

THE STUMBLING-STONE.

**OR A DISCOURSE
TOUCHING THAT OFFENCE WHICH THE WORLD
AND WORLDLY CHURCH DO TAKE AGAINST
CHRIST HIMSELF
HIS TRUE CHURCH
HIS TRUE WORD
HIS TRUE GOVERNMENT
HIS TRUE WORSHIP
HIS TRUE MINISTRY**

**WHEREIN THE UNIVERSITY IS REPROVED BY THE
WORD OF GOD.**

Delivered Partly to the University-
Congregation in Cambridge, and partly
to another in the same town.

BY WILLIAM DELL

MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL, AND MASTER OF
GONVILLE AND CAIUS COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

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Brief Biographical Sketch

William Dell, 1607–1669, Parliamentary Army Chaplain, and Master of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge. Dell was educated at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, and was appointed Rector of Yelden, a small village in Bedfordshire in 1641. From 1644 he served in the Parliamentary Army, and joined the New Model Army soon after its formation in 1645, serving under General Thomas Fairfax as a 'preacher of the army' in the campaigns of 1645–6, from the battle of Naseby to the siege of Oxford; and was the officiating minister at the marriage of General Henry Ireton to Oliver Cromwell's daughter Bridget, which took place at Holton in Oxfordshire in 1646, Holton being at that time the headquarters of Fairfax's army.

In June of 1646, he preached before Fairfax and the officers at Marston, a sermon entitled, 'The Building and the Glory of the Truly Spiritual and Christian Church,' which was published in the following year. In this message Dell referred to the New Model Army as a true spiritual church, and declared that the LORD would not allow this church to be overcome. In that same month of June, 1646, he entered Oxford, with the Army, which resulted in the surrender of the city. It would seem that he remained in Oxford for a few months where, according to Anthony Wood, {*Athenae Oxonienses*, 1691,} Dell became conspicuous by forcing himself into several of the churches in the town as a

preacher. Wood {in accordance with his own royalist bigotry, and often fantastical interpretations} goes on to state, "when the forces belonging to the Parliament were entered, who were all Presbyterians, Independents or worse, were among them their Chaplains of the same persuasion, who forthwith, upon all occasions, thrust themselves into the pulpits, purposely by their rascally doctrine to obtain either proselytes, or to draw off from their loyal principles and orthodox religion the scholars and inhabitants of the city. Among them were Hugh Peters that diabolical villain and pulpit-buffoon, William Dell, who was chaplain to Sir Thomas Fairfax, John Saltmarsh, William Erbury, &c., and what they did there besides, during their stay, is too large a story now to tell you."

Dell preached before Parliament on Nov. 25, 1646, a Fast Day on which they also heard a sermon by Mr. Christopher Love, the defender of the Presbyterian cause. {As a quick side note, Love in 1651, became involved in a plot to overthrow the Parliamentary government of Cromwell, in hopes of restoring Charles II as King of England. In May of 1651, he was ordered to be arrested on charges of high treason and was confined to the Tower of London. Within three months Love was convicted of treason and sentenced to death, and was executed on Tower Hill in London on August 23, 1651.} Dell's message {from Hebrews 9:10} in which he attacked the Westminster Assembly, argued for a separation of Church and State, religious toleration, and first and foremost for Christ as the chief Reformer of his

own church, was soon thereafter published under the title, "Right Reformation; or the Reformation of the Church of the New Testament represented in Gospel Light." In its Dedicatory Epistle, {addressed to the members of Parliament,} he makes the following statement, "if any think that I gave too much power to CHRIST, in the reforming of the Church, his own body; let them consider again, that too much cannot be given to CHRIST in GOD'S Kingdom, seeing he is all in all in it. Neither is that exaltation the Gospel gives to CHRIST in this business, any diminution to yourselves; neither by making CHRIST all in the Kingdom of GOD, are you made ever the less, in the kingdom of this world. But whatever power the Word of GOD hath given you, I will deny you none of it; nay, I will be among the first, that shall attribute it to you. And do desire, you would no more be displeased for attributing the Reformation of the Church to CHRIST alone, than the Redemption, Justification, Sanctification, or Glorification of it to CHRIST alone; the former being every whit, as great and glorious a work of CHRIST, as the latter. I do most willingly allow you your thrones in the Kingdoms of this World, but only desire to reserve to Christ his own throne in the Kingdom of GOD." Both the sermons of Dell and Love were published, with letters of mutual condemnation of one another's views, attached at the end. Dell's evaluation of Love's message can be summarized in his own words, "many other weak, passionate, inconsiderate, erroneous things fell from Mr. Love, neither worth the troubling of the reader

