus Christ came into the world not for satisfaction, but for publication: Not to procure for us and to us the love of God, but only to be a glorious publisher of the gospel.
8. That God is not displeased at all if his children sin; and it is no less than blasphemy for a child of God to ask pardon for his sins.
9. That sanctification is a dirty and dung-like quality.
10. That the doctrine of repentance is a soul-destroying doctrine.
11. That fastings and humblings are legal and abominable.
12. That the souls of men are not immortal, but mortal.
13. That there is no heaven (to crown the godly), nor hell (to torment the ungodly).
14. That civil magistracy is antichristian; and but an usurpation.
15. That the whole ministry of the land, as to their present ordination and standing, is antichristian.
16. That it is as lawful to baptize cats and dogs, and horses, (which some have done for some of them, if not for all and more) as it is to baptize the infants of believers.
17. That there is no true ministry, etc. today in all the world; nor was since the general apostasy, which (they say) began since the death of the last of the apostles.

18. That there will be none neither until some apostles are raised up and sent: and when those apostles come, then there will be true evangelists also, and pastors, and not until then. Hearken O people, and judge O Christians, whether the serpent has not cast out his flood among us! Judge whether the errors in our times do not call for more high thoughts, and more deep tears!

III. The danger posed by all these things: If the danger were confined only to the souls of those who are the craftsmen and founders of these opinions, even this should move us to lament; but the flood is running, the water is spreading: The plague is not only begun, but spreading: the contagion is becoming general: It has entered the city, the countryside, entered that other main university: the poison has been dropped into the source: It has infected many leaders of the people, who themselves err, and cause others to err, it breathes, and walks, and rolls around. It is spreading across the whole kingdom: it surprises place after place, infects family after family: The sword of late was not so swift to conquer bodies, as errors now are to poison souls.

Truth Speaks If blasphemy against God, if insults against Christ, if declarations against the Holy Spirit, if contempt for the Scriptures, if vilification of the Ordinances of Christ, if insults to our holy profession, if the eternal hazard to souls, if all these cannot move us, afflict us, I don't know what to say to you.

IV. The special obligations that we all have to lay these things to our hearts with sorrow. Beloved! We are Christians (let others think of us as they please) we are covenanting Christians (let others ridicule this as they wish), and we are, or should be penitent Christians (let others be what they please) now.

Consider us as Christians, we consider ourselves the children of the true and living God, and profess ourselves to be members of Jesus Christ; The faith of Christ has been entrusted to us: we are responsible for it, we are to be zealous for it. How then can we

tolerate our God, our Christ, our faith, being thus dishonourably insulted and abused, without being troubled at all!

Consider us as covenanting Christians: so we have all bound our souls to God (can any mortal creature here release us?), we have raised our hands to the Most High God (in our respective places) to extirpate heresies and false doctrines.

Yes, consider us as penitent Christians: fasting Christians should be so, they should be mourning Christians: And Christians who mourn penitently, will mourn for the sins of others, as well as for their own sins. And they will mourn most when God is most dishonoured: and can God be more dishonoured than by blasphemy and damnable heresies? Put these together, and then consider whether the sins of heresies and blasphemy should not wound our souls with grief, which have wounded our God with so much dishonour.

But I move from this use of humility,* to a second use, which will be for exhortation; and it is this: Since there is such a flood cast from the mouth of the serpent to carry away the woman, let us carefully consider the following words in the text [And the earth helped the woman, and opened her mouth to swallow up the flood:] Before I distribute my exhortation, let me offer a distinction or two.

There is a twofold opening of the mouth concerning this flood: One is to speak for damnable errors and opinions and such as promote and maintain them; Oh that the mouth of any Christian should ever open itself in the behalf of those who dare open their mouths in blasphemy against their God and Christ! Should the welfare of a corrupt and poisonous seducer be dearer to you, than the glory of your God, than the truth of your Saviour? But there is another opening of the mouth, and that is against damnable errors and blasphemies: we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth, says Paul: Contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the Saints, says Jude: Hold fast the faithful Word, for there are many unruly and vain talkers and

deceivers, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, etc. So the Apostle in Titus 1:9, 10, 11.

