

Robert Towne

1592-1663

Accepted in the Beloved

Our comfort, you say, and happiness is, that He pleaseth to accept from us that which is sincere, though weak and imperfect. Nay our comfort and happiness is, that whereas God in justice can accept of nothing that is imperfect, He hath made our works and persons perfectly holy and good, that so He may accept and delight in them both. Robert Towne {"Assertion of Grace, or A Defense of the Doctrine of Free Justification, against the lawless, unjust and uncharitable imputation of Antifidians, or favorites of Antichrist, who under a pretended zeal of the Law, do pervert and obscure the Simplicity of the Faith of the Gospel" 1644}

Assurance in Christ Alone

Crosses, afflictions, tribulations and death itself, not only cannot separate from the love of God in Christ; but all are yours, saith Paul, for your furtherance and hope; the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, I Cor.3:21,22; and all work together for good to them that love God. Rom.8:28. But this state is not discerned, except by the eye of faith; yet this is the truth of the Christian condition by means of the blood of sprinkling, which hath slain and abolished all enmity, and sanctified all things unto us; and as it standeth and is confirmed in the mind of God, and by Him is revealed, and held forth in the word of Reconciliation. He that is truly and effectually called by God, is stated in that grace and blessed condition, where he is without fear or danger of evil. The defects or imperfections which you speak of are not in the state, but in our sight and apprehension; not in the thing or Object, but in our little faith. The word and ordinances are left us to use, for the increasing of our knowledge, faith, assurance, consolation, and full contentment of our happy condition; but the state itself simply considered, is always one and the same, neither subject to diminution, or to be augmented; as the sun is as glorious in itself when it riseth, as at midday though not so to our sight and senses. Robert Towne {"A Re-Assertion of Grace or, Vindiciæ Evangelii; A vindication of the Gospel Truth, from the unjust censure and undue aspersions of Antinomians. In a modest reply to Mr. Anthony Burgess' "Vindiciae Legis", Mr. Samuel Rutherford's "Trial & Triumph of Faith," from which also Mr. Geerie and M. Bedford may receive a satisfactory answer." 1654}

Assurance in Christ Alone

Objection - These good works, though imperfect, may be a great comfort to us, as the testimony of God's eternal love towards us. Assertion - The best and most satisfactory testimony and assurance of God's love, is His giving of that dear Son of His love to die, that we might live through Him. I John 4:9,10. In this He commands, sets forth, and confirms His love, Rom.5:8, to put it beyond all doubt. The next testimony is the giving of His Spirit, for to reveal the things of Christ, the unsearchable riches in Him. Eph.3:8. To shed abroad that love in our hearts, that so the soul may know it, and feel the consolation thereof, &c. A third is the delivering and freeing of our hearts and natures from that bondage and pollution of sin, by sanctifying us in body, soul, and spirit; yet these are no causes, but effects and expressions of His free and eternal love, because He loved His own, He doth all for them. Our works are no causes or motives to Him, nor yet sure testimonies of God's eternal love, for many a Papist, heathen, and reprobate, for the matter and show of works, exceed divers of them who believe. - As God's works for us are testimonies of His love, so our works at the most are but witnesses of our love unto Him, and therefore cannot be testimonies, as you affirm, of God's eternal love to us. - So this makes nothing at all against Dr. Crisp, who would have all to derive their comfort and peace from the pure fountain, even the faith in the satisfaction, discharge, and atonement made by Christ, as the most direct, near, and infallible way; and not from works, which must be first carried to our faith or assurance that our state is good, there to be proved to be good; and so at best can but secondarily an weakly seal that comfort formally had by believing. - As David many times did, being wrongfully charged by Saul and others; and as it is our case, who are falsely slandered as Antinomians; and yet can and dare boldly go an appeal to God before whom all things are naked; saying, 'Thou knowest, O Lord, we are no Antinomians, no Libertines, or teachers of licentious doctrine, &c;' and so the testimony of David's, and our conscience being clear of such things in the presence of God, is a great support, a sure defense and an effectual

comfort against all those calamities, censures, and false accusations. "This is my rejoicing," saith Paul {being misrepresented to be what he was not,} "the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." II Cor.1:12. But now all this is touching things controverted between man and man, where our innocency, such as it is, is and ever will be the best buckler, plea, and comfort. - Thus, it is one thing to be comforted from the inward testimony of my conscience, reflecting with an impartial eye upon my conversation in this world, and finding it to be unblameable, and in all integrity of heart, especially when adversaries do accuse and speak evil of me; and another thing to fetch my peace and comfort thence concerning my spiritual state and reconciliation with God; for he that is exercised with inward conflicts and temptations, will easily perceive how dangerous a thing it is to have the eye and consideration of the soul taken off Christ and His Righteousness, and to be set upon any work or qualification of our own; for nothing but Christ, apart from all is accounted as dung and loss, our own righteousness as unclean and filthy rags. Phil3:8,9. Isa.64:6. Robert Towne {"A Re-Assertion of Grace" 1654}

Blood of Christ

If it be replied, that God looketh upon all in Christ, and so is well pleased with all. I answer; it is true, that God regardeth and accepteth both the persons, and the works of believers in His Son; but yet not as they are in themselves impure and defective; but as they are changed, washed, purified, and made thoroughly perfect, in that clear, and all healing fountain of His precious blood, and everlasting righteousness. {Zech.13:1, Is.1:16} Thus Abel and his sacrifice through this glorious tincture, and dye put upon them by a true and effectual faith, were accepted. Heb.11:4. Robert Towne {"Assertion of Grace" 1644}

Chastening Hand of the Lord upon His Children

Our Divines distinguish indeed between punishment and chastisement; and so call these corrections of children, and not punishment properly; for that every punishment is in some sort satisfactory. And so will that be intended, which by them is objected against the Papists; namely, if the Saints be punished for their sins temporally, then Christ satisfied for pounds, and left us to satisfy for pence. Robert Towne {Monomachia or A Single Reply to Mr. Rutherford's book called 'Christ dying and drawing of Sinners.' 1654}

Chastening Hand of the Lord upon His Children

False Assertion - Christ hath not borne all our punishment of correction, for we must daily bear His cross, and fulfill the remainders of the sufferings of Christ. Answer: Strange doctrine and new, that what we suffer deservedly as evildoers, should be called the cross of Christ, and the corrections for faults counted the fulfilling the remainder of the sufferings of Christ. See I Pet.2:10, 3:17,18, 4:15,16. It is evident, that to suffer as an evildoer for his offenses, is opposed to the suffering as a Christian. Do you not see yourself to be rash and confused, even where serious consideration is requisite, and where you pretend to use most exact distinguishing? Make you no difference between the sufferings for Christ, and the sufferings for sin; between suffering for righteousness, and as an evildoer? Or whereas Christ for our sins endured the punishment of malediction, must He daily now in His members be afflicted with the punishment of correction for sin, even so often as they are hated, reviled, and evil entreated of the world. For so Calvin expounds that place, Col.1:24, of the sufferings which Christ suffered in His members, in which God in His secret and everlasting counsel hath appointed to the mystical body, that is, to the Church of Christ. Indeed; either you or I mistake the nature of reconciliation. For I simply take it to be an agreement and friendship between two which were at odds and variance, which could not be effected by our Mediator, save by the expiation and abolition of sin, the seed and cause of enmity. Eph.2:15, Col.1:22. Yea and by bringing in Everlasting Righteousness, the elder sister to Peace. Dan.9:24, Heb.7:2. Thus as reconciliation rightly understood, implieth first a freedom from sin {passively and imputatively} so it necessarily inferreth a freedom from correction for sin. Isa.53:5. You object, Heb.12:6; He "scourgeth every son whom He receiveth &c." I answer, the Apostle saith not that they are chastened for sin, but barely if they were without chastisement, &c. - It is granted that afflictions as all outward things befall alike to the just and unjust; but yet the Scripture mentioneth only these three causes, why the godly are afflicted in the days of the Gospel. #1. To try their faith, whether they will abide constantly in the truth of this testimony, that Christ hath slain and abolished all enmity, and made everlasting peace between God and them, even now in the appearing in sense of the contrary. James 1:2, I Pet.1:7. #2. To conform and make them like Christ in suffering. Rom.8:17,18, II Tim.2:12. #3. To quicken and increase faith, causing them in these sharp storms of crosses more diligently and firmly to keep and gird close this garment of Christ's Righteousness, of which end it seemeth that place, Heb.12:10,11 is meant. So that in some sort and sense, here

respect seems to be had to sin, not principally, but secondarily and occasionally, not as it offendeth God {who by that One sacrifice is forever pacified, Heb.10:14, Mt.3:17,} but as it offendeth or troubleth the minds of the faithful. Not that afflictions simply, properly, and immediately do ease, cure, or quiet the conscience {for their natural fruit and affect, is to deject and terrify like the Law, of which they are appendices,} but that they awaken, and stir up our dullness and security to a more lively, effectual, and enlarged apprehension of Christ and His Righteousness, the only procurer of health, peace, and rest. Mt.11:28. In time of danger, the coney hasteneth to the Rock, the hare to the thicket, the Egyptians to their houses, Ex.9:20; the faithful to the Name of the Lord {the Lord our Righteousness, Jer.23:6,} as their strong Tower of defense. Prov.18:10. And thus whilst God useth afflictions as a tender father the rod, the cause hath not properly with Him the nature of sin, which is an offense to Divine Justice; but it is now considered as a disease troubling His child, which in love, and much pity He seeks to make riddance of in a manner aforesaid, and not in anger and displeasure as you would. And thus the text also saith, "whom He loveth he chasteneth." Heb.12:5. Therefore I wonder to see you so transported, as to affirm that those afflictions are merited by sin, and are from Justice, which cannot punish the guiltless; and to that purpose to bring that place, Gen.18:25, as if whatever sin deserved, had not been afflicted upon Christ, who suffered the Just for the unjust. I Pet.3:18. Does, or can sin merit any more than death? Gen.2:17, Rom.6:23. And hath not Christ tasted and undergone the same? Heb.2:14. And is not Justice forever fully satisfied? "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth." Rom.8:33. Or lastly, are the justified still guilty before the Justice of God? You outshoot all your confederates that I know; for they grant that Christ hath freed us from the guilt of sin, and the punishment. And how well serveth that Scripture, Gen.18:25, for your purpose; for by this the justified should be again spoiled and robbed of the everlasting garment of Christ's Righteousness, and of their peace thereby, passing all understanding, and indeed be set again in the same condition and condemnation of the wicked and unjustified. Thus you play fast and loose with your hearers. Can you free yourself from Popery, or from gross ignorance of the everlasting efficacy of Christ's blood, and of the nature, extent, and effect of free justification, or from being opposite to true and pure grace? - God does therefore sharply rebuke and correct His chosen, to drive and fastened them to the Laver of his Son's blood! Robert Towne {"Assertion of Grace" 1644}

Christ the Life of the Believer

The way by which we can only go and enter into Heaven, is that new living way dedicated by blood. {Heb.10:20,21} In which way the soul can only walk and continue by believing. Hence it is said, that through faith they inherit the promises. {Heb.6:12} He that walketh in Christ is holy, and walketh holily, but he walketh not in Christ by his holy life. "As ye have received Christ, so walk in him." Col.2:6. In walking or living holily, we as it were move in another sphere; by faith we live and walk in Christ, and in the way of peace and life, which is by His Righteousness. Doth not the Scripture call us to come to Christ, to be found in Him, to abide, walk, and continue in Him? All which can only be effected by faith. In this way the soul meeteth with the most and strongest temptations and oppositions, which it resisteth and overcometh by faith alone. {I Pet.5:8,9, I Jn.5:4} - If your faith, which should elevate and carry up the soul unto Christ, and the way of free justification by His grace, for continual peace, favor, acceptance and everlasting salvation; does yet let you seek, and labor to receive all in the way of your own works and obedience, it may well then be questioned. {Gal.2:19-21} Further, your expression is not accurate, but falleth short; when you say, that Christ only giveth a right to salvation. Christ and salvation cannot be parted. You would place Christ in the beginning, salvation in the end, and your good works paving the way, and leading and guiding from Christ to salvation. This is your divinity; but eternal life is in Christ. "He that hath Christ, hath life." I Jn.5:11,12. You may as well say, 'A believer hath not Christ, but only hath a right to Him.' Now Christ dwelleth in the heart by faith; and His Kingdom is in you, which is in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Rom.14:17. I'm sure if you find and walk in a holy and clean way, it is by faith; or rather the blood of sprinkling cleansing and making your way undefiled before God, and no perfect obedience of yours. But spiritual things are only spiritually discerned. Robert Towne {Monomachia, 1654}

Christ the Life of the Believer

Will you teach a man, that this act of coming to or taking Christ, is a good thing in him, to be looked at by him; or that it is in anyway satisfactory to the justice of the Law, or available for the recovery of his lost soul and estate; that he may put this act in, and reckon it towards his discharge, or justification; or will you teach and tell him that Christ is all this, unto whom he therefore cometh for that purpose. If a notorious malefactor, condemned to die, have a pardon put into his hands, or have it for going to the King; can he plead his going; or doth any account him less wicked, or guilty for that? - If you do truly good works, you do them in Christ, abiding in Him, John 15:4, in whom you are alive, and walk continually by faith. Doth the soul go out of Christ, or leave Him, when or while it worketh? "As ye have received Christ Jesus, so walk in him." Col.2:6. Now the soul cannot walk in Christ, nor have

union with Him, except by faith. The believer also walketh in the way of the obedience, but this is his way on earth amongst men, and Christ is his way to God and heaven. Let me add; Christ is set forth so to be our way, that He is our salvation also; so that in Him the soul is at her journeys end, and need not work to go further for attaining life, as if it were afar off, and good works were a way to carry and bring us unto it. Eternal life is in the Son. "He that hath the Son, hath eternal life." John 3:36, I John 5:11,13. Robert Towne {"A Re-Assertion of Grace" 1654}

Christ the One Foundation

The error is yours, who call light darkness; and darkness light. We belong to Christ's barn floor; your loose tongue is not the fan to separate, nor can all this boisterous wind blow us away. The Doctrine is of God {you have need to take heed how you fight against it} for He hath planted it, and will defend and water it; therefore it shall take root, flourish and prosper; what you imagine or practice against it is a vain thing. There is an election of grace, who shall receive it, though others be blinded and hardened; and for their sakes God will have it preached, despite all malice and spite of man. Therefore ministers maybe humbled, that they have so much doted upon the Law of works, that Christ, and the riches of His grace, hath been like the Chief Cornerstone, despised by the builders. - What avail all other truths besides Christ, who is all in all? The great apostle Paul desired to know nothing amongst the Corinthians, not anything, except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I Cor.2:2. All other learning will spoil us, if it be not after Christ. Col.2:8. Is there any foundation but Christ? Doth not all light, life, power, peace, consolation, goodness, felicity flow from Christ? What god, or idle rather; do you, or your people worship, draw near unto, know and put their confidence in outside of Christ? All religion and performances be as a dead and stinking carcass, without faith in Him. Paul counted all other things but loss and dung, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus. Phil.3:8. Robert Towne {"A Re-Assertion of Grace" 1654}