with, nor myself; and so they may perish and rot in their own grave, if they will, for they shall never receive a resurrection from me." In the light of such remarks Dell now became a marked man amongst many of the Presbyterian zealots, notably Baillie, Love and Rutherford, the latter remarking, {Rutherford's, Survey of the Spiritual Antichrist, London, 1647,} "among other Antinomians, Master Dell in his sermon before the House of Commons, excelleth in debasing the Scriptures, and all Ordinances, and setting up his enthusiastical spirit, not the Spirit of God."

On the day of the execution of King Charles, {January 30, 1649,} he was one of four ministers {the others being Joseph Caryl, Richard Vines & Edmund Calamy,} who presented themselves at St. James Palace, with a willingness to pray with, and speak to the King, if he would have allowed it. Another 'historian' {Cole} again intending to discredit Dell, and those in his connection, had these interesting remarks regarding this incident, "and on the morning of the martyrdom of King Charles, he, {Dell,} with other bold and insolent fanatical ministers, went with all the solemnity becoming a better cause, and all the confidence and assurance peculiar to the fanatical tribe, to offer their unhallowed services to the blessed martyr, whom they had just brought to the scaffold."

In April of 1649, Dr. Thomas Batchcroft was ejected from the headship of Caius College, {upon the restoration of the crown, he was reinstated in 1660,} and in the following month Dell was

appointed by Parliament to succeed him. During his occupation of this office {which lasted until 1660} he repeatedly took the opportunity from the pulpit of St. Mary's of denouncing the role of the University in their manufacturing of so-called ministers of the Gospel, excluded from communion all who were suspected of royalist leanings, and wrought havoc against the trappings of Popery, as its tenets had infiltrated the church.

In 1653 he preached at St. Mary's, in reply to a sermon delivered from the same pulpit in the previous year by Sidrach Simpson, master of Pembroke College, and one of the leaders of the Independent faction in the Westminster Assembly. Simpson, in a commencement sermon, had attempted to set forth the importance of classical learning and university culture generally in the training of a minister for his vocation. Dell, in his reply, {which caused quite an uproar, being spoken from within the academic circle,} made his argument that human learning was essentially irrelevant to the education of a true minister of the Gospel, vehemently denouncing the notion that such attainments were of any value as a means towards the better understanding of scripture, and even associating his own University of Cambridge with antichrist, and calling it the "throne of the Beast." He says, "and herein, according to the grace of Christ, I both do and will contend against it forever, seeing human learning mingled with divinity, or the Gospel of Christ understood according to Aristotle, hath begun, continued and perfected the mystery of

iniquity in the outward church. Wherefore I do in all boldness appear for Christ, the wisdom of God, against human learning, the wisdom of the world; knowing assuredly, that he is as very antichrist, who opposes Christ as the wisdom of God, as he that opposes him, as the power and righteousness of God, and men may as well bring into the church of God another righteousness than Christ, and another power than Christ, as another wisdom than Christ. Wherefore, as they who bring in human righteousness, that is, civil or moral righteousness, or any works or duties of men for righteousness, into the church of Christ, they are true antichrists in so doing; seeing herein they are contrary to, and do oppose Christ the righteousness of God, and as they who bring in human power, or the secular arm into the church of Christ, to do or leave undone, to reward or punish, to promise or threaten, to encourage or discourage by that, they are true antichrists in so doing; seeing herein they are contrary to, and do oppose Christ, the power of God. So also, they that bring in human wisdom, or the learning and philosophy of men, into the church of Christ, they also are true antichrists in so doing; for herein they are contrary to, and do oppose Christ, the wisdom of God; for Christ is, and is to be, the only power, the only wisdom, and the only righteousness in the church of God; and he that brings in any other power, wisdom or righteousness, besides Christ himself, that man is in very deed antichrist. And in this matter also, it was necessary that I should be bold for Christ against antichrist."