Again, there is a twofold swallowing up of this flood; one by way of endorsement and advancement, of imitation and countenance: as when the fish does swallow the bait: too many swallow up the flood in this sense: The Prophets prophesy falsely, and my people love to have it so, Jer. 5:31. There shall be false teachers, who secretly shall bring in damnable heresies, and many shall follow their pernicious ways, 2 Pet. 2:1, 2.

Another is by way of hindrance and repression, so as to make the danger of this flood to sink and cease; Oh bring in your help, bring it in fully, bring it in speedily (thus) to swallow up the flood: Believe it, if you do not carefully swallow up this flood, this flood will ere long swallow you up, and the Kingdom too.

Now there are two sorts of people especially, who may help, and who ought to help to swallow up and suppress the present flood of heresies and blasphemies.

1. You (Right Honourable!) and the rest who are Christian Magistrates. It was but the scornful speech of Tiberius, that the gods alone must remedy the injuries offered unto them: Oh no! you are custodians of both tables: you are designed to be Nursing Fathers: you have received the sword to be a terror to the evil. Pious and learned Amesius, speaking to the question, "Whether Heretics are to be punished by the Civil Magistrate?" Answers thus, "Magistrates place and office demand that they suppress wicked disturbers with the sword, or public and external power if necessary: It is his place and duty to repress them, and restrain them, if they be harmful and disruptive: yes, and he adds more than everyone will be patient to hear: namely, that if also they be manifestly blasphemous and obstinate, they may be cut off with capital punishment: according to that in Levit. 24:15, 16. But I will not fall upon the discussion of that

at this time: all that I would humbly suggest to you, is this, That you may help against this dangerous flood 9 ways.

1. By a peremptory abhorring and crushing of that flood-begetting maxim, viz. a Catholic liberty and toleration of all opinions: There was a religion (as one once spoke before you) of all gods amongst the old Romans: and there is a religion of all saints now amongst the Papists: and if the serpent could but wriggle into a religion of all opinions amongst the English, he needs to desire no more: If men can step from one religion to all, they will soon fall from all religion to none.
2. By a public declaration against all heresies and blasphemies, known to be spoken and printed; When Ostroodius and Vaidovius started their Socinian heterodoxies in the Low Countries, the States General packed away those seducers with exile, and publicly condemned and committed their pestiferous books to the fire.
3. By making some standing laws against such opinions, which can be proved to be heretical and blasphemous; *Serviunt reges terræ Christo (saith one) etiam leges ferendo pro Christo.*
4. By setting up your Church Discipline with full power, so that it may reach these heresies and blasphemies, which, if any sin, then they do plainly fall within the reach of it. If the discipline were fully and generally established, you should not have a heresy or blasphemy, or any erroneous opinion creeping out in any part of the Kingdom, but there would be a timely discovery of it, and also a spiritual remedy to recover erring persons and to prevent their further spreading.
5. By encouraging and heartening the godly, orthodox painful ministers of the gospel, in their asserting and vindicating the truths of Christ, and in their opposing wicked, dangerous, and damnable opinions. Not suffering, therefore, to be snubbed,

abused, reviled, scorned, slandered, disturbed, or hazarded because they oppose the adversaries of truth and those serpents that cast out floods amongst us. Why should the shepherd be discouraged because he keeps off wolves from the sheep? Or any man be checked because he would quench the flying fire?