Christ - our Sabbath Rest

Paul tells us, that the whole Godhead resideth in Christ; that having obtained Him, we may possess also solid perfection in Him; therefore saith he, those are two ways injurious to God, who do not rest in Christ alone, for beside that, they derogate from God's glory in desiring something beyond His perfection; they are ungrateful also in seeking for that elsewhere, which they have already in Christ. Yet; though we hold a perfection in Christ, we are yet against perfection in the flesh; we hold according to the Scriptures and orthodox Divines a perfection of the thing and condition, and yet an imperfection of faith and apprehension. Robert Towne {"Assertion of Grace" 1644}

Communion with Christ

Enoch, Noah, Abraham &c., walked with God as friends, by virtue of faith only in this Righteousness of Christ, and not in their own holiness of works, and performances. Can you have communion with God, except by Christ and in Christ; and is there any other way or means of embracing Christ then by faith? Let the world judge, what is the danger and consequence of your doctrine, who call upon men to walk with God in their holiness of works, which vanisheth away at the presence of God, like the morning dew. Hosea 6:4. Robert Towne {"Assertion of Grace" 1644}

Conditionalism

Repentance and faith are no Gospel conditions, but are said to be the reason and end of the preaching of the Gospel. It is preached that men may repent and believe, Rom.16:26, yea; and that they may be holy too. Tit.2:12, Eph.4:22. Secondly, the Gospel is the seed of them all; they all grow and arise out of the doctrine of grace; how then can they be conditions of it? For what is a condition, but that which is necessarily required that a thing may be so. So that it will follow; it is no Gospel, where there is no faith or repentance, or at least none preached to me. What am I called upon to believe then? Christ in the Gospel is the Object of faith, and in believing we are said to receive and obey. II Thes.1:8. The Gospel offereth pardon, favor and eternal life to sinners, that they may come, receive, and partake of all freely. Yea, the Gospel beseeches men to be reconciled; and does not bid them go and get repentance, and faith and holiness elsewhere, as they can; and then upon condition they bring these, they shall be forgiven all their sins, be reconciled and saved by the Gospel. Indeed where God maketh the Gospel to be effectual, there it bringeth forth these fruits, there is repentance and faith to believe; and it giveth no peace, nor consolation to any, but the believing soul; so as faith is after the hearing of the Gospel, so comfort is after faith. "The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." Rom.15:13. In order one precedes another. Gospel is preached before faith, that men may believe;

and then comes peace and consolation upon believing. But who would argue hence, that faith is a condition of the Gospel, or peace a condition of faith? They denote a certain order, that God is pleased to set and observe in His works and dispensations. As for mortification and sanctification that you speak of, they are the effects of the Gospel; for the soul thereby called and implanted into Christ, beginneth to die unto all things, and to live only unto Christ and God in Him, so increasing with the increasings of God. Col.2:19. Robert Towne {"A Re-Assertion of Grace" 1654}

Covenant of Grace

I see no difference in effect between the Arminian doctrine and yours in this; you hold good works to be imperfect, so they; and you make all the promises of eternal life to belong and to be made unto them; and what do they more? You answer, although they be requisite in the justified or saved, yet it is a Covenant of Faith. Answer - Where do you find it to be called a Covenant of Faith? It is a Covenant of Grace; and so it is entirely without our faith. Robert Towne {"A Re-Assertion of Grace" 1654}

Covenant of Grace

Unless you bring in Free-will, this Covenant of Grace will prove absolute, no part of it lying on us; for that presupposes some power and goodness where there is none; for this Covenant is with man being fallen, and so having lost all; therefore it behoveth that it should be suitable to his broken state, requiring, neither promising no good conditionally, where nothing could be first given by him. It is granted by all, that all was transacted between God the Father and the Son from eternity, and that the Covenant as it cometh and is commended to us, is as the breaking up of that great seal, the opening and manifestation of those secrets concluded upon; so far as they concern the raising of the elect of God, out of their sinful dust, unto everlasting blessedness; so that what is in the decree of heaven concerning them the same is contained in the Covenant; then as God purposed to give repentance, faith, holiness, so He hath included and promised all in the Covenant; and these are truly parts and branches of it, and not properly conditions. Now we see, that as there were thoughts of peace in God for us, when we were in our lowest and worst condition; and in what way, and after what manner His mind is to recover our souls from their lost estates, and restore and give life, favor and glory unto them by this Covenant also, He hath laid and cleared to us a firm ground, upon which we may with comfort and confidence expect and wait for faith, and all things to be freely given unto us. This agreeth to the expressions of Zanchius, Calvin, Perkins, &c. Indeed God observeth His due and set order, in giving and working one thing before, and another after; but the first, suppose repentance or faith, is not a condition of what followeth, except with us, and not according to these Authors, you will call it a condition of state; that is, God bringeth the soul unto such a state or case, as He humbleth it, and then giveth Grace, &c. Thus many promises are with a 'if' - if ye repent, if ye believe - then thus it shall be unto you; and denote only Order and Consequence, as Calvin saith, not condition. As a husbandman soweth not his land, till it be plowed and fitted; if he be asked why he doth not commit his seed to it, he will answer, it must be prepared first; but one part of his work is not the condition of the other, when the whole rests upon him. Again, if the promise to give faith and repentance be not in the Covenant, where is it to be found? Is there anything to be looked for, not mentioned in the Covenant? You call it a Covenant of Grace; now if it be of Grace, then works are excluded; yea repentance and faith, as our acts; and if it be Free, that necessarily fighteth against all conditions; it cannot be free and conditional. The more freely the riches of God's Grace is held forth, the more glorious and admirable is it in our eyes. Besides, it is your expression, that Christ is a party contracting, or a Covenanter undertaking for all His own; so that I see not how you can make His Elect, singly and simply to be any party in undertaking and promising anything. Robert Towne {Monomachia, 1654}

Death in Adam - Life in Christ

Our state of reparation without all controversy does far excel that of Adam's innocency, even as an infinite good exceedeth a finite. But then we must believe more than we see or feel; yea, and things contrary to what these our senses are set upon. In Christ Jesus there is a New Creation; old things are passed, and all things are become new; he that by faith puts on Christ, beareth the Image of the Heavenly, whereas the image of Adam was the image of an earthly man. "As is the earthly, such are they also that are earthly; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly." I Cor.15:48. But our "life is hid with Christ in God; when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." {Col.3:3,4} The state of reparation is more excellent than that of innocency, in regard of immortality; for the life that Christ hath purchased and brought to light can never be extinguished; it is an everlasting life, without fear, danger, or possibility of perishing; here is no subjection, nor

propensity to death or mortality; but Adam's state was not so absolute and happy; and though the body die, and outward man perish, yet the state is imperishable and unchangeable. And saith Christ, "He that believeth in me, shall never see death." {John 8:51} Robert Towne {"A Re-Assertion of Grace" 1654}

Doctrine of Christ

The Doctrine of Christ and faith is the straight way, which few indeed do find; and the broad way is false Doctrine, and error of all sorts, which leaveth the simplicity that is in Christ. II Cor.11:3. There is a broad way common to the religious Jews, Papists and deceived Protestants, which leadeth to destruction. As for the way of downright wickedness, all know that it is the way to hell; and as many be carried to damnation, as by profaneness, so by false and blind religious zeal. This is a strong inducement to me, thus to understand it, as that to believe, is the straightest way of all others, and few find and walk in that way with an upright foot; so because Christ is there {Mt.7:13-20,} speaking of teachers and their doctrine, and not of man's life and manners; so that it is doctrine He meaneth to be the straight way; for it is doctrine, true or false, that guideth and carrieth the soul one way or other, to heaven or hell; and that is either the righteousness of faith, or the righteousness of works. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned;" and no good work can help or save him. Robert Towne {"A Re-Assertion of Grace" 1654}

Duty Faith & Repentance

Let the poor, sinful, miserable and lost soul first be united and married to Him, in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead, and in whom she is then complete, wanting nothing, Col.2:9,10, and then tell of duties. The true Christ will be all, or none; He will be alone, without the joining or mixture of duty; as Christ hath satisfied the Father, so that in Him he is well pleased; so are we to preach Him and the unsearchable treasures in Him, that He alone may satisfy the conscience, give true rest to the soul, be the way to favor, peace and life; and be the reason and ground of all acceptance. Thus a dejected and distressed soul may know and receive Him aright, and find sure and everlasting consolation; and then may your duties and performances have their due place, ends and praise, with no danger. But if you can make all your duties of pure and mere Christ, you are a strange alchemist; this is such chemical divinity, that I cannot skill of, nor well understand. Robert Towne {"A Re-Assertion of Grace or, Vindiciæ Evangelii; A vindication of the Gospel Truth, from the unjust censure and undue aspersions of Antinomians. In a modest reply to Mr. Anthony Burgess' "Vindiciae Legis", Mr. Samuel Rutherford's "Trial & Triumph of Faith," from which also Mr. Geerie and M. Bedford may receive a satisfactory answer." 1654}

Faith

Faith is conversant about the glad and happy news of the Gospel, and here it rightly knoweth Christ, truly receiveth Him, as the richest gift of the Father, and in and with Him is made a possessor of all his unsearchable treasures, Eph.3:8, as remission of sins, Col.2:14, righteousness, II Cor.5:21, adoption, Gal.3:26, favor, peace and fellowship with God, Mt.3:17, Rom.3:25, I John 1:3, and eternal life, I John 5:11,12. Robert Towne {"Assertion of Grace" 1644}

Faith

Faith is compared to a mathematical point, which can admit of no addition or diminution; or to a gold ring, wherein the least cleft detracteth from the integrity of it. True faith bringeth nothing to God in the office or work of justification and redemption; but only sets the poor miserable lost sinner, taken captive and wounded to death by the Law, in the presence of God, naked, spoiled; and empty of all goodness, strength, and hope; minding and apprehending alone the mere rich and free kindness and bountifulness of God in Christ Jesus, cleansing, clothing, healing, delivering and saving him from all danger whatsoever; and in a word, freely receiving him into His everlasting well pleased favor, and enriching him with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus. Thus are repentance, fear, hope, and love shut out of door, whilst this great work is in hand, though they always accompany faith in the justified. Robert Towne {"Assertion of Grace" 1644}

Faith

Faith only fixeth the eye, and heart upon these Divine Testimonies; acknowledging, and admitting no other object. It is against the nature of faith to conceive, or to entertain any thoughts of God in relation to herself, which do not

in everyway suit and agree with the word of faith, which is the Covenant of Free Grace. It is the office and special power of faith to captivate and confine every imagination concerning God, as He is alone to be found revealing, and communicating Himself and His mind in the Son of His love, who therefore is called the image of the invisible God. Col.1:15. God will be known to faith none otherwise than in Christ; and so it's a fancy or fiction to imagine a universal, non-illuminated, and confused faith in God, which can never bring into acquaintance with the true God. Robert Towne {"Assertion of Grace" 1644}

Faith & Obedience

As believing is called the obedience of the Gospel; so not to believe, or to refuse to hearken to the voice, and call of the gospel requiring faith, is termed the not obeying the Gospel. {II Thes.1:8} And therefore you should have put and placed this for your first mark, whether a man be in the faith or no, {II Cor.13:5,} that is, whether he rightly understand, purely embrace, and solely rest confident in the doctrine of grace alone for justification and salvation without any addition, or condition of works. Robert Towne {"Assertion of Grace" 1644}

Faith & the Righteousness of Christ

Will you against the consent of all Orthodox writers in this deny that faith comes singly and alonely adorned, beautified and dignified with Christ's Righteousness, and unaccompanied with our works into God's presence to obtain salvation at His hand; or if God does see the righteousness of the Son of His love, will not this sufficiently move Him to accept and save, unless He find an addition and presence of our works, which in the best are so defective, beggarly and filthy, that without justification they deserve rejection and condemnation. - Will you turn tradesman that you may be saved? Robert Towne {"Assertion of Grace" 1644}

Faithfulness of the Lord

What God promises, He is faithful to perform and do. You infer some indirect and undue consequences, as you would rather wrangle against the truth, which you cannot resist, or are offended that it shines forth not so gloriously and convincingly in your face. What if dogs abuse it, and pharisaical spirits spurn against it, or misconstrue it, as occasional Antinomianism? The sin be theirs; yet this is the only right ground and reason of prayer, and using all God's Ordinances, in which the soul carrying itself passively, waiteth that God may communicate and pour out His blessings according to His word. Because God had promised first, and that freely, the building of David's house, and the king saw thereby, that God had a gracious mind and purpose to do it, and that it should be his act, therefore David prayed that the Lord would bless his house, that it might continue forever before God. "For thou O Lord hast spoken it." II Sam.7:27-29. Robert Towne {"Monomachia, 1654}

Free & Sovereign Grace

Blessedness is a passive; that is, in the sense of Scripture and all true divinity, it consists alone in what God in Christ Jesus freely worketh and conferreth, without either works or worthiness in man. Justification and blessedness go for one and the same in Holy Writ. {Rom.4:6} - God is not induced or moved by the consideration of anything in man, to give or impute this righteousness of His Son unto him, but justifieth him freely by His sheer Grace. {Rom.3:24} Now can anything fall to man more passively, then that God alone should confer and work it Himself, and that freely and fully without any respect or addition on man's part? If a poor wretch {that never could get a farthing by any labor,} should by the undeserved bounty of his Prince, have great treasures and possessions bestowed upon him, and so presently become rich; is it not that this happy condition is passively attained. Or was man's blessedness passive in the first creation anymore then in his re-creation, regeneration, or justification. {II Cor.5:17, Eph.2:10, Phil.2:13} Robert Towne {"Assertion of Grace" 1644}