Upon the death of Cromwell, and the return of the King, Dell made post haste to abandon his position at Cambridge, and retired to his rectory at Yelden. This was in May of 1660, which was followed by a petition signed by thirty aggrieved parishioners from Yelden, who presented to the House of Lords, a request for his removal, naming amongst other things the fact that he allowed a tinker by the name of John Bunyan to preach in his pulpit on Christmas Day, 1659. A portion of the petition reads as follows. "He has reported that the King and his followers were like the Devil and his angels, and has approved of the murder of the King, and the taking away of the House of Lords; he has for twelve years past neglected the due administration of the Sacraments, in consequence of which many children are unbaptized; he has ceased to sing any psalms or read any chapters in the Holy Bible on the Lord's-day in the congregation... he has entrapped the gentry of the county into discourse, and then given false information against them; he hath declared in the public congregation that he had rather hear a plain country man speak in the church, that came from the plough, than the best orthodox minister that was in the county; upon Christmas Day, last one, Bunyan, a tinker, was countenanced and suffered to speak in his pulpit to the congregation, and no orthodox minister did officiate in the church that day. Since the restoration of the secluded members of Parliament he has declared that the power was now in the hands of the wicked, and that the land was like to be over flowed again with

Popery; he hath put forth several seditious books, and before the horrid murder of the late King he declared publicly in the congregation that the King was no king to him, Christ was his King; Venice and Holland were without a king, and why might not we be without; and that he did not approve of earthly kings." Probably, the Parliament had more pressing issues at this time, so thankfully for Dell, it was set aside.

In 1662, when Dell refused to subscribe to the Act of Uniformity, {which prescribed the form of public prayers, administration of sacraments, and other rites of the Established Church of England, according to the rites and ceremonies prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer,} he was ejected from his living on the 24th of August. He then moved to the small village of Westoning, where he died on Nov.5, 1669.

Due to his outspokenness on many issues which separated him from other believers of his time, it would seem that Dell walked a relatively isolated path throughout his life, though we can evidently see the Lord's gracious reign of grace mercifully exerted on his behalf, in sustaining him, as he sought to faithfully preach the Gospel of Christ, in those years when so many were risen up against him.

Dell writes in 1653, "through dissent from so many worthy and gracious men, that have been, and are otherwise minded; yet it is the less grievous to me, because I differ from them, {I can say it in truth before the Lord,} not out of any desire to be

singular, or for any worldly or carnal end whatever, but only that I might cleave to the clear and evident word of God alone; even there, where I see the very faithful to leave it; seeing I am rather to join to the word, without men, than to men without the word; and where I find the most holy men in the world, and the word parting, I am there to leave them, and to go along with the word." He concludes his Stumbling Stone treatise with the following paragraph, which seems a fitting conclusion. "But because I see this present generation so rooted and built up in the doctrines of men, I have the less hope that this truth will prevail with them; and therefore I appeal to the next generation; which will be further removed from those evils, and will be brought nearer to the word; but especially to that people, whom God hath and shall form by his Spirit for himself; for these only will be able to make just and righteous judgment in this matter, seeing they have the anointing to be their teacher, and the Lamb to be their light."

Preface

Here I present thee with this discourse, which met with such notable opposition and contradiction from the University of Cambridge, to whom it was delivered; and also from such of the town then present, who are baptized into the university spirit; and yet every point of this doctrine will appear, to spiritual men, to be the word and truth of God, and if need shall require, I can yet more fully prove it to be so, by the scriptures of the prophets and apostles, and by the doctrine of Christ himself, the Head of both; and that against, not only one, but all universities, and also against the gates of hell, and powers of darkness. And by this gross opposition against the plain Gospel, thou mayest judge and discern that this university, which hath been counted one of the eyes of the Nation, seeing sees not; and which hath been counted a fountain of knowledge and good learning, hearing hears not, neither understands; whereby we may conceive that gray hairs are upon it, and that the time of its departure is near, except it repent. I had thought also at this time to have given a further testimony for Jesus, against the mystery of iniquity which hath hitherto prevailed in the ecclesiastical state, and in the universities, the head and heart of it, but that this work under my hands, multiplied into too great a proportion for an epistle; and also because I intend to add thereunto my testimony against that mystery of iniquity which hath hitherto also prevailed in the civil state, antichrist having, with his deceivableness