6. By using your prudent authority, in a timely manner, to cause faithfull and able ministers, who have been thoroughly tried and well-approved as sound in the faith and skilled in convincing gainsayers and seducers, to be sent forth. The more you help truth and the servants of truth, the more help you thereby contribute against errors and the enemies of truth. There is no better help against darkness than light.
7. By a tender and watchful eye towards the universities, one of which has lately come into your possession. Take care that it may not fall into the possession of any seducers. You have heard (I doubt not) of a recent disputation in Oxford, where someone undertook to maintain (besides in private) various strange and dangerous opinions in public. I humbly request that you take care that the serpent does not enter his body before there is anyone to bruise his head. Truth by right is the first-born, and should inherit first. Do not put truth to play a secondary game with error. Other garrisons, if lost, may easily be regained, but what is captured swiftly by error is not so easily recovered.
8. By observing a solemn day of humiliation throughout the land, for the dishonors reflecting on God, Christ, and truth due to the current errors, heresies, and blasphemies, you recently did so for the floods of rain that threatened the corn. O that it might seem good to you to do the same for the flood of errors that threaten souls. I humbly presume to leave this request with your pious zeal and prudence.
9. By using your coercive power with appropriate methods and measures for the real safety of flesh and souls, and the

repression of dangerous errors, so managing the distribution thereof that, under the notion of restraining heresy, you in no way harm real sanctity, nor yet, under the guise of sanctity, do you support the growth of heresy. O, what a happy people they are amongst whom errors are losing and truth is gaining! Where piety thrives and wickedness perishes! Where all who are good can join against all that is evil, and although they cannot (due to weakness) embrace opinions, yet (for the sake of truth and peace) can clasp hearts and hands to promote God's glory and the common salvation of souls!

2. I have a word also to say unto you who are Ministers of the Gospel of Christ: Come forth from your long silences, neglects, and reserves, and help the Church of Christ swallow up the flood which the Serpent has cast out of his mouth. When Jesus Christ is blasphemed, it is not a time to fear, but to cry out. So spoke Luther to Staupitius. Men will say that you are moderate and discreet, but what will Christ say to you if at such a time you are silent in his cause? O my brethren, you are the farmers, take heed that no one sows tares in the field while you sleep. You are the builders, so be sure to preserve the foundation safe. You are the shepherds of the flock, beware of the wolves lest they break in and destroy the sheep. You are the vine-dressers and keepers of the vineyard, keep an eye out for the foxes which will spoil the tender grapes. You are the stewards of Christ, so be vigilant about what provision the household is fed. You are the watchmen, look out lest the enemy slips in and surprises the city. You are the fathers, be sure that your children are not given a stone instead of bread or a serpent instead of a fish.

You must help with your most fervent prayers, as Alexander once did and prevailed against Arius. You must help with your counsels, with your watchings, with your preachings. You must "bona docere & mala dedocere", as Augustine speaks. You must be defenders and warriors, stand for truth and withstand errors. You are, in a singular manner, entrusted with truth and souls. O watch, O pray, O preach, O do all that faithful ministers should do when a flood breaks in. You

read of Elijah's zeal against the false prophets and of Paul's zeal against false apostles. You have read of the zeal of Athanasius against the Arians and of the zeal of Cyprian against the Novatians, and of the zeal of Augustine against the Donatists, the Manichees, and the Pelagians. You have read of the zeal of Jerome, Chrysostome, Nazianzen, and many others in ancient times. You have read of the zeal of Luther and Calvin and others in later times. You have shown your zeal for the kingdom in our dangerous times. I say no more, remember your first works, remember your engagements, and be zealous. If you, who are the angels of Christ, the ministers of Christ, the stewards of Christ, if you are drowsy, if you are silent, if you stop your own mouths when mouths are opened against your Christ, whose mouth can we expect should open itself to swallow up the flood? It was a brave answer which Cyril gave to Theodosius that in our private and personal injuries we should hold our peace. But when the truth or faith is endangered to be corrupted, we ought to speak, else we must give an account to God of our unseasonable silence.