Free Grace

Herein I found a composure of very excellent matter, the doctrine of the Law of God truly published in its lightning lustre, and native purity, drawn forth from under the veiling glosses with which it lay a covered {the mere inventions of Satan transformed into an angel of light} and restored to its former integrity, and proper use; as silver, tried in a furnace of earth purified seven times; so that Sinai's thunderclaps, or the bolts of Horeb do here appear shot out, the clouds and pharisaical expositions {darkening the counsel of God by words without knowledge} being dissolved and broken asunder. And moreover, that the fainting sinner might not utterly be

excluded, I found comprised therein, the bringing to light of life and immortality through the Gospel, the opening of the kingdom of heaven, the doors being largely expanded in Christ's own way, and method of preaching; which reason, and the seeds of the Serpent sown therein {the enemy to the simple truth of God} hath endeavored by all subtle workings, and secret insinuations, either wholly to shut, or else to open, and but only halfway, by the key of such legal qualifications, that there is no possibility for any heart sensibly discovered, by the doors so opened, to enter in. Only the hypocrite, who lives in a fool's paradise {feigned with a vain imagination of his own conditional goodness} doth concededly seem to himself to enter into the kingdom of heaven, by that way which Satan hath prepared, and cast up, but the issues thereof are the issues of death, leading to Jericho, the accursed city; so that this he shall have in the end, he shall lie down in sorrow; and because he thinks that he seeth, therefore his sin remaineth; for the end cannot be enjoyed but only in God's own way, appointed by Himself, which way thou shalt find most clearly held out, and convincingly proved in these ensuing treatises, to be Christ Himself, by whom the believing heart hath access to God, and comes with boldness to the throne of grace, no man coming to the Father but by Him; and also that he is the Door, ready to entertain and receive into peaceable habitations and sure dwellings, all such as are wounded with the invenomed arrows of their hidden abominations, and stand trembling under the hand of God, fearful of His fiery wrath, and justly deserved indignation; which none may abide, nor otherwise can avoid. And that He is the Truth of the brazen serpent which is lifted up upon the pole in the wilderness, not for the whole, but for the mortally wounded to look unto; and the Water of Life to cool and refresh the withered heart, parched with the heat of sin; at the which, as still waters the weak sheep may drink, which otherwise were not able to stand in, or withstand the boisterous streams, and hold its footing in the clashing waves; so that out of His belly flows the rivers of Living Water. And the good Shepherd, who fully manages that relation for the good of his tender ones, he feeds his flock, like a Shepherd he gathers the lambs with his arm, and carries them in his bosom, and gently leads those that are with young. The Vine, in which the branches live, and in whom His people enjoy their life by faith, being dead in themselves through the Law, so that what they have or enjoy doth proceed and issue forth from that Root so full of moisture of which fullness they receive, and grace for grace. They live, but it is in Him who is their Life; they are righteous, and that completely, but it is through His Robes; they are cleansed and washed, but it is by His blood; they are accepted, but it is in the Beloved; they are adopted, but it is in the first begotten amongst many brethren; their hearts are purified, but it is by the faith of the Son of God; they are free from condemnation, but it is because they are in Christ Jesus, for to such there is no condemnation. Nay, reckon up all their participations, and we shall find that they are in and proceed from Him who is the Head; that in all things He might have the preeminence. So that, what have they, but what they have received? And a believing man may say most truly, "In Christ I have and am all things, but out of Him I am nothing, less than nothing and vanity." And why should this doctrine be so impugned; when as it ought rather to be highly extolled and magnified in heart, press, and pulpit, seeing it lifts up and establisheth the mountain of the house of the Lord in the top of the mountains, and exalts it above the hills, and does but fulfill this saying of Isaiah, where the prophet speaks in the Person of God Himself, "Behold my servant {meaning Christ} shall deal prudently, He shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high," though many should be astonished at Him; because His visage {not appearing comely to the eye of flesh and blood} was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men. {Isa.52:13,14} But what God in Himself, or his Word, hath most highly exalted, that Satan, always an enemy to the truth of God and the seed of the woman, does endeavor to depress and strike underfoot. Seth Bushell {Preface to a book by Robert Towne, entitled "Re-Assertion of Grace" 1654}

Free Justification in Christ Alone

How safe it is either for you to teach, and publish this anti-Christian doctrine, making head and opposition thereby against the simplicity of Christ, or for your hearers, who have too servilely apprenticed their judgments to your teachings, as oracles from heaven; or yet for any other, {for its rare, and hard to keep and preserve the doctrine of grace pure without mixture,} I leave it to you, and the judicious reader to judge. For if it be not grace which is not every way grace, or if we be saved by grace without works of righteousness which we have done, {Tit.3:5,} {where note, that you be not deceived by such teachers, that by 'grace' is meant the alone Free Grace, and good will of God, by Jesus Christ, and not the gift of sanctification, which is always by Paul opposed to the free grace of God in the point and cause of justification and salvation, as Calvin saith,} whether then I pray you, doth this doctrine tend directly to obscure, destroy, and abrogate the grace of God or not. Robert Towne {"Assertion of Grace" 1644}

Free Justification in Christ Alone

Oh, how welcome and pleasing is this teaching to man's nature! It tendeth to withdraw our eyes and considerations from off Christ unto ourselves, and from free-grace unto our works; whereunto all are most prone by nature. If our

goodness be a motive moving God; then God seeth something out of Himself exciting and moving Him to do good; and if you hold this foresight of goodness which thus moved Him, was from eternity, you are not far from Arminianism or Popery; and if He was moved at the time of doing good {which many of them also hold} then this new and present motion in God to do good is a child of time, begotten in His mind or occasioned of late; and God showeth more kindness then from the beginning He intended. - The true God loveth, accepteth, and saveth freely in Christ, without anything considered in the party! Robert Towne {"A Re-Assertion of Grace" 1654}

Godliness

Objection - There is a promise made to them, I Tim.4:8, and Godliness hath the promises. Assertion - Some by Godliness in that place, understand the grace righteousness, by which we become saints towards God, and indeed all true piety is virtually included in it. Actual holiness is produced by it; and if the promises were to this active righteousness, yet not primarily, nor yet causally, but by reason of justification, the sole root and foundation of it. "There is a secret faith in all that we do," saith Luther; and unto this, God, in His promises of any good, hath respect; and for it, or more truly to Christ apprehended by faith, is the promise made. So that in having Christ, we have all the promises, or else we have none. Yet it's more plain and direct to take Godliness in that sense it is in, I Tim.3:16, wherein we read, "Great is the mystery of godliness;" that is, of Christian religion in general, but all tendeth to one, though this seemeth to me to be the meaning of it. Robert Towne {"A Re-Assertion of Grace" 1654}

Gospel Liberty

It is liberty indeed which we attest, and unto which as its proper mark and end our doctrine tendeth, but it's only the liberty of Christ. Gal.5:1. And whosoever receiveth it truly, learneth it effectually, and so stands fast therein, he doth find experimentally, that he is free indeed, John 8:36; in conscience he is discharged of his debt and burden, rid of his fears, and delivered from the power and condemnation from the Law, from the wrath of God, and out of the hands of all his enemies; in his condition, he is secure and at rest; in his calling free from distrustful, distracting and heart eating thoughts and cares; in his affections, he is sweetly seasoned and inclined to love God and man, and to testify the same in the joyful running in the ways of the Lord. These be the fruits of this righteousness of faith, as every believing soul will bear witness, as Joshua and Caleb did of the promised land, however the infidelity and malice of a great multitude, have brought bad and false reports upon the same. Robert Towne {"Assertion of Grace" 1644}

Gospel Rule

Every Christian's experience teacheth him that the more he inwardly sees and feels that Divine love that pardoneth, reconcileth, and preserveth his soul in that Everlasting Covenant of Sure Mercy and Peace, the more he loveth again; and in love, hateth evil, escheweth it; doth good, and is in everyway cheerfully obedient. "I love the LORD {saith David,} because He hath heard my voice and my supplications." "For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling." {Ps.116:1,8} Whatever bred and caused love, and gained the heart to God at the first, that same is of continual force still to enliven and enlarge the affections towards Him. But because sins are forgiven, it is said, "she loved much," {Lk.7:47,} and if this candle be put under a bushel, if this sun, the light of God's countenance, do not shine forth upon the soul of a believer, it will be dark, dull, and indisposed to whatever good you can propound to it. Therefore is it requisite that faith be nourished and ever operative and lively in apprehending and feeding upon the exceeding kindness of God in Christ, that so it may be more quick and free in all holy expressions. Faith works by love; if faith die, or wax cold, by which the soul liveth, the Law can but little work upon or affect the heart. Besides, as the Christians beginning, so his building up and increasing is in another way, and by other means than are merely legal, for he lives and grows in the Vine Christ, and thereby flourisheth. Robert Towne {"A Re-Assertion of Grace" 1654}

Growth in Grace

Paul, you say commands to work out our salvation; and the same Apostle testifieth elsewhere, that our salvation is already finished by Christ alone, and that God hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works. {II Tim.2:9} Shall Paul now be at odds and disagreement with himself, rather then you will grant salvation to be before works, or to be attained without condition of works? For thus is your mind prepared and set well. How then is Scripture to be reconciled? For salvation is but one, and in essence indivisible; though Christ hath

saved His people, yet is this treasure hid, till God reveal His son in us, {Gal.1:16,} and make known the unsearchable treasures of His grace in Him by the Gospel, through the Spirit of Illumination and Faith. Hence we are called upon to work it out, which is carefully to attend upon the ministry of this reconciliation, which sheweth us where our Righteousness and Life is, {Job 33:23,} and so convinceth, persuadeth, and uniteth the heart unto it, {Eph.1:10;} yea and because our sight and strength spiritual as well as natural of the body admitteth of degrees, we are exhorted daily to edify ourselves in our holy faith, to grow up in the knowledge and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Robert Towne {"Assertion of Grace" 1644}

Humility

Assertion - As he that exalts himself must be brought low; so the Scriptures show those to be in the highest estimation with God that are low, and are least in their own eyes. True; but not by their own lowliness and humility, for that would have made them proud, that they were not proud. Their account and esteem with God was through Christ and His righteousness alone. Let any speak whose spirit argues or begets pride - yours or ours, whilst you make man and his works of themselves to be something to deserve regard or reward. And we according to truth teach that man is nothing, II Cor.12:11; and that all his works before or after justification; of nature, of free will, or of the Law, or faith, are as a menstrous cloth, dung, and be no cause or ground of rejoicing before God, if you consider them apart from Justification, which alone doth give them both beauty and acceptance, as is proved before. Isa.64.6, Phil.3:8, Rom.4:2. We spoil man of all matter of glorying, that he only may rejoice, and have confidence in Christ alone; and you will prune and deck him with his own ill favored feathers, his patched, imperfect, and scanty raiment, and bid him presume to find favor and a blessing thereby at God's hands. - Augustine is of that mind, that the chief thing required or commanded in Christian religion is humility, and so thitherto if they be rightly understood, tend our contentions, but not that a man should be partially humbled, confessing that in many things he is faulty, and deserveth to be punished; but if he might be spared, he hopeth and promiseth to amend. No; this is no true knowledge of a man's self; but then is man rightly subdued indeed, when he is not only a sinner, but even sin itself, a child of wrath, and so broken in pieces, that he sees neither goodness, nor strength at all in himself, and therefore is forced to lie in his blood, confusion, and condemnation, until free grace by Jesus Christ does rescue and save him. So that all action for life and happiness faileth; for thus saith Augustine again, "Let no man flatter himself, of his own he is a devil, and what maketh him happy is only from God, for what hast thou of thine own but sin, &c." Again, in Psalm 70, he forbids us to remember our own righteousness, to the intent we may acknowledge the righteousness of God, &c., he sheweth that God so commendeth His own grace unto us, that we may know ourselves to be nothing; hence, our humiliation is His exaltation. - So here a Christian, when his eyes are seriously and alone upon himself, findeth no good, but a world of vanity and wickedness, a corrupt and unceasingly sinning nature, a hell of darkness, horror and despair; whence cometh such like complaints; "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death," {like to Israel being stung and inflamed with the fiery serpents,} how base and abject is he now in his spirit, anon his eyes and thoughts be raised and quickened to a lively and joyful apprehension of his perfect cleansing, plenteous redemption, plenary and everlasting victory, and salvation in Jesus Christ, {as Israel was healed and cured by looking to the brazen serpent.} What is his voice and the language now? He believeth, and therefore he speaketh; now he knoweth, and saith, but I am washed, I am justified, &c. I Cor.6:11; I am accepted in the Beloved, Eph.1:6. Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. I Jn.1:3. Thanks be to God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Rom.7:25. If you had well pondered that imperfection, yea nothing else in ourselves considered apart from Christ, and absolute perfection and fullness in Christ, do fitly accord together, yea and when that speech is of a Christian, he is properly to be conceived of, as he is in relation to Christ, hath communion and communicateth with Him in all Spiritual Blessings, Eph.1:3, and that only faith by the alone help and light of the Gospel, can discern and attain this, you then surely would not have been so sharp and rash in your censor? - Mark well what the doctrine of our Church saith: "The Doctrine of life and salvation freely without works advances the true glory of Christ, and beateth down the vainglory of man; this whosoever denieth is not to be counted for a Christian man, nor a setter forth of Christ's glory, but for an adversary to Christ and His Gospel, and for a setter forth of man's glory." Robert Towne {"Assertion of Grace" 1644}

Immutable Justice of God

What God hath manifested to be detestable and accursed, that He cannot accept. But He hath manifested by Holy Scripture, that whatever is not absolutely perfect, is detestable and accursed. Whatsoever is not absolutely perfect, cannot be accepted with God. The proposition is grounded upon the constant virtue, and immutableness of God, who cannot deny Himself, or recall His word, and with whom is no variableness nor shadow of change. {James 1:17} God will not suffer the loss of the least tittle of His righteous Law, {Mt.5:18,} nor alter any part of His

unchangeable will. In the one whereof He most strictly and indispensably requireth without all possibility of mitigation, abatement or favor, that everyone present himself, and all his works absolutely entire and perfect, according to the exact and spiritual meaning of His whole Law; and by the other He is necessarily, naturally, and immutably inclined and bent to love or hate, to accept or reject, to bless or curse; everyone without respect of persons, as he shall be found just or unjust. Psalm 5:4,5. - Must we not then of necessity be perfect; yea, complete in Christ, that we may be accepted. Col.2:10, Rom.8:4. - God's mercy by Jesus Christ doth not cause Him to put off, deny, or in any way to abate any part of this justice. Robert Towne {"Assertion of Grace" 1644}

Imputation

The Orthodox express so much, say you, upon this ground, because the righteousness of Christ as it was His, was of infinite value and consequence, and so as we are in a Mediator, we are in a better and surer condition than Adam. Assertion - If it be of infinite price and consequence as it was His, then it is so as it is imputed; for it is not impaired or diminished a wit by imputation; neither read you anywhere that God imputeth but only some piece or part of it; and also that Christ ceaseth not still to be the Author and Subject of it, though imputed to us, even as we are the authors of sin, and the subjects in whom sin is seated; however it be imputed by Him. He is the "LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." Jer.23:6 & Isa.45:24. "Surely, shall one say, in the LORD have I righteousness." In Christ are all the treasures of His Church, and in Him she is complete. Col.2:10. By her union with Him, she hath Communion in all His unsearchable riches, as hath the wife all by marriage with her husband; thus, she is beautiful by His beauty. Whole Christ is the believers, and not some portion of Him, or of His treasures. Of him {saith Paul} are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. In that Christ is ours, all His be ours, even His purity, holiness, and perfections. Robert Towne {"A Re-Assertion of Grace" 1654}