of unrighteousness, seduced and deluded both, ever since the reign of Constantine; and this twofold testimony, {through grace given, and hoped to be given,} I intend very shortly to publish; for I judge it most necessary for the true church to be acquainted herewith, especially after so many of the seals have been opened; and also, seeing the time of the restitution of all things makes haste upon us, and we hope is even at the doors. Wherefore we continually entreat that the arm of the Lord would awaken, and put on strength; not only as in ancient times, and in the days of old, but more also, to wit, as his Spirit, by his prophets hath foretold he will do in the last time, when he will reveal his arm for Christ and his seed, in his greatest might and glory. And let the remembrances of the Lord not keep silence, till the cursed kingdom of antichrist, with all its religion, works, duties, doctrines, counterfeit law and Gospel, false clergy, false church, false power and jurisdiction or discipline, false ordinances, and false all things, be utterly overcome with the Spirit of Christ's mouth, and the brightness of his coming; and till the true spiritual church, that through faith, hope and love, lives out of this world, and the elements thereof, in the kingdom of God's dear Son, be made an eternal excellency, and the joy of generations; and till they who have afflicted it, and domineered over it, be made to come humbly bending to it, and to lick the dust of its feet, as the Lord hath promised. Further, I thought good at this time to advertise thee of the animadversions of Mr. Humphrey Chambers, called Doctor in Divinity, and

Pastor of Pewsey, in the County of Wilts, on a discourse published by me, entitled, the Crucified and Quickened Christian. In which Animadversions, {as he calls them; after Mr. Christopher Love's example, who was one of his forerunners in this opposition to the truth,} he hath, doctor-like, contradicted the manifest truth, and the very substance, marrow and mystery of the Gospel, which being made void {which yet is impossible as to the true church} there would be neither true righteousness, nor life, nor redemption, nor salvation, nor the true Christ, nor the true God in Christ, left remaining to believers; all which I make account, in due time, to make appear by the Scriptures, for I allow no doctrine that is not according to the doctrine of Christ, and the writings of his apostles and prophets, which are a most sure and infallible word, if they be understood according to Christ's mind, and not according to man's.

Now when I read those Animadversions, I found them very captious, slight, weak, and grossly erroneous, and somewhat like the Animadversions of the Sorbonists on some of Luther's writings; and this hath not been my judgment only, but also it hath been represented to me from godly and understanding Christians, that this great undertaking of this Doctor, is judged such by them, that it deserves no more refutation; his Animadversions, compared only with the discourse itself, being sufficiently forever already confuted by it. And truly I cannot but bless God, who hath given

his truth so weak an enemy, and error and darkness so weak a patron.

But by this the true church, may judge also, what a sad ministry these poor nations have received from antichrist's ordination, when the chief Doctors, the very Scribes and Pharisees among the clergy, do not know the very first principles of the Gospel in any spiritual light, or by any teaching from God; but all their cold, faint, and uncertain doctrine, they scrape from fathers and schoolmen, and from other ordinary systems of divinity; without any presence of faith, or anointing of the Spirit, whereby all their doctrine becomes carnal and corrupt, and contrary to Christ's mind, and agreeable to antichrist's, so that I cannot choose but conclude with John Hus, "that all the Clergy must be quite taken away, ere the Church of Christ can have any True Reformation."

Another thing hath happened in this matter, which makes me wonder, and that is this, that those few shreds of weakness and error, published by Mr. Chambers should be so honorably licensed by so famous a divine, as the present Vice-chancellor of Oxford, {Doctor John Owen,} a man of such excellent learning and judgment; but truly, such doctrine deserved such a license, that something at least might make it considerable; whereas the true doctrine of Christ, the word of Faith, the word of the Kingdom, hath a standing license from Jesus Christ, and comes upon the world as the rain and dew, without asking leave of man, or the son of man. But great places are greatly dangerous to those whose

faith is not stronger than their form; and so I leave this also to the wisdom and judgment of our Lord Jesus Christ, into whose hands God hath given all things.

Christian, acquaint thyself much with the word of God, and be much in the prayer of faith, for some of the angels are preparing to sound the last trumpets, and to pour out the last vials on the very seat and throne of the beast; and we hope, ere long, to hear that shout of triumph in the spiritual church, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, is fallen," and is now become the habitation of devils, and unclean spirits, which before was the habitation of hypocrites and false Christians, yet covered over with all the most glorious shows of religion and holiness, that the deceivableness of unrighteousness could put upon them. And now {if thou please} read on, and let the spiritual man judge, who judgeth all things.