Let everyone take heed, lest he be carried away with any part of this flood: I say, take heed: For erroneous times are trying times, and proving times, as well as bloody and persecuting times: God has tried your fidelity to this Kingdom (of late) by a flood of blood: and God is now trying your fidelity to the Kingdom of his dear Son, by a flood of errors; Take heed lest you be carried away by this flood: There are seven things which are very apt to be carried away by a flood; 1. Light things. 2. Loose things. 3. Weak things. 4. Low things. 5. Rotten things. 6. Tottering things. 7. Venturous things. O take heed,

1. That you be not light or proud Christians: errors are most apt to breed in a proud brain and a gracelesse heart: and no man is more likely to bee overturned by error, then he who hath overturned himself by pride; the proud and blasphemers are joynd together, 2 Tim. 3:2. The proud man is exposed to most temptations, to most fals, and to most errors: 'Tis the proud man

who consents not to wholesome words of Christ, but dotes about questions, 1 Tim. 6:3, 4.

2. That you be not loose Christians: If ungodlines be in the heart, it will not be hard for error to get into the head: A loose heart can best comply with loose principles: Truth is searching and reforming, but error is more quiet and gratifying: 'tis grace which settles the minde, and stablisheth the heart.

3. That you be not weak Christians: weake stomachs are most longing: A Christian whose faith is implicit, and leaning on man, doth often trust out his judgement and soul: The weaker light you have of truth, the more easily may you be cheated with errors in stead of truth.

4. That you be not law Christians: a worldly heart is a very low heart: It is of all other the cheapest, it will be bought and sold upon every turn to serve its own turn: The truth can never be sure in that chest, which any error with a little golden key can pick. If thou be the servant of truth for gain, thou wilt be a slave to error for more gain.

5. That you be not rotten or hypocritical Christians: they were given up to beleve lies who did not receive the truth in the love of it: How just is it with God, that he should fall into reall error, whose heart did never love reall truth? that the deceitfull heart should at length be a deceived heart? Is it difficult to set him against the faith, who never had a sound faith?

6. Take heed that you be not tottering and unstable Christians: when the judgement is not ballanced and solidly fixed upon the truths of Christ, but reeling and wavering, and like them in Eliahs time, halling between two opinions; it is usually in danger to be poised with error: He whose mind is but indifferent about a truth, is more then half on his way to error.

7. That you be not venturous and soul-tempting Christians: Julian sipt in his Apostasie by going to hear Libanius: The Devill is ready enough to tempt you, be not you found to tempt him: Eve lost all by hearing one Sermon from the mouth of the Serpent: If you will be trading amongst cheaters, it is no wonder if you be cheated: we are sure to goe by the worst, when we venture upon our own strength: the man who will expose himself to hear new truths, doth oft times come back with old errours newly dressed.

2. Let everyone strengthen their soul, that they may stand and withstand, and not be carried away, etc. The house built upon the rock stood when the flood came: Take all in a word; a judgement solidly principled: a heart sincerely renewed: a faith truly bottomed: truth and love of it cordially matched: profession and practice well joined: a fear of ourselves and dependence on God still maintained: God's ordinances and the society of humble and growing Christians still frequented: watchfulness and prayer still continued, are the best directives (that I can deliver) to keep us in the truth, and the best preservatives (that I know) to keep us from errors.

FINIS.

MONERGISM BOOKS

The Nature and Danger of Heresies, by Obadiah Sedgwick, Copyright © 2020

All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. By payment of the required fees, you have been granted the non-exclusive, non-transferable right to access and read the text

of this e-book on-screen. No part of this text may be reproduced, transmitted, downloaded, decompiled, reverse engineered, or stored in or introduced into any information storage and retrieval system, in any form or by any means, whether electronic or mechanical, now known or hereinafter invented, without the express written permission of Monergism Books.

ePub, .mobi & .pdf Editions February 2020 Requests for information should be addressed to: Monergism Books, PO Box 491, West Linn, OR 97068