Imputation

As Mediator He is God-Man, and therefore His Person, obedience and all things of Him and from Him be infinite, by reason of his Godhead. What did fully satisfy the justice of God, which is infinite, must needs be infinite; but that obedience and righteousness which God imputeth, was that which gave satisfaction to His infinite justice, for the almost infinite sins of the world of men; therefore that imputed righteousness must be infinite. Say you, it is only imputed to us for that righteousness which we ought to have; it is not made ours in that latitude as it was in Christ, but as we needed it. Now God never required of us greater righteousness than Adam had; and therefore it is a senseless thing to imagine, that that should be made ours, which we never needed, nor were bound to have. I hope that I have made it plain, that it is ours in the same largeness as it was in Christ. Whereas you see no necessity of it, I affirm, that a greater righteousness than Adam had is needful and requisite for the repairing and advancing of our condition, and that upon this ground. - There seems to be more poison in sin, than that the goodness of any or all created righteousness should be able to equipoise or countervail the evil of it. So in regard of God vilified in the breaking of His Law, the sin by this object becometh infinitely heinous and hateful, though the fact and person be finite. What God requires of us to keep us in favor and happiness was one thing; had Adam sufficiency to have given; but now the question is, what God requireth of Christ for the making up of the breach, the appeasing of His wrath, and the full satisfying of His mind and justice according to that Law of Mediatorship laid upon him, the righteousness whereof he hath fulfilled. The first Adam, in all His perfections and abilities, could never have done the will of God as it is contained and required herein. A better righteousness was needful now; in that God intended to restore, and raise His elect unto a far more blessed state than an earthly Paradise, even unto an Heavenly Crown and Kingdom, where they shall shine like the sun in the firmament, and their bodies shall be, not natural as was Adam's, but spiritual, made like unto Christ's glorious body. I Cor.15:44, Phil.3:21. Therefore hath the Lord laid the infinite satisfaction and righteousness of His Son for a foundation of so superexcellent and glorious a structure or edifice. John 17:22, "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them," and vs.24, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me." Robert Towne {"A Re-Assertion of Grace" 1654}

Justification

You fear infection, and so get as far from Doctor Crisp, and from Paul's Doctrine as may be. Crisp speaks of justification, as it is God's only free act, absolving and discharging all the elect of all their sins at once, even when he laid them on Christ. Now as God said to Job, "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth," so where was this faith, purity of heart, and sanctification then? This is no evasion you know; but by this all you have

said is annihilated; he makes faith not to be necessary to justification, but the evidence of it in due time for the relieving, staying and comforting of the conscience troubled and affected by sin and the Law. – Doctor Crisp speaketh of justification, as it is God’s alone gracious act in Christ, discharging and acquitting all the elect in Him at the time of His passion and resurrection, fully and forever. This was done forever before the judgment of God. As for the instruments, whether the word to reveal and publish it, or faith to apprehend and rest upon it, they were neither necessary to that act of God; but only afterward to give evidence and assurance to the several consciences of all those elect, of what was done for them freely by God in Christ upon the cross. For there God was in Christ, reconciling them to Himself. II Cor.5:18. Robert Towne {“A Re-Assertion of Grace” 1654}

Justification

Doth not the Scripture place perfection in justification, and define it to be an entire and absolute estate. Col.2:10, Heb.10:14. Doth not justification imply an expiation and abolition of sin? I Jn.1:7, Rev.1:5. As sin by reason of the justice of the law of God did separate between God and us, and did make us hateful and accursed; so Christ did come to purge us from sin, {and not from the guilt and punishment alone,} which did not make God to hate us, but were rather the effects of His justice in us, and upon us. For sin, as the third Commandment sheweth, that we might be such as could justly be charged with no fault, and yet sin remaineth in the flesh, wherein is imperfection and wretchedness, and not perfection and blessedness. Why should this be strange, since God’s testimony is so evident and full for it, that by reason of Christ’s satisfaction all our sins are quite erased out of God’s score, out of the book of His remembrance and justice, and yet that these sins are deeply and indelibly during this natural life, imprinted and fastened in our natures. Robert Towne {“Assertion of Grace” 1644}

Justification

You say that you distinguish between the principal efficient and instrumental causes of justification. To what end is all this? Christ alone hath saved us, the word only testifieth it, the ministers expound that word, faith wrought by that heavenly ministration through the operation of the Spirit alone goeth to Christ, apprehends Him to salvation, unaccompanied of works. Thus truly taught the apostles, and all that ever went with a right foot to the Gospel of Christ. – You ask what we will say to Paul, &c., I say that you have here heaped together the choice Scriptures, and arguments of the Papists, as if you intended publicly to testify what you are, and with whom you side, and how resolved you are to derogate what you can from faith, grace, Christ, and God; and to transcribe it to man and his dunghill works. You envy that Christ’s righteousness should have all the reward and glory. Robert Towne {“Assertion of Grace” 1644}

Justification Truth

Indeed it is the great and lamentable ignorance of that one article of Free Justification in Christ that makes you stumble at the Truth; and thus whilst you seek to oppose and suppress it, you misconstrue and pervert almost every Scripture. Robert Towne {“Assertion of Grace” 1644}

Law & Gospel Distinction

Observation - The Law must needs have a directive, regulating, and informing power over a godly man, as will appear by the fact that we cannot discern the true worship of God from superstition and idolatry, but by the First and Second Commandment. Answer: Here is a large field, this requireth a full treatise in itself, as for the expounding it in such a manner as may satisfy men’s minds, being concerning this full of darkness and doubts; so for the general necessity of some clear and special light to be held forth for the informing and directing aright; a world of people going far wide, through want of this true knowledge. In brief, thus for the present. First; God was not only a God unto His people, but had made known also Himself unto them, before the solemn giving of the Law; and He gave not the Law, that by the observation and works of it He might be their God, and they His people; nor yet that thereby they might know and conceive of Him in their hearts according to that Law of works. And therefore is it observable, that He beginneth with these words, “Hear, O Israel, I am thy God, &c.” Now as He became their God only by Christ the promised seed, in the face of whom the knowledge of His glory is made manifest, II Cor.4:6, so His redeemed and peculiar were only to take notice of Him as God in Christ reconciling them to Himself, blessing all in the alone Messiah, giving out all peace and life through Him, and vouchsafing all favor and respect only in reference unto Him. To this dispensation, manner, and kind of revealing Himself to mankind {according to that first promise found in Genesis 3:15 – “the Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpents head;” and “in Him

shall all the nations be blessed"} are all to attend; for God will not be known, nor worshiped out of His Christ. Now man's heart naturally is a shop of idolatry; infinite are the forms, conceptions, and images which we frame and have of God within us. And, as our inward notions are, under which God cometh to our understanding, so we think of Him, worship Him, seek to please Him, and lay a foundation for expecting and receiving some good from Him. And what inscription the Athenians had on their altar, {Acts 17:23,} the same may be found on a world of our devotions, all being to an unknown God. For as Christ said to the woman of Samaria, for the most part we worship we know not what, {John 4:22,} for He is only a God in our opinion and conceit, and not in truth, and His own nature, who accepteth, respecteth, loveth, or blesseth any, for any work, worth, or goodness of theirs; but the true reason and ground of all favor is Christ. {Eph.1:6} Thus he that in his thoughts falleth from that true knowledge of Christ, and that in Him He is well pleased with him, pacified towards him, receiveth, loveth him, without and before any actual holiness and work, or performance of his, he necessarily falleth forthwith into idolatry; because he cannot now but imagine such a God, and frame Him in his own mind, which is nowhere to be found. A God out of Christ, without a mediator, not satisfied, reconciled, at peace with us, propitious to us, &c., but requiring and respecting some duty or holiness in us, to move Him to grant us access, audience, and all blessings needful; an absolute God, clothed with glorious attributes, terrible to sinners {and not justifying the ungodly through faith in Christ, nor loving us when we were enemies, and so by His own hand and work reconciling us to Himself, without any of ours, Rom.4:5, 5:8,9,} such a God do many set up in their hearts, and they frame their devotions, works, and ways suitable with this their image; seeking in their own righteousness and holiness to draw nigh, and that some goodness or qualification of theirs should commend and ingratiate them unto Him. A friars coat, a monks hood, holy orders, pilgrimages, a strict and religious life, must speak for one sort; others fast, pray, vow, reform, &c., thinking, studying, seeking by those to pacify God, and procure His favor. Now, as we may plainly see, that the preface of the Decalogue, relateth to the Covenant of Grace, of promise of peace and life in the Messiah, in which God did commend and make known Himself, what a God He would be unto them, in what way He would deal with them, and give them peace. So God, to keep this light in them, to suppress or prevent all idolatry, or spiritual and false conceivings and imaginations of Him {contrary to that His promise, whereunto man's nature is exceedingly prone} therefore saith, I am thy God {as I have made myself formally known unto thee} and thou shalt have no other; as not worship stocks and stones, so not form and conceive otherwise of Me in thy heart and mind. And verily, as the heavenly light of this true knowledge of God which did appear in the word and work of atonement by Jesus Christ, began to be eclipsed and darkened in the Church, so idolatry and superstition crept in and prevailed, so at last it became palpably gross, by images, pictures, using of saints for advocates, and the like. And the bright and glorious arising and shining forth of the Sun of righteousness, who hath healing under His wings, {Mal.4:2,} will prove the alone effectual means to disburse, dispel, demolish, and abolish all that trash and superstitious vanity, and to instruct and guide to men's souls aright into the knowledge of the true God. Robert Towne {"Re-Assertion of Grace" 1654}

Law & Gospel Distinctions

If you were under the power and teaching of the Law, it's true, sin would then lord it over you, in that the Law is the strength of sin; "The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law." {I Cor.15:56} But you are translated into another Kingdom, where both sin, the enemy you so fear, is spoiled of all its armor, and power whereon it dependeth; and also the King you now live under, doth freely communicate abundant and effectual grace of justification, and sanctification, so to fence and fortify you on every side; that, in whatever siege or battle you be engaged, you may be more than Conquerors. Therefore fear not, nor be dismayed, only be strong in the faith hereof, that so your hearts may be encouraged in the Lord. The Law indeed called, and put you to fight against sin, for life and death; but it gave you no help at all, but rather insensibly and secretly it doth side with sin, that so it might work your overthrow and undoing. It strictly forbade all manner of sin under a heavy penalty; but the effect of this by reason of that native wickedness, and treachery of your corrupt hearts, was that sin more revived, increased, and enraged thereby, Rom.7:5. But now that your state is altered, the case is far otherwise. Robert Towne {"Assertion of Grace, or A Defense of the Doctrine of Free Justification, against the lawless, unjust and uncharitable imputation of Antifidians, or favorites of Antichrist, who under a pretended zeal of the Law, do pervert and obscure the Simplicity of the Faith of the Gospel" 1644}

Law & Gospel Distinctions

"But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter;" {Rom.7:6;} that is, which now serve God in a new spiritual manner, according to the operation of the Spirit of God, which attending and accompanying the ministration of Righteousness, or the Gospel, {II Cor.3:8,9, Gal.3:2,} createth a new light, giveth the knowledge of God in the

face of Jesus Christ, declareth his name and will, according to a new covenant of mere Grace, without addition or mixture of works; and communicateth, and distilleth the sweetness of His ravishing and overcoming love. And thus swallowing up all former fears, and discontentments, causeth in the believing soul, new thoughts, motions, and ways towards God different from whatever could be engendered by the ministration of the Law. {I John 4:18, Rom.2:15} Thus being dead to all opinions, and concepts of God, and our own condition, according to our own worthiness or works, however wrought upon and made humble, devout, and conformable to the Law; conscience yielding and captivating herself to the same, the spirit is raised from death to life, delivered from bondage to liberty, and translated into another Kingdom of mere Grace and favor, only by the true and effectual apprehension of Christ and his Righteousness. {Rom.5:1,2,21} Robert Towne {"Assertion of Grace" 1644}

Law & Gospel Distinctions

Have you patience to see your halting, and failing in the expounding of this Scripture, Rom.7:6. "But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter." The meaning is evident thus: Through faith in Christ is bred assured confidence, lively hope, pure love towards God, invocation of his Name without all wavering, fear, or doubting; not questioning his good will, audience, and acceptance; which could never be affected and attained by all the zeal and conscience towards God, according to the Law of works. And so the opposition is plain to be not so much between the gross hypocrite, {who is only brought to outward subjection and correspondency to the Law,} as it is between him that in good earnest and rightness of heart yields and gives over himself wholly to the Law of God, Rom.10:2, {as the wife to the husband and guide of her youth,} to be instructed and ordered in all things, inwardly and outwardly, after the mind of God therein, and so frames within himself concepts of God's will towards him, according to the testimony of his own legal conscience {which never being satisfied with works can never be pacified and consistent,} and him who knows and worships God alone according to the Gospel of Grace. Robert Towne {"Assertion of Grace" 1644}

Law & Gospel Distinctions

False assertion - But how may a man get from under this dangerous estate? Answer. By the attaining and exercise of three saving graces; namely, faith, repentance and obedience. Towne: Give me leave to tell you, that this your prescription of the remedy against this danger is not Doctor-like. For it is neither sound, orderly, nor safe. For these three graces are but gifts, or effects of Grace; and all the elect are saved in Christ - so that Faith is but the revelation of what was secret, and hid before, or an evident testimony, and lively and comfortable apprehension and application in the conscience of the person, of what was conferred and made his before. So that Faith works only a change as touching the conscience, whilst by an actual and sensible sprinkling of this blood on the doorposts thereof, it purgeth, justifieth, and saveth; it causeth light there instead of darkness, life instead of death, liberty instead of bondage. Paul calls it the revealing the Son of God in him. Gal.1:16. Faith will admit of no other ingredient, or partner in this business. Rom.3:28, Gal.2:16, Tit.3:5. You corruptly and treacherously do join and mingle repentance and obedience with it in the very cause of salvation, and deliverance from danger. Do you now walk with a right foot to the Gospel? Is this to teach healing, and deliverance alone by Christ? {Is.53:5} Is this to preach a naked Christ, as Mr. Fox said? Must Christ be a Lawgiver, an exacter of works in the very point of Justification, and Redemption? Are you herein conformable, and consonant to the established doctrine of our Church, which truly teacheth free grace, faith alone, only in Christ crucified, excluding and denying all works before and after, as physicians of no value, having no hand, or stroke in the cure. - I am much ashamed in your behalf; but it can never sufficiently grieve and afflict my soul, that such untempered mortar, adulterated coinage, hotch potch divinity should pass pulpit and press without control, and be so generally received, approved, and applauded. "The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so; and what will ye do in the end thereof?" Jer.5:31. Where may we find the incorruptibleness of faith, the simplicity that is in Christ? {II Cor.11:3} The pure Doctrine of Justification freely by grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus? {Rom.3:24} O England beware of apostates! Let the fearful example of the unwise Galatians awake and admonish thee to take heed of false prophets, {Mat.7:15,} of evil workers, {Phil.3:2,} and deceitful, {II Cor.11:13,} of corrupters of the Word, {II Cor.2:17.} I mean such as to teach free grace, whilst maintaining that pestilent opinion that works also, and the keeping of the Law are necessary to salvation. Those are teachers of perverse things, {Acts 20:30,} that opposed the apostle Paul, and much pestered the church of Corinth, Galatia, Philippi, &c.. Crafty they are in this, that directly, and in plain downright words speak not against justification in Christ; yet they do handle and carry the matter that their doctrine tendeth to the obscuring, defacing, and overthrowing of it. Oh the zeal of Paul in this case! What did he mean when he said, "Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing; for I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that

he is a debtor to do the whole law." {Gal.5:2,3} Is it not evident that the Galatians would not forsake Christ; yet they accredited that there must be an addition of something else to salvation, and what could be less hurtful to the Gospel than circumcision; yet see the effect of this conceit, it separates them from Christ; they can have no benefit by Him, and withal it draweth upon them the heavy yoke of the full and perfect observation of the whole Law. For the Law of works is so enwrapped and entwined together, that if a man lay hands on any, even the least link, he inevitably pulls the whole chain unto himself. And is not your conjoining of three 'saving graces' {as you are pleased improperly, and dangerously to call them, Acts 4:12,} that is, of faith, repentance, and obedience to the Law; as much as circumcision, and can the consequences be less dangerous, and damnable! Enough can never be spoken against this pestilent, poisonous, and yet too common error! Is not this that brings in another gospel. {Gal.1:6-8} You attribute something to Christ and faith; but something also to repentance and obedience; and this is impious and intolerable wickedness. "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." {Gal.5:9} This leaven is that false persuasion, that something is necessary to righteousness and salvation, besides faith in Christ; which soon will corrupt and spoil the whole mass of the doctrine of Free Grace; yea of the Gospel of Christ, it maketh it the gospel of the devil. Robert Towne {"Assertion of Grace" 1644}