WILLIAM DELL.

STUMBLING-STONE, &c.

“And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be
offended in me.” Matt.11:6.

These words are the conclusion of Christ’s answer to that question which John the Baptist propounded to him by two of his disciples, himself being in prison; the question was this, “art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?” Now it is much disputed, whether John himself did at this time doubt of Christ, or no, and several men give in several opinions, which I shall not now stand to recite; but almost all, both ancient and modern, do conclude, that John propounded this question to Christ, not that he himself did now doubt whether Christ were the true Messiah or no, seeing he had before given so clear a testimony to Christ, that he was the Lamb of God, that takes away the sins of the world; and had also baptized him with water; and had seen, at that time, the heavens opening, and the Spirit of God, as a Dove, descending and resting on Christ; and had heard the Father’s own voice, saying, “this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Wherefore they say, that John himself could not possibly, after all this, doubt of Christ; and therefore that he did not propound this question to him by his disciples for his own sake, but for theirs; that they, who before had envied Christ for their Master’s sake, and would rather have had John to have been the Messiah than him, might now be assured, and fully instructed, touching Christ, from Christ himself.

But for my part, I do conceive that John did propound this question to Christ for his own sake, rather than for his disciples; for though, when he lived in peace and freedom, he had a clear revelation from the Father, touching the Son, by the Spirit, and had accordingly clearly spoken of Christ to others; yet now, being in prison and bonds, and near unto death, he is brought, by great tribulation and temptation, to doubt of all that truth which before he had been taught of God, and even to question whether Christ were the true Christ or no? For, thought he, if he be the true Christ, why doth he not send redemption to me, who suffer for his sake, but suffer me thus to perish, whilst he might help me, if he be the Christ? And if he work miracles for others, as I hear he doth, why doth he wholly neglect me, who have given such an honorable testimony to the world of him?

And truly, brethren, we know not what place or power the Gospel of God our Saviour hath in us, till tribulation come; and so much of the true knowledge of Christ, and of true faith in Christ we have indeed, as we have strength in such hours. That truth which we confess freely in prosperity, we are fain to begin to learn it again in tribulation; and tribulation makes us learn the truth over again the second time; it makes us to learn that in experience, which before we had learned only in doctrine.

And how hard a matter it is to hold fast in trouble, that truth which we well know, and freely profess in prosperity. We may see, not only in John the Baptist, {who being in prison, doubted whether

Christ were the true Christ, after he had been so clearly taught him by God and his Spirit, and had so plainly confessed him,} but also in the disciples of Christ, who, though they had heard all his doctrine, and seen all his works, and had confessed him to be Christ, the Son of the living God, yet, when the high-priests were enraged, and the people in an uproar; and when they beheld the swords and the staves, and Christ was apprehended, and themselves in danger; they were all offended at him, and fled. Yea, we may see it in Christ himself, who, though the Father had testified touching him three times from heaven, saying, "this is my beloved Son, &c," yet when his suffering drew near, he exceedingly feared, and was amazed and astonished, and on the cross cried out aloud, "my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

My brethren, no man knows the grievousness and efficacy of tribulation, and the weakness and frailty of human nature, but they who have had experience of both; but this is the comfort of the faithful, that that knowledge of Christ and the Gospel which God hath taught us, and we have heard and learned from him, will certainly endure and hold out throughout all the greatest and longest storms of tribulation and temptation, though with much striving and difficulty; but they who have had much knowledge of the truth, and have made a glorious profession of it before men, and yet have wanted the true teaching of God, and true faith through that teaching, such, when tribulations and difficulties

have risen up, have quite departed from the truth, and have often renounced it.

We know not, brethren, I say again, what we do believe aright, touching Christ and his Gospel, touching the love of God to us, and the remission of our sins, &c., till distress, and tribulation, and death come; and what we are then, we are that indeed; yea, at such times, we are to be judged according to our faith, and not according to our sense and feeling.