Law & Gospel Distinctions

I hope it will not be denied by any rightly affected towards the truth, that faith is a judgment and persuasion according to the Gospel, the word of faith, whereof it is conceived and bred; so that, as the Law {being effectual} engenders fearful conceits, and conclusions; according to the true nature and office of it; so doth the Gospel on the other hand, set up a lively and joyful light of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ, {II Cor.4:6,} and only causes and raises such thoughts of God in the believer, as agree with that declaration of his loving and Fatherly goodwill to usward in Christ Jesus, in whom God by his Gospel requireth nothing of man to salvation; but abundantly testifieth, and promises to do all Himself, and so His promise maybe every way firm and free. Let all the world judge how unsound this doctrine of yours is, when as you shall never be able to show either from holy Scripture, the established doctrine of our Church, or any Orthodox writer, ancient or modern, that faith, repentance, and obedience, were ever made joint causes of man's freedom or deliverance from danger and misery. - If you do not retract this for the church's sake, it will be aggravated by showing what abominable and intolerable evils will follow this doctrine. It defaceth Christ, derogates from his sacrifice, obscureth the Gospel, leaveth the conscience always in fear and danger, spoils it of all peace, joy, and consolation, it mingles Law and Gospel, it nourishes and maintains the special ground of Popery, it engenders bondage, and is an enemy to all true godliness. Robert Towne {"Assertion of Grace" 1644}

Law & Gospel Distinctions

Blind and Popish conceits stick to men's hearts naturally closer than their skins to their flesh; to wit, if we could but get the heart to rent, tender, and melt into tears, &c. If we could fast, and pour out our souls in great bitterness, and afflictions of mind, be enlarged to prayer, and holy duties, we should then hope, that God would hear and respect us; for this would much satisfy and ease the legal conscience. Robert Towne {"Assertion of Grace" 1644}

Law & Gospel Distinctions

I am of that mind, that the whole Law is in as full force and power as ever it was, and that nothing without damnable violation can be taken from it. {Mt.5:19} But yet that believers {when I say, a believer, I mean one that is in Christ, and can never be separated or considered apart from Christ,} should be under it, is to me full of danger, and contrary to all Scripture. - The Apostle tells us, "now we know that what things soever the Law saith, it saith to them who are under the Law. {Rom.3:19} He doth not mince and part the Law, as your manner is. - Can you put your conscience under the mandatory, and yet keep it from the damnatory power of the Law? - I say that you have dealt as uncourteously with it, as did that King with David's servants, who cut off their garments by the midst, but you have done worse, even Joab-like, under fair pretense and friendly words, you have killed and destroyed the life and soul of a Law. - Your endeavor is too much to steal from God, and to pamper that pride of man's spirit which God would humble to hell! Robert Towne {"Assertion of Grace" 1644}

Law & Gospel Distinctions

Christ so establishing and vindicating, and opening of the spiritual intent, and meaning of the Law in that Sermon, {Matthew chapter 5-7,} was especially; if not solely that by so doing He might destroy all vain boasting and

confidence in man's own righteousness of works, which was dangerously bred in men's minds by that unskillful and unfaithful use of the Law in the hands of the Scribes and the Pharisees, whilst He let them see how spiritual, perfect, and absolute the will of God is in His Holy Law; inasmuch that if there be but the least ataxia in the thoughts, ever so secret motion or lust, to evil in the heart, it casts and condemns them to hell, and everlasting destruction; that by this means every man might see and learn how worthless whatever he could do was before God, and that notwithstanding all his zeal towards God, witnessed in all his strictness, and travail about mortification and holiness; yet he still remained as deep in condemnation as ever he was, and there was no difference of state or condition between him, and the vilest, and loosest, and worst of men. {Rom.3:19,23} That thus He might prick the vein, and let out the proud blood of all work mongers whose spirits be lifted up above others, as if their own care, watchfulness, and diligence had anything bettered them. Secondly, that thus he might make the way plain, that none might stick in the law of works by this deceitful and pharisaical ministration of it, and so be kept from Christ to their own perdition {from which no works can deliver and save,} but might be driven and compelled to run and hasten to Him, and His righteousness to the everlasting security and salvation of their souls. - This I trust, will sufficiently speak to the world for our just defense against all malevolent cavils and calumniations, and let all clearly see, that the doctrine of Free Grace only reconcileth God and man; the law and the conscience; and man and man, gathering and uniting all in the bond of love, flowing from the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Spirit, {Rom5:5,} in the ministration of the Gospel. {Gal.3:2} And that whosoever labors to bring in works any other way does err. And though by their daily legal pressing, they put men to much and sore travail, yet the Law in their affections is loved and liked just as much as the taskmasters in Egypt were by the Israelites. For if those who are now hot and forward were left to themselves to live as they list, with promise and warrant of security from danger, their courage I fear would soon cool and abate. Robert Towne {"Assertion of Grace" 1644}

Law & Gospel Distinctions

As for the texts – Heb.12:14, without holiness "no man shall see God." What holiness is that, if not of Christ communicated by the Spirit, who shall take of Christ's, and give it unto you? This is that object of Faith, which looketh on, and enjoyeth things invisible, Heb.11:1, II Cor.4:18; and by the operation of the spirit of Faith, it shall be diffused throughout the powers and parts of soul and body like leaven; and after the measure of faith, is sensibly discerned in the light of knowledge, wisdom, peace, joy, patience, confidence, contentment. Secondly, Rev.21:27 necessarily sendeth you to that Fountain "opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness" – Zech.13:1, Rev.1:5, and our growing in the unity of faith is the enlightening and enlarging of the heart to a more effectual understanding and full receiving of that immeasurable sea of righteousness, peace, joy, and all manner of blessedness, which is in Christ; that all things may be swallowed up in us thereby, and not a proceeding in legal holiness as you imagine. Robert Towne {"Assertion of Grace" 1644}

Law & Gospel Distinctions

It is out of the Laws element to judge of this blessed condition. True, for the law is not of faith. Gal.3:12. And it is the part of the Gospel to blot out the handwriting; and to erase out of our minds that opinion and sentence of the Law which is natural; and to write or imprint another opinion, and knowledge of God. But this cannot be effected without great conflict, and wrestling of our mind and spirits. For our natural conscience strengthened by the Law is ever reclaiming, and contradicting what the Gospel testifieth. Only the word of faith can truly discern and judge of this matter of faith. For where does the Law speak a syllable of our conjunction in union with Christ through faith. Robert Towne {"Assertion of Grace" 1644}

Law & Gospel Distinctions

Can I look upon myself, my actions, yea, into my conscience, and see my sins remain; but look into the Records of Heaven, and God's Justice, and since the bloodshed of Christ, I can find there nothing against me, but that the bond by my Surety is satisfied, and canceled; and even these present sins which so fearfully stare in my face, are there blotted out of God's book of remembrance, Heb.8:12. And as a debt discharged has become a nullity with the Lord. Faith seeth an everlasting expiation, which causeth shame and fear to flee away. Therefore my peace and happiness consists in the forsaking, and not considering of myself, and in my living and abiding in Christ, who is in heaven, where is perfect purity and cleansing forever. And this is to live, and walk by faith, and not by sight. Whether a Christian, a justified man, who hath reference to Christ alone, being united to Him, made one with Him,

and by the imputation of His obedience, is become the righteousness of God, and so is a certain spiritual person, a son of God, heir of the world, conqueror of the world, of sin, death, and the devil &c.; and who only can spiritually be discerned by faith, ought to be considered in relation to the Law of works, and to be judged by reason and sense, according to his outward condition, and life among men? For thus to fall from justification to inherent sanctification, from faith to works, is to pervert the state of the question. And whilst you thus consider him, as he is in himself apart from Christ, and according to the Law and to works, he then ceaseth to be justified to your thoughts, and is brought from heaven to earth, and is found to be a sinner, accursed, and condemned, and one in whom God and men see sin. These queries are pertinent to the point in controversy, and may happily give some light to the right understanding of it. Robert Towne {"Assertion of Grace" 1644}

Law & Gospel Distinctions

As faith looks directly and exclusively to Christ; so it's the nature, and force of reason, sense, and infidelity to eye and consider what is in me, and elsewhere out of Christ, and His Gospel. {Rom.4:19, Heb.11:11} The Law and Gospel passeth over the heart of every believer daily; their voices, operations, and sentences are contrary. The conflict in the conscience thereby causeth more grief, and unrest, then ever did Jacob and Esau in Rebeckah's womb; and it will ever continue until the one be destroyed and extinct. Faith and Infidelity do strive within me, about me, to whether of them I should appertain. And now I yield to the Law, and infidelity, and say and confess with bitter lamentation that I am taken captive, &c., Anon faith, and Christ appears, and reviseth, recalling, erecting, and enlarging my spirits, and putting in my heart and tongue a new song of praise, victory, and salvation to my God and King, because He hath redeemed, justified and saved me. Robert Towne {"Assertion of Grace" 1644}

Law & Gospel Distinctions

As Adam was under the government of the inward righteousness of his heart by virtue of his creation; so is a believer a servant of righteousness; that is, of that law of righteousness written in the heart by the faith of Justification. Rom.6:18 & 8:2. The antithesis used by the apostle, {"for sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace." Rom.6:14,} is remarkable. He opposeth the kingdom of Grace against the dominion of Sin and the Law, and sheweth that in our natural estate sin is so strong and forcible in us, that God hath put us under an outward law of precepts to be taught and tutored by it, &c., for we were like unto a horse and mule that must be curbed, and guided by the rider; but after Faith {Christ} is come, it subdueth and weakeneth that tyranny, it bringeth an inward spirit of righteousness which possesseth and persuadeth the heart aright, and so leadeth and ordereth the whole man in all the ways of godliness and truth. - You are ever imperiously by the commandment of the law exacting and requiring this and that with strong threatenings; it must be done, or smart for neglect &c., little considering that believers are of an ingenuous and free disposition. It cannot be said, that my spirit doth that voluntarily, which the command of the Law bindeth and forceth unto; it's one thing for a man at his own free liberty to keep the Kings Highway of the Law; and another to be kept in by pales and ditches, that he cannot without some danger go out of it. Whilst the child is under the awe, and rule of his Tutor or Master, you cannot know his disposition, although he live soberly and orderly; but free him from that government, and leave him to himself, and you may soon know what to judge of him. This is no plea for carnal looseness, but a necessary trial to put all professors unto, that it may be seen, whether the Son hath made them free indeed or not. John 3:36. Therefore it's impossible that we should be thralls to sin, since the grace of God reigneth in us, saith Calvin. Robert Towne {"Assertion of Grace" 1644}

Law & Gospel Distinctions

Suppose a justified man commits adultery, &c. The ground of the objection seemeth to be this; that in whatsoever the Law hath power to command, the same also necessarily hath power to justify and condemn as its obeyed or disobeyed, &c. But why suppose you such gross and open sins? Is it not because your mind is too pharisaical? May not the Law take hold, and the just God punish for the least blind, rash or idle thought, as well as for these? I easily espy your lower leaven. For you say; the Law both for matter and form stands in force; and to justify and condemn are as proper and essential to the Law, as to command, as has been showed already; and so the justified shall be then still under both the command and condemnation of the Law, although the manner of command in the rigor is to them abated. I would see Scripture for this, for I read and hear it often from man, but Christ saith, "that one jot or tittle shall not perish from the Law," yet if I believe you, can you certify me how far then, or how much of the rigor is abated; or can you warrantably tell me, that this is the nature and extent of the dispensation of the

Law by means of the Gospel; and if I walk humbly and carefully, shall not the Law condemn me for imperfection and defect? What a dallying and mockery is this! Come to experience and practice, you are justified in Christ, and live under the directory and commanding power of the Law, but are freed {as you affirm} from the condemning power and curse, whilst you make indentures, being off and on, in and out, weak and halting in the whole course of your life, if the matter be so mitigated by God, that His Law requireth no more than you carefully can perform, &c. Wherein now do you offend? The Law is become as weak and childish as yourself, it can bear with, and wink at your slips and failings. - How idle, dangerous, and groundless is this teaching; and to what other purpose Satan hath foisted this into the Church, I know not, except to put hereby pillows under men's arms, that they may rest and sleep securely in their own good desires, and zealous endeavors to serve God, and to make no further use of justification, being quite fallen from grace. This is your doctrine: Christ hath justified us from all the evils of our lives before our calling and conversion to the faith, having fully satisfied the Law for them, but afterwards God hath laid aside his strict and perfect Justice, and will be content with what we can and strive to do. - Yes I say, and find daily, that God's law taketh hold on the conscience, to convince, rebuke and terrify, not only for gross offenses, but for the least failing; yea, for the imperfection of the best thing that ever he doth, till Christ our continual Refuge, doth deliver the conscience. Let the Law then be still in full force and authority, and its usefulness to a Christian; for I know none that teach otherwise; thus it driveth to Christ, keepeth the soul close, that it dare not look away from His Righteousness, or depart from faith, to mind and regard his best performances, for fear of condemnation. Robert Towne {"Assertion of Grace" 1644}

Law & Gospel Distinctions

What is more useful in the prayers of preachers, then such words as these: 'But we appeal from Thy justice to the throne of mercy &c.', as refusing to be tried in that Court, and yourself do witness again and again, that the condemnation of the Law hath nothing to do with the believer, which is the same in effect, for he doth not stand and fall to God upon such terms. This is the privilege and lawful plea of faith, useful and necessary in time of temptation, urging God with His own promise, relying confidently and soberly upon the Covenant of Free Grace without works, &c., therefore desiring to remove the whole Law of works out of sight in this conflict. Robert Towne {"Assertion of Grace" 1644}

Law & Gospel Distinctions

The Law hath its proper office and use as it revealeth sin, accuseth, terrifieth and condemneeth; and we say with Paul that the Law is good, if a man use it lawfully; that is, if a man use it as a Law. If I define the Law rightly and keep it in its office and use, it is an excellent thing; but if I translate it to another use, and attribute what is not to be attributed to it; I not only then pervert the Law, but all Divinity. This discovereth the vanity of their profession; and saith, in whom Christ, and the love of God in Him doth not effectually move and constrain to walk worthy of so high and heavenly calling. Such have not heard Christ, nor been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus. True faith purifieth the heart, brings the soul into favor and communion with God, stayeth it upon His Name, causeth it to take delight in the multitude of heavenly peace, and so filleth and satisfieth it with that fullness and goodness of God, that it falleth off from all earthly and perishable felicity. Robert Towne {"Assertion of Grace" 1644}

Law & Gospel Distinctions

Eternal life can but be due to all holy actions jointly, and to no one singly, if it should be due to works. It is true, that promises be so made in the Law, wherein there is a concatenation, or linking of all in one; yet they are upon such hard conditions, that it is poor comfort, and small or no hope of having any performed, it being impossible. The Law is weak through the flesh, Rom.8:3, but the New Testament is upon better promises, which are sure to faith, because they are made to Christ. He saith not, the promises be made "to seeds, as of many; but as of One - which is Christ." Gal.3:16. Therefore the collection of the scattered promises is in Christ only, and by union with Him, we come to have interest and right to them all. Robert Towne {"A Re-Assertion of Grace" 1654}

Law & Gospel Distinctions

You grant that your sanctification is imperfect and defective. Now since the sinfulness remaining in us, doth spread itself throughout all the powers of the soul; all parts, actions and passages of the whole man. When you then have gathered and summed up all in one, do you not bring all your works in the end to your Justification, by your confession of weakness, wants, pollutions &c., and to seek forgiveness of the sins of your prayers, your failings,

your sermons, and errors of heart and life? And this is in effect to have all healed and justified by Free Justification, or the blood of Christ; knowing that otherwise all is damnable, and in the Law and Justice to be rejected. Know it, and cause also your hearers to learn it, that though Justification be one individual act, yet the virtue and efficacy of it is necessarily to be extended throughout all the life and ways of man. It purifieth the man, and maketh all pure also and acceptable. "Unto the pure all things are pure." Titus 1:15. Thus may you see that it is a truth, that all are become perfect; and the manner also how; and lastly, that all is in Justification, and not in Sanctification; and to know your mistake. If you receive not this, how shall what is imperfect be accepted, except either by some mitigation of God's Justice, contrary to that place so much, and that without cause is urged against us, Matt.5:17,18, or that you will so far be beholding to the new Covenant, with the Arminian, as to seek for the grace of it; which may pardon or pass by our defects, or in effect to deny the extent and continuance of the force and virtue of Justification and Christ's blood unto the last end. Robert Towne {"A Re-Assertion of Grace" 1654}

Law & Gospel Distinctions

If you put them under the government of Justice tempered with mildness and mercy, {which is a Law evangelized, a new crotchet and dream,} then the Law of strict justice, which is the Decalogue, is no longer a rule; our sins must be no longer examined and measured by it, but judged as they are offenses of this mixed and fatherly justice. So now Christ may be set aside, we shall no more need Him for Advocate, neither is there use of faith when we sin; but our sufferings must in this condition pacify, not Christ's sufferings, {that only was of use and efficacy to bring us into this state, and under this government.} Who now are become the total abrogators of the Law, as it is a rule to live and walk by? - Your doctrine by a direct and necessary consequence doth free the believer from the ruling power of the Law, while you place him under a mixed government of justice and mercy; for the Law is pure justice without mixture, and a strict and exact rule without mitigation. Robert Towne {Monomachia or A Single Reply to Mr. Rutherford's book called 'Christ dying and drawing of Sinners.' 1654}

Law & Gospel Distinctions

Can you put your conscience under the Law's mandatory power, and yet keep it from under the damnatory? The Law bids you love your neighbor though your enemy; and presuppose that you are obedient thereunto, yet do you do it so perfectly, that the Law hath no power to reprove and condemn you in that particular? If the Law condemn you not, away with humiliation, confession, repentance, justification; and all living by faith in Christ. For now you can so walk according to the rule of the Law, that it cannot subject you to the curse and death; you are not reprov'd and judged in yourself for anything; your peace and safety is by your just life, the Law being curbed and restrained, or rather exauthorized, or dis-invested of all power to condemn; and your life and comfort is not by your faith in the Son of God, who loved you and gave Himself for you, as Gal.2:20. There is no condemnation unto you, not because you are in Christ, as Rom.8:1, but the reason is, in that the Law though a rule, yet wanteth power to reign to death. We often meet with this groundless and false assertion; and now see what is the chief stone that you stumble at. Robert Towne {"A Re-Assertion of Grace" 1654}

Law & Gospel Distinctions

Christ was made under the Law, to redeem us from under it, Gal.4:5, not to take the curse from the Law, but to redeem us. In what sense, and to what end Christ was under the Law as our Surety, in the same sense are we freed; but He was under both the rule and reign of it. Yet it will not follow that believers are in no state of subjection and obedience thereunto; or being enlarged, and set at liberty, do not run the way of God's Commandments. For they do it, though by another efficient, from a new principle, and for a different end then that of the Law, 'Do & Live.' They are under Christ, and moved and led by His Spirit, who is the Head and Husband of His Church. Robert Towne {"A Re-Assertion of Grace" 1654}

Law & Gospel Distinctions

Objection - Our holy duties have a promise of pardon and eternal life, though not because of their worth, yet because of their presence, and therefore may the godly rejoice, when they find them. Assertion: This is a strange teaching amongst Protestants. It is an assertion gross enough to have fallen from the pen of a Jesuit, who now deny any dignity in good works, as well as you, deserving eternal life, only by virtue of God's promise made to good works, they expect it. If you teach thus, then no man can dare to believe or receive remission of sins through Christ's blood, till he be sure he find first the presence of good works before he believe. Or what are the good

works he must so necessarily find, and unto which the pardon is promised? You might have done wisely, and it had been a special work of charity, to have given example in some, and then to have showed both how those good works may be done in the state of unbelief, and also how they may be certainly known to be good before faith. Oh poor, sinful and trembling soul; into what an inextricable labyrinth will this bring thee; and when thou shalt be deeply plunged into temptation, how to prevent thy fearful desperation, by this doctrine, is utterly impossible. By this you will make people look more to good works than to Christ present and formed in the heart the only hope of glory. Col.1:27. And he that hath Christ hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life, whatever works he may pretend to have. I John 5:12. Yea; a legal ministry exhorting to duties, performances, and conformity to the Law of works, will be held sufficient, and men need not be bid to examine themselves, whether they be in the faith, and Christ dwell in them, or not, II Cor.13:5, but whether they have a store of good works, and so they may be sure of pardon, and salvation. – Oh that ever such a doctrine should see the sun, be heard out of any of our pulpits, and to be suffered to pass the press, and with such applause to be published! Robert Towne {"A Re-Assertion of Grace" 1654}

Law & Gospel Distinctions

The ground and the reason of your opposing is, in that you are of opinion that God comes unto us by or with, or because of some inherent graces or qualifications in us, which be as a magnet to draw and unite His affection; and that Christ is but the meritorious cause of this; a Papistical conceit indeed! God is in Christ, and where Christ is, there is God present. "I am in the Father, and the Father in me." John 14:10. He that hath the Son, hath the Father also; and he that hath not the Son, hath not the Father. "He that receiveth me receiveth Him that sent me." John 13:20. God then loveth, uniteth Himself, and cometh to the soul only in and through Christ, in whom He makes us accepted, Eph.1:6, and that only by His grace. If the presence of good works you so contend for in justification, were granted you, yet God hath no respect to them, but beholdeth us as sinful wretches plunged into all confusion, and being moved to pity us, He considereth our persons, and receiveth us alone in our Lord Jesus Christ. He only beholdeth us, so all our good works in that perfection of His Son, else they could not be accepted, nor liked. And these are the only true, and most powerful and operative principles of all right sanctification; though your legally forced sanctity or reformation may grow and arise out of another natural principle and dead root. Robert Towne {"A Re-Assertion of Grace" 1654}

Law & Gospel Distinctions

Objection - They tell us not only of a righteousness or justification by imputation, but also saintship and holiness by this obedience of Christ; and hence it is that God seeth no sin in believers. Assertion – If they tell you of such perfection, that God seeth no sin, they also in the same place tell you {if you had the same ears to hear it,} that this justification or saintship is by imputation, and not by inherent sanctification. If Christ be held forth unto you by God Himself, as one that hath washed you and cleansed you from all sin, and withal it be given us so to apprehend and receive it; what think you now of yourself and condition, while you abide in this light? In the Creed you say, 'I believe a Holy Church,' yet the Church itself is no exterior or visible thing, that the world can discern, though the persons be visible; and her holiness is invisible. Only faith {which is of things not seen, Heb.11:3,} can behold this purity of the Church, not in the Law, nor any work or inherent thing; but as she is washed and made clean in the blood and righteousness of her Redeemer. The Church is all fair, for her filthiness is taken away by Christ, and He hath made her fair. If the Christian look upon his life, he will there find many things that are blame worthy. If he look within himself, the work of renovation there wrought, it is also imperfect, and not pure; but only as he is beheld in Christ who hath sanctified him, he is all together pure and holy, but faith only seeth this. And why do, if not yourself, yet many others in their prayers, say, 'Lord behold us not in ourselves, but in our Lord Jesus &c,' if there be no such sure and secure estate, why pray we to attain to it; and if we be persuaded of the truth of it, why wrangle we against it? You might inform yourself, and others, as to what it is to continue of yourselves separated or remote from Christ; and of the meaning of the phrase, 'God seeth no sin?' Indeed you overthrow the Gospel, and do strangely shuffle and confound grace and works. Robert Towne {"A Re-Assertion of Grace" 1654}

Law & Gospel Distinctions

What premise then is made to the righteousness of faith, or of Christ? Paul was most diligent and faithful in his ministry, abounding in the works of the Lord, fought a good fight, kept the faith, finished his course; but the crown which was laid up for him and which he certainly expected, was the crown of the righteousness of faith. II Tim.4:8. If the crown be not due to that righteousness, to what purpose is it; and if it belong and be annexed to it, will God

make promise of it to our good works? It is true, it shall be said at that last day, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat &c., {Mat 25:35,} but the promise of inheriting is to them, in that they were elected to it from eternity, and prepared for it by the righteousness of faith, were found in Christ, and heirs annexed with him; and these works in ministering to the necessities of the Saints, did flow from their hearts fervent love unto Christ, and declare the truth of their faith, and of their Adoption and Election. Robert Towne {"A Re-Assertion of Grace" 1654}

Law & Gospel Distinctions

It seems that your spirit lives and abides under the Law, as under a quiet and peaceable government, without sense or fear of condemnation, and without inward molestation or checks of conscience, in that you tell us of being under both the natural and moral Law, and yet free from the condemnation of either. I find you in doctrine agreeing with Doctor Laud, who in a sermon before the King, his text being Jeremiah 6:16, said that the old paths wherein we might rest, were the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments; and added, that the Law was like unto a serpent at the hedge bottom, which had lost its sting. I believed him not, though you do; and so he told the King and the rest, what a pestilential sect the Antinomians were; and thus he did labor, as you do, to make the world believe that there are some abolishers of the Law, and that these against whom you write, and all others who go in the same way, are such, and so not to be tolerated in the kingdom. And about the same time D. Gifford, after many invectives against that sect and sort {for it is spoken against everywhere, Acts 28:22,} in his closure he gave this wise admonition to his hearers; namely, 'to repent, to believe, and to do as they should do,' and so he would warrant them to be saved. Here was repentance, faith, and inchoate obedience, as in your friend; but in which will you place salvation? In all, you and these your accomplices do say and teach; and then in none at all, doth the truth of God say; for, "if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing." Gal.5:2. Robert Towne {"A Re-Assertion of Grace" 1654}

Law & Gospel Distinctions

Objection - The Law was given in an evangelical sense and to evangelical purposes. Assertion - The Law came in a terrible manner, as in thunders and lightnings; and the Lord descended upon Mount Sinai in fire, and the whole mount quaked greatly, so that all the people trembled. Ex.19:16-18. But the Gospel came in a joyful manner. The Angels said unto the shepherds, "Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." Luke 2:10. Neither was the Law in a proper and strict sense given for evangelical purposes, for God purposed by His Gospel to give pardon, freedom, peace, joy, refreshing, health, and rest to the souls and consciences of His people; but by the Law He intended to reveal sin and wrath, to terrify, wound, and condemn &c. These two ministrations are to produce two contrary effects; for humbling, bruising, and beating down of the soul, being convinced of sin, guilty of death, and worthy of God's everlasting wrath, is the true and proper effect of the Law; and that for which it was especially given, as Gal.3:19. "Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions;" that is, to discover transgression, to cause fear and horror in the conscience, and so to conclude or shut up the soul under a fearful and inevitable bondage and malediction; for "the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." {vs.22} And thus did Paul set up the Law in a most horrid and terrible manner, as if there were no Christ, neither grace or redemption to be expected from God. And if no such indignation and terror be by the Law, what need a Mediator for reconciliation and peace; or Christ to be a sanctuary or hiding place; or any to fly to Him for refuge and salvation? It seems that you would have the Law to be preached more mildly, and with much mitigation of justice. This I dare say, he that was never killed, was never made alive; where the Law worketh not to condemnation, there the Gospel never brought justification to life. And by this means the Law is subordinate and subservient, in making sensible of sin, guilt, and damnation; and in suppressing and destroying that pestilent opinion and conceit, which everyone hath of himself, his own strength and righteousness. In a remote and general sense, it may be said to have evangelical purposes, in that all hope of righteousness, acceptance, and life, being quite lost, and gone by the Law, the mind and intent of God hereby, is to drive man to believe in JESUS CHRIST. Robert Towne {"A Re-Assertion of Grace" 1654}

Law & Gospel Distinctions

Since the death of the Testator, the Covenant is so ratified and confirmed with God, that He remembereth the sins of His people no more, but abides fully, and forever pleased with them in His Son; and through faith herein, the conscience also is made to yield to it, to receive and embrace it, and so is led and brought into this confidence of

the quietness and peace of God towards us, and hereby effecteth our assured rest in God reconciled forever, which is the true Christian Sabbath. Thus every high thing exalting itself against the knowledge of God according to the Gospel, is to be cast down, and every thought to be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. II Cor.10:4,5. And by this is glory given unto God, while one thing is felt or suggested within, and another is believed. Let this be well marked of great and continual use in every Christian, that the Law implanted by nature, is ever contradicting and reclaiming against the testimony of God in the word of His grace; whence ariseth the difficulty and impossibility of believing except by the power and operation of God. Col.2:12. Robert Towne {"A Re-Assertion of Grace" 1654}

Law & Gospel Distinctions

They who say we are perfectly righteous, do affirm us to be holy also and without sin in the same sense and manner, but not inherently; for if the Law require holiness and righteousness, how can we be justified in Christ, from what the Law hath against us, and yet not be as well holy and righteous in Him, and so without sin. What can be spoken by the Spirit of God more plainly than this, "Christ hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in His blood." Rev.1:5. See also Col.1:22. And read Luther on Psalm 130, who there saith, 'they that put not their trust herein alone, that by the death of Christ their sins are taken away, and God's eyes closed, that He cannot see their sins, must needs perish; for this only do the Scriptures set forth, that our life resteth wholly and only in the remission of sins, and in that the Lord will not see our sins, but in mercy cover them, &c.' Robert Towne {"A Re-Assertion of Grace" 1654}

Law & Gospel Distinctions

Objection - God doth use the Law as He doth His whole Word, to beget and increase the life of grace in us, and in this effect of the Law, to increase life, David doth often commend it. Assertion - There be but two principal and essential parts of the Covenant of Grace. 1. To hold out the way of justification, peace and life. 2. To promise and give the spirit of regeneration and renovation. Jer.31:33,34 & Ezek.36:25,26. And the Law doth neither of these; therefore it is no Covenant of Grace. There is nothing more against Scripture, and the main current of all true divinity, then to teach that the life of grace is begot by the Law. Here are two great mistakes: First concerning the nature of the life of grace, which is not in works, nor the expressions of inherent holiness or sanctification; for to move and walk in the Law of works, or of our own active righteousness, is a legal life; but that is the life of grace which reviveth, quickeneth and comforteth the mortified, and dejected and distressed consciences, which lay in extreme sorrow, and in the shadow of death, being apprehensive of the sentence of condemnation passed upon him by the Law and the spirit of bondage. If you know not yet what this life is, and wherein it consists, ask the condemned prisoner, whose life is gone by the law, and he will say, that his pardon would be his life, which must come from the mere grace and mercy of his Prince. Robert Towne {"A Re-Assertion of Grace" 1654}

Law & Gospel Distinctions

Your great reading may tell you that when divinity was more pure and distinct than it is now, repentance was said to have two parts. Mortification and Vivification; and the object of both of these is the man, who is spiritually slain by the Law, as Romans 7, and again quickened through the faith of the operation of God; and so made partaker of the first resurrection. Rev.20:6. Hence it's said, "And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses," {Col.2:13,} and the efficient or worker of both these is God, who killeth and maketh alive; and man is the patient, the soul receiving the pardon of sins, having entrance into the presence and favor of God, and in His favor is a life, and His lovingkindness is better than life. "In His presence is fullness of joy," saith the Psalmist. Hence we read, that justification is unto life, {Rom.5:18,} and Christ is the Bread of Life, whoever eateth of Him, shall live forever; and whosoever heareth His voice, shall live. John 5:25. Thus life cometh by believing; but Law is not of faith. If there had been a Law that giveth life, surely righteousness {which is our justification} should have been by that Law, Gal.3:21, for righteousness and life come both one way. - He that hath any Christian experience, knoweth that when the soul lies in death and darkness, the apprehension and presence of Christ {who is received and cometh into the heart by faith} is the only true light, life, peace, and consolation of it. Robert Towne {"A Re-Assertion of Grace" 1654}

Law & Gospel Distinctions

I dare affirm that none hateth sin more, is so weary of it, complaineth so of its remaining and dwelling in the flesh, and the sorrow it sometimes breeds him &c.; and yet if he makes light of it, how can he prize justification from it? He that accounteth nothing of sin, cannot rightly esteem of a Savior to save from it; therefore contrarily our counting all things lost and dung, even our best works, legal zeal, reformation and worship, {because mingled and defiled with the leprosy of sin,} for the excellent knowledge sake of Christ Jesus, our desire ever to be found in Him, not having our own righteousness, to know nothing but Christ crucified &c., do argue sin to be our greatest and most fearful evil to our apprehensions; but it is not so with you, and your disciples, who seldom or never preach or desire to hear of a Savior, of free justification; and do so wrangle with the doctrine of grace and faith. That phrase of God's not seeing sin in a believer is still an eyesore to you and many others. And to add this to the former, it argues that you make nothing of sin! For; if you hated it, you would seek to get your soul cleansed from it. If you loved God; you would not come and appear in His sight until you were washed from it, seeing it is unto Him so hateful and abominable, that He cannot endure the sight of it; and therefore calleth upon His people to watch and make them clean, and then to come. Or yet; if you feared God, and stood in true awe of Him, knowing how terrible He and His presence is where He seeth and marketh iniquity, {for who may abide it, or who can stand? Ps.130:3,} you durst not abide in His sight without that faith and assurance that the blood of His Son Jesus hath washed and cleansed you from all your sins. If; as that Martyr said, the veil were taken off Moses' face, such a glory and dreadful Majesty would break forth, as would confound your spirits, and be intolerable, your sins being set in the light of His countenance; then you would not deal with God without faith in the blood of Christ; nor durst entertain a thought of Him out of Christ, in whom iniquity is done away, never to be remembered anymore. Then you cry out, 'Oh blessed man, whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sin is covered.' A day of temptation and trouble may come, in which you, and all who have disparaged and despised this, may be brought to acknowledge and embrace it, as an useful and most acceptable truth of God, full of soul consolation; which in your wretched security is now loathed and rejected; the Law being so mitigated and modified in your opinion and ministry, that Sinai is your Zion. Robert Towne {"A Re-Assertion of Grace" 1654}

Law & Gospel Distinctions

You are no fit advocate to patronize or defend the Law, for it is abrogated by yourself, if that be true, as it is most certain, that a Law without power to condemn is no Law; for the Law you would establish hath no condemning power, as you say, therefore the Law is by you abrogated. The truth is, the Christian is abrogated and dead to it; and yet the Law remaineth entire. Robert Towne {"A Re-Assertion of Grace" 1654}

Law & Gospel Distinctions

Conversion may be taken for the change of the condition, as when one who was in bondage is enlarged, set free, delivered out of the hands of his enemies; and being far off, is made near, as John 8:36, Eph.2:13, Col.1:12; or, for the turning of the heart to God. "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." Acts 26:18. - If by conversion you mean {as happily you do} the change of the disposition and frame of the soul; it is as certain also, and clear, that God doth not this by the Law, but by the Gospel; thus, Acts 15:9, God purifying the heart by faith; and Acts 26:18, sanctified by faith. This is the special commendation that Paul giveth of the Gospel. That therein we all with open face behold the glory of the Lord, as in a glass, and are changed into the same image from glory to glory even by the Spirit of the Lord. Can man's nature be changed till he be united and engrafted into Christ the True Vine; and does not virtue come by that infusion or union? And was it ever talked, or read, that the Law should be that ministry by which this is wrought? If the Law do not set this object Christ before the soul, nor is a means to bring and join it to Him; how can it be an instrument to give and communicate the Spirit of Christ? Indeed, a legal spirit or power it hath, which hath been effectual to work a great deal of reformation and legal strictness, having a specious and deceitful show and lustre, as we see in the Pharisees, who therefore were admired in their age. Oh Sir, if you would set before your own, and the eyes of your people, duly and daily, that exceeding kindness of God, and sweetness of His so surpassing love in Christ in so infinite expressions of it, and seek to affect both your own and their hearts with it; you would find what an incredible force and virtue is in it, far beyond any power in a legal ministry, to melt, gain, and leaven the soul, transforming it into its own nature and image, which is love and mercy; and so disposing you to do all things of the Law freely and willingly, which are but the offices and duties of love. In a word; no sounder, further, nor better conversion can be wrought by the Law, then was in Paul, before he received the faith; who in his zeal of God was a

bloodsucker and butcher of Christians, Christ's silly and harmless sheep; for he was inwardly in the gall of bitterness, &c., and so are too many this day, as we see, find, and feel, who might be metamorphosed by the Gospel, and of wolves become lambs. Like priest - like people, according to their pasture they feed in, namely; as the nature of the doctrine is they receive - so they are. Where much Law is, their hardness of heart, cruelty, self-love, &c., but want of meekness, humbleness, and mercy. And it will ever be true that a legal zeal is persecuting. Robert Towne {"A Re-Assertion of Grace" 1654}

Law & Gospel Distinctions

Neither did the Law instrumentally convert and turn the heart to God; for Christ is the way to the Father; His blood and cross slays the enmity that is between Divine Justice and the sinner, and removes whatever does hinder or separate, and so opens a freeway for access, Heb.10:19,20, and His righteousness is the bond or union between God and the soul, bringing them into a sure and everlasting covenant of peace. He is first King of Righteousness, and after that King of Salem; that is, of Peace. Heb.7:2. Now Christ, His death and resurrection, with the fruits and benefits thereof, are the subject and peculiar treasures of the Gospel, whereof Paul was made a minister, that he might preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable Riches of Christ. Eph.3:7-9. God cannot be approached unto, known, nor enjoyed but in Christ. And Christ gaineth and draweth the soul with cords of love. He appears gracious and merciful to poor sinners beaten-down, humbled, and brought to death's door in the conscience of sin; else the soul being afraid of Him, would with Adam flee away, and hide itself from Him. Hence, men are exhorted to turn to the Lord, because He is gracious and merciful. Joel 2:13, Ps.86:5. We are to hold forth God in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, and not imputing their sins unto them; and as Ambassadors for Christ, we pray men in Christ's stead to be reconciled unto God. II Cor.5:18-20. Now this cannot be by the Ministry of the Law, by which cometh the knowledge of sin, for it worketh wrath, Rom.4:15, and threateneth with the curse and death. Gal.3:10. And thus, the Law {by the will and appointment of God,} forces man out of himself, to destroy all self-confidence, and trust in any goodness of his own, and to make him to seek out, and to hearken after Christ, the true and only right Door set open in the Gospel; that by Him the soul may have entrance, being found in Him, not having its own righteousness which is of the Law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, "the righteousness which is of God by faith." Phil.3:9. It is a vain, and a strange conceit, that the soul should convert to God by the preaching of the Law, since it can only turn and come unto Him by faith, which nothing doth so much cross and hinder as the Law; and it putteth the soul upon a contrary way. Robert Towne {"A Re-Assertion of Grace" 1654}

Law & Gospel Distinctions

This I ingenuously profess {whatever you may think of it} that my desire is not to know or think of God out of Christ, but to confine all the powers and workings of my soul unto that so pleasant and amicable Object, God reconciled in His Son. And so to set Him before me gracious, propitious, loving, &c., in all the events, occurrences and conditions of this life. And this is the true office and exercise of faith. And thus I deal with God, even as He also dealeth with me - without Law, in his Covenant of mere Grace; the more I can do so, the greater confidence I have towards Him, the better everything He does pleases me; the more welcome is the cross, and the more apt and able I am to bear and digest it, and the more is my heart and affections lively and sweetly stirred up, enlarged to love God, and to delight myself in Him. By these means the soul is made merry and kept joyful in the Lord, and like an instrument in good time, it is ready for use upon any occasion. And the inward appearing and manifestation of God unto the soul in love and tender mercy, does melt it, and effectually change and overcome the enmity and maliciousness of my naughty heart and nature. And this light I endeavor to hold out to all, and to walk in this way of loving kindness, long-suffering and compassion towards everyone, in doctrine and life; esteeming it the wisest, most direct, effectual and Gospel-like course and way, thus to overcome the forwardness and evil that is in man, with leniency and goodness, even as God in this way prevented and overcame me. The more I can look into that gentleness, amiableness, and those fatherly affections in God through Christ Jesus towards me, and that secret bosom of divine love being laid open; the more are all fears banished, discontentment is swallowed up and I am heartened to go on cheerfully in a Christian course, as best becometh that holy and heavenly calling. And the more abundantly God's thoughts of peace are discovered unto me, the more peace and rest I thereby find bred and preserved in my thoughts. Robert Towne {"A Re-Assertion of Grace" 1654}

Law & Gospel Distinctions

If you and your partners in the ministry did go with a right foot in the foot of the Gospel, or tread in Paul's steps, the same would be charged upon you, and you might be glad to pretend or wipe off such slanders. Christ Himself,

saith Calvin, who is the wisdom of God, could not so preach the doctrine of free grace, but some took occasion from His words {as you from ours} to say or think that He destroyed the Law; hence was that prohibition: "Do not think I came to destroy the Law." {Mt.5:17} Do you think yourself more wise or cautious in your preaching than Christ or Paul was? If not; suspect yourself, in that you bear not the same reproach. The disciple is not above his Master; if Christ and Paul were counted as Antinomians and Abrogators of the Law, who will not take up the same cross? And it is remarkable, by whom they were so opposed, even by the preposterous zealots of Moses' Law; a generation which ever have and will hinder the free passage of the Gospel, and disturb the peace of the Church, like Cain, Ishmael etc. Robert Towne {"A Re-Assertion of Grace" 1654}

Law & Gospel Distinctions

By attributing too much to the Law, and our works, you obscure the glory of Christ and of free grace, mingle Law and Gospel, entangle and deject the hearts of the faithful, carry them from Christ and that union in spirit with Him, hinder the right exercise of faith and prayer etc., for which you teach that by the Law we received grace, conversion, sanctification; so that the Law makes alive, fills, builds and satisfies; it does not make us poor, feeble, humble, empty; nothing in ourselves, that so we may seek out for all, receive and live by the faith in Christ our Head, grow up in Him, and so be built up in this way of faith to the Everlasting Kingdom. Robert Towne {"A Re-Assertion of Grace" 1654}

Law & Gospel Distinctions

A believer walketh according to the rule of the Law; yet it is not by virtue from the Law regulating him, but from another power within, renewing and disposing the heart thereunto. He is like the honest Traveler, who keepeth the highway of his own accord, and taketh pleasure in so doing; and yet the work here is so imperfect, and he cometh so far short of what is in that Law, that he findeth and acknowledgeth a power therein threatening and condemning for it; so that his free justification by grace is his continual rock and refuge, and his faith therein the sole preserver of his peace and safety. But by your doctrine, there should be no more need of justification, of Christ, or faith after conversion; for the Law hath only a mandative power, say you, but none to condemn or curse. I'm surprised, that your own experience does not convince you of your error. Thus we teach and say; the Law, or more properly and plainly {that there may be no evasion} - God in His Law obligeth and bindeth unto that rule of perfect righteousness, and also to the curse inevitably for every fall and disobedience. You tell of a contradiction; but it is in your own senses, which cross and overthrow one another. And you deny God to have any sovereign or reigning power in His Law, but only a ruling, and that also with much mitigation and abatement of rigor in His justice, which yet is as indefinite as unwarrantable. Thus you exauthorize God in the kingdom of His Law. Robert Towne {"A Re-Assertion of Grace" 1654}

Law & Gospel Distinctions

You have some strange and unsound expressions in this section; for you grant a regenerate and unregenerate part, yet the man is but one, and his state but one, not two; and put the Law with its terror and compelling power to the flesh, what availeth this? Can this draw the flesh to the ways of piety, as you seem to imply? You imagine either that the flesh, being and remaining flesh can change the corrupt heart. It is simple and free believing that leadeth and carrieth the soul into the right way; and all the forcing and terrifying of the Law can provoke only unto an external and hypocritical obedience, such as is in the children of the bondwoman. If the spirit in the godly be not alway so willing, the Law cannot give aid and quickening to it, but rather dampeth and deadeth the spirit of faith and love, and doth vivify the corruption in nature, for so sayeth Paul, "when the commandment came, sin revived and I died," Rom.7:9, and again, "the strength of sin is the Law." I Cor.15:56. It's only faith in the Gospel of Christ that exciteth to all goodness cheerfully and joyfully. Noah, Abraham, Moses are said to do all by faith. Robert Towne {"A Re-Assertion of Grace" 1654}

Law & Gospel Distinctions

Methinks the preface itself should have been sufficient to have stopped you in this your way or opinion. Thus it is recorded, Ex.20:2 & Deut.5:6. "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out, &c.," out of which I collect, and it is plain and undeniable; that God was their God, and Israel were His people, before the giving of the Law; and that He did not in these words express His willingness and consent to be their God; if, or upon condition, they will keep His Commandments, which you call the first thing belonging to a Covenant. Therefore He saith, "Hear, I am thy

God;" that is, I am now already thy God; namely, by free promise in the Seed of the woman, Genesis 3; or as it was made to Abraham and his posterity. Gen.12:3, Gal.3:6. To Abraham and "his seed were the promises made." And unto this Promise or Covenant of Grace, they had given and professed their consent formally by their faith, and externally by receiving circumcision the sign of the Covenant, and so avouched God to be their only God in Christ, and themselves His people through Him. And He being their God and King, it pleased Him to deliver unto them His will in this way and form of government, according to which He would rule them, and they were to conform themselves to His pleasure herein. And this promise given by God, and believed by them so long before this promulgation and solemn delivery of the Law, was entire of itself, containing perfection of doctrine, and holding out a free and clear way to pardon, reconciliation and life. And therefore it was singly made and preached at first to Adam and Abraham, with his posterity; so that Paul saith {Gal.3:18,} that God gave the inheritance {that is, all the blessedness belonging to a child,} by promise, denying and excluding the Law in this matter. And hence is it, that {to prevent all objections against the doctrine of free grace} Paul saith, Rom.5:20, "Moreover the Law entered, that the offence might abound;" that is, the Law entered besides the promise of grace, which was the prime and principal doctrine; and it entered into the Church, or among the people of God, and yet neither to disannul, nor to add anything unto the former covenant or promise, Gal.3:15; as if, imperfect before, it was to be perfected thereby. Nor yet as it were to be mingled with the promise and so to adulterate it; but it was to be kept distinct from it, as being of another nature, and for another end, contrary to that of the promise. The Law was to uncover sin, terrify the conscience, exclude the soul from God's favor and presence; and the promise was to cover, to pacify and comfort, and to admit or give entrance with confidence through faith in Christ's blood. The Law was to make sin abound, that upon that occasion the amplex and efficaciousness of the grace promised in Christ might be made more abundant. Robert Towne {"A Re-Assertion of Grace" 1654}

Law & Gospel Distinctions

God dealt with them now, not absolutely indeed, but in relation to His promise formally made, by means of which He had freely chosen, and taken them to be His peculiar people; having long before said to Abraham, "I will be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." Gen.17:7. And hereupon the Martyr Mr. Bradford, intending to comfort one dejected and distressed in mind, upon consideration of some failing or lack of obedience, as I remember, wrote to this effect, 'Let this consideration be still in your mind, that before God asks anything of us, He saith that, He is ours; "I am the Lord thy God;" giving Himself, and then all that He hath, to be ours. And this He does in respect of Himself, of His own mercy and truth, and not in respect of us; for then were grace no grace.' In consideration whereof, saith the Martyr, 'Whatever He commands, though of duty we be bound to accomplish, and be culpable and guilty if not; yet He requireth the same no further of us, then to make more of His love, and more certain of this His Covenant, that he is our Lord God, which is made in respect of His grace in Christ Jesus, and dependeth nothing on our obedience.' So this Covenant is most free and most sure forever, and the only refuge and plea of the soul in the hour of temptation. It is more than evident then, that God as now, so from the first, stood reconciled to His people in Christ Jesus, and in Him became their God, and took them into that happy relation of being His people, His peculiar treasure and children. And all your Scriptures, if you now look on them again, do hold forth this, and can speak no other truth! Robert Towne {"A Re-Assertion of Grace" 1654}

Law & Gospel Distinctions

The Scripture doth not say; that Christ did actually take and do away sin, until He came and shed His blood for that purpose; and the object of their faith in the Old Testament was the promise of future good things, to be done and wrought by Christ when the fullness of time appointed came, Gal.4:4, so that God is said to have patience in bearing with His people till He received full satisfaction, Rom.3:25; and this finished and plenary work of redemption, that the Gospel holdeth forth to us, was the Object of their hope, who only lived in a certain expectation of it, according to the promise; yet did that faith and hope both sustain, deliver and serve them sufficiently according to that their condition; wherein it pleased the Father to place them. Their Gospel in brief was, that Christ should appear and take away sin; ours now is, that Christ is come, and hath fully accomplished it. He "loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood," Rev.1:5. They had the promise of this; but we have the performance. Robert Towne {"A Re-Assertion of Grace" 1654}

Law & Gospel Distinctions

Whatever your reason or ends may be for it, yet I see not any good or warrantable ground with us to take and handle the Law and the Gospel in a large sense, as you say; and when you have done so, I would know what of the

Gospel you conceive to be legal, and how much Law you take to be evangelical. - Indeed, we grant the godly Jews did enjoy what Christ promised; but it was by such ordinances as were of grace, and not of works, as is the Law; they eyed or looked at Christ in the promises, and not in precepts. Robert Towne {"A Re-Assertion of Grace" 1654}

Law & Gospel Distinctions

Now who needs to be regenerated and sanctified? He that hath a perfect and holy nature, or he that is a sinner and impure? If you think otherwise, what a deceiver you are, when you would persuade the filthy and the vile, that they may be changed and renewed by the Law of works. It is the Gospel or Word of Grace that justifieth and sanctifieth. God in that ministration we live under, is a free giver; and man, a mere receiver; for God having discovered and made bare the root and heart of man, so as he seeth his spiritual poverty and wretchedness by His Law, doth then open His graciousness and His bountiful hand by His Gospel, that the believing soul may be satisfied with His goodness in every way. So that now as a beggar he must live by alms of Divine liberality, being thus made to walk humbly with his God. "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." Ps.81:10. Robert Towne {"A Re-Assertion of Grace" 1654}

Law & Gospel Distinctions

So that to me it is clear, that in order of nature the doctrine that holdeth forth the graciousness of the Name and Nature of God in Christ, {in whom He is propitious,} ought first to be published; both because our conceits naturally are, that God will not favor and receive sinners, but the just and good are they only, unto whom the promises of acceptance and blessing do belong; and also in that God, in that ministry of the Law, hath already appeared unto the dejected soul in another form, and under a contrary notion, revealing wrath, threatening a casting off and shutting up all mercies in displeasure against it because of sin; for how else possibly can these natural and inbred conceits and false imaginations of God be raised out of the mind, and the soul be persuaded, that notwithstanding and beyond all that it apprehends of God in His Law, and is become sensible of, yet there is hope of mercy, forgiveness and redemption with the Lord. So that the effectual and immediate incentive and introduction to repentance and turning to God is the promise of grace by Christ Jesus. Robert Towne {"A Re-Assertion of Grace" 1654}

Law & Gospel Distinctions

Who will most heartily and experimentally, set up and endear Christ, and free grace? He who teacheth the Law to be only a rule of life, yet to have no reigning power, but disabling it from cursing and condemning, so that a man may bless himself, and find peace and rest in the righteousness of his own works; or he that teacheth that the Law is ever revealing wrath, threatening, and pursuing with the dreadful curse and vengeance all that are of the works of the Law, in that when they have done their utmost, they are come short of what it requireth; and therefore it will suffer them to have no rest, nor confidence, save in the righteousness of God by faith. Certainly, this man's doctrine will much more make Christ and free grace desired and prized by all that have any discerning spirit, and a broken and believing heart. Robert Towne {"A Re-Assertion of Grace" 1654}

Law & Gospel Obedience

When you promise acceptance, and speak peace to your people in case they endeavor to reform and conform according to the Law, and teach that the conscience of their sincere and holy walking must give them boldness and confidence towards God; and that it doth infallibly testify the truth of their conversion, and that they are in a state of grace {when most know not what grace is,} and that the favor of God may be regained by tears of repentance, loathing and avoiding of evil, and promises to amend, &c. And lastly, when you teach them to appear before God, to plead and deal with Him in their own righteousness, what do you else {yourselves being judges,} then cause men to hang upon their own righteousness, thereby to stand or fall, to be accepted or rejected, and so you establish a judicial righteousness, being far from the Evangelical Righteousness both of justification and sanctification, and then it's neither false nor absurd to charge you with this. But I wonder that you blush not to papistically slander us, as of those good works which arise from a true and lively faith, for the joy of favor and blessedness already obtained by Christ to declare the truth of conversion, to glorify God. Robert Towne {"Assertion of Grace" 1644}

Life of Faith

The just lives by his faith. {Hab.2:4} Thus I am a sinner, and no sinner; daily I fall in myself, yet stand in Christ forever. My works fail, His never can, and they are also mine. His righteousness is everlasting, and so are all the blessed fruits thereof, as peace, joy, life, acceptance, reconciliation, salvation. - How rarely you behold and worship God in Christ Jesus, in whom alone he hath put his name and Memorial there to be found. Robert Towne {"Assertion of Grace" 1644}

Repentance

How palpable also and dangerous to the simple, is your oversight, in that you attribute to repentance, first to knock at the door of mercy, to seek and sue for pardon, not giving over till it have got a gracious answer, that sins are remitted. Secondly, to wipe off old scores, repeal all the actions of the Law, get all sins cast into the bottom of the sea. Have you forgot, being transported with blind passion, or zeal of the Law, that without blood shed is no remission; {Heb.9:22;} or, that if you could weep a sea full of tears, yet they would be of no force or power to take away the least sin. For Christ by himself hath purged our sins. {Heb.1:3} And as touching conscience, only faith in this blood of Christ doth purify it. {Acts 15:9, Rom.3:25} You have, I think, outwardly subscribed to the established doctrine of our Church, which would have taught you truly, according to the word of God, that it is evident and plain, that although we be never so earnestly sorry for our sins, acknowledge and confess them; yet all these shall be but means to bring us to utter desperation, except we do steadfastly believe that God our heavenly Father, will for Christ sake pardon and forgive us our trespasses, and utterly put them out of remembrance in His sight. Robert Towne {"Assertion of Grace" 1644}

Repentance

If repentance be rightly understood for mortification, confession of sin, or the forsaking of ourselves {as it ought to be;} I say it's impossible that it should be separated from faith, being ever a companion of it, both in regard of the person justified, and of the time of working; for how can a man be prepared, or have way to faith, but by confession, {I John 1:9;} or how can a man be said to go to Christ, but necessarily there must be a renouncing of himself, {Phil.3:8;} or how can a man put on the white and precious garment of Christ, but he must needs cast and put off his own filthy and beggarly raiment of his own works? How can a man live and grow in Christ, but he must die and decay in himself? Surely, the believer liveth in a continual denial of himself, abhorring of his own ways; but this is not the whole, no the choice and chief of the day's work is behind; namely, to believe in the Lord Jesus. Hereby gets a believer all his life, peace, consolation, and blessedness; to repent is to condemn all our works, righteousness, and judgment, and the best things in us; and then by faith to flee to free grace. It's said, "repent and believe the gospel," {Mk.1:15;} that is, distrust and forsake your own righteousness, and embrace Christ in the promise. Robert Towne {"Assertion of Grace" 1644}

Satisfaction of Christ

Dr. Taylor charges us with this error. That God is not displeased with the sins of the justified. Answer: It is strange that you should give credit to such a report. Could ever any harbor such a senseless opinion, that fire and water, light and darkness, life and death, righteousness and sin could ever be agreed? The righteousness of God doth so necessarily, naturally, and immutably incline and move Him, to hate and curse sin, in whomsoever, that He spared not to pour such a sea of wrath, and vengeance upon that only Son of His love, when He stood before Him charged only with the sins of others. Can any think that God can be less displeased with sin in His adopted sons, which is also of their own committing, then He was with it on His natural Son, when it was only His by imputation? Or that Christ by His cross should destroy that enmity which was between sin and righteousness, and not rather abolish sin utterly, the sole cause of hatred, and variance between God and His elect, and so to make peace. {Eph.2:16} But I think there is some mistake here, an easy and usual thing among this kind of professors, who have little skill to concede or retain any sound Tenant of the Gospel, their eyes being so veiled, and their hearts so leavened with the Doctrine of the Pharisees. Thus perhaps it should have been delivered. That though the justified do sin continually, for in many things we sin all. {James 3:2} Yet God is not displeased nor angry with them; the ground of which seemeth to be this: That Christ remaineth forever a Mediator between God and His Church, {Heb.12:24,} speaking perpetually Peace by virtue of His blood, thereby banishing, and keeping away continually all the evils and failings of His peculiar from the sight and presence of His Father; and by means of His everlasting righteousness, {Dan.9:24,} the virtue and preciousness whereof infinitely exceedeth the evil of all sin, and doth preserve God and

His people in perpetual unity, communion and love. {Rom.5:1, Heb.7:25} If we sin, we have an Advocate, He is the propitiation for our sins. Christ doth not reconcile us to God, and then leave us in danger of procuring God's displeasure by our after failings and backslidings. No, the Scripture witnesseth an inviolable Covenant of peace and a life forever established in the death of the Testator; so that it is of free and pure grace without our dependency and conditions of our works or worth. The ground of our exception against that is, that you consider the nature of sin, and of God's justice, not regarding the atonement for sin, the virtue whereof extends universally to all sins, and times. Robert Towne {"Assertion of Grace" 1644}

Spiritual Warfare

Who can so hate and strive against sin, even at the first rising or stirring of it, as the believer? Can he have a continual care that Christ may dwell in him, and he abide in Christ, Eph.3:17, and yet have an unclean heart? All evil groweth out of the bitter root of unbelief, and all good ariseth from the true Faith. Robert Towne {"Assertion of Grace" 1644}

Unbelief

To men that abide in the unbelief of the Gospel, dallying with it, or not having that grace unto which the Apostle there exhorteth; which in effect is this, that all those are so threatened, who believe not Christ to be the Messiah, and the Mediator who hath made and brought in a full and everlasting atonement; whereupon followeth the serving of God acceptably &c. The despising or neglecting of this grace, doth most displease God, and is the main condemnation under the Gospel. John 3:19. And so long as the heart doubteth whether God be pacified, and become propitious in Christ, it can never please God. Heb.11:6. For no prayer, nor worship, with this unbelief or doubting in the inward parts, can be heard and accepted. "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed?" Rom.10:14. You say, if they sin not, they may find comfort. Answer: In what? Where is he that sinneth not, and can say that his heart is clean? All our comfort lieth in our discharge by Christ. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." Ps.32:1. Robert Towne {"A Re-Assertion of Grace" 1654}