Another was wont to say, "that in temptation he could hardly make use at all of that doctrine of the free grace of God to sinners, and of faith in Christ crucified," &c., which at other times he did preach in much knowledge and utterance. And he said another time, "that if he were addicted to God's word at all times alike, and could find such love and desire thereto in his heart always, as he did sometimes, he should reckon himself the happiest man in the world." Now from all these things I conclude, that John, being in prison, and being fallen into many tribulations and temptations, did send these two disciples unto Christ for his own cause, and for his own confirmation, as it is said in verses in 2 and 3, "now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and said unto him, art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" Whence we are further to observe, that John, in his doubting, sends to Christ himself, and would not turn aside to the Scribes and Pharisees, to take advice from them, or to demand their judgment. For true faith, in all doubtings touching

Christ, goes to Christ himself for resolution, and will be satisfied from none but Christ.

And Christ is as ready to satisfy John, as John to inquire and ask; and so he returns him this answer by his disciples, in verses 4 and 5, "go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see; the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them." And now let John himself resolve his own question, whether I am the true Christ or no. Go, show John the things you see and hear. Where you see, that Christ doth not say in plain terms that he was the Christ; yea, he often forbad men to say so; but he would have his works and his word declare what he was, that our faith might have a sure foundation.

Christ would be known by his works. The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, &c., and so everywhere in the Gospel, Christ would be known to be what he was by his works; particularly in John 10:24, when the Jews came round about him, and said, "how long dost thou make us doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus thus answered them, verses 25, "I told you, and ye believed not; the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me," and in verses 37 & 38, he saith to them, "if I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works; that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him." Thus you see, that Christ will be known to be what he is by his

works. For Christ, the power, wisdom and righteousness of God, is a most lively and active principle, and cannot lie hid where he is present and dwells; but when this word was made flesh, that is, came into the flesh, it did manifest itself to be in that flesh, by doing the works of God; and without the works of God, the presence of the eternal Word in the flesh of Christ had not been known. Wherefore Christ is called God manifested in the flesh, and not hidden; and he was manifest to be God in the flesh, by doing the works of God. And as Christ is known by his works, in himself the Head, so also in the church his body; for wherever Christ's presence is, there also are his works; and where his works are not, there neither is his presence. If Christ be present in our hearts by faith, his works will be undoubtedly manifest in our lives.

Now if any shall say, but it is not necessary for every Christian to do the works of Christ here mentioned, to wit, to cause the blind to see, and the lame to walk, &c.

I answer, yet however, there are other works of Christ besides these, which are inseparable from his presence, as the work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope, together with the self-denial of Christ; the meekness, lowliness, goodness, long-suffering, heavenly-mindedness of Christ; as also his readiness and diligence to do the will of God, and his cheerfulness to suffer it; these works, I say, everyone ought to perform that is a Christian, that so Christ may still be known by his works; as the apostle saith, "show me thy faith by thy works;" that

is, let me know the presence of Christ in thee, by the works of Christ. And thus is Christ known by his works, both in himself and in his members. And thus much touching the works of Christ in general.

Now, for the kind of the works which Christ did, as, to give eyes to the blind, and strength to the lame, &c., it is to be noted, that they all are such works as the prophets had foretold the Messiah should perform when he came into the world, as Isa.35:4-6, "say to them that are of a fearful heart, be strong, fear not; behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing, for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert," and he that did these things, thus foretold by the Spirit, must needs be the true Christ; and these works were a demonstration of the efficacy of his unction.

And thus Christ doth here describe himself by his own proper works, as one whose business, employment and kingdom, lies with the poor, lame, blind, and all sorts of diseased, afflicted, sorrowful and distressed persons; and these poor creatures he doth not neglect and despise; but his proper office is among these, and these he comprehends in the greatest love, and pities with the tenderest bowels, and minds and tends with the greatest care and diligence, and relieves, and helps, and saves them perfectly.

Whence first we learn, that Christ's kingdom brings good to all, but it receives nothing from anybody; for it carries in it all the unsearchable riches of God, and stands in need of nothing that man can do. Wherefore it entertains not the rich, and full, and noble, and honorable of the world, and such as abound already, and have enough in themselves and the creatures; but only the poor, and needy, and afflicted, and desolate; and it supplies these freely and richly, and sends the other empty away. And this is the true nature of Christ's kingdom.

Secondly, seeing Christ, in his proper office, hath only to do with the poor and afflicted people, we may learn to make a right judgment of Christ, that is, that our Lord Christ is such a sweet Saviour, that in him is nothing but love, and mercy, and goodness, and compassion, and kindness to such as are in distress, and in grievous fears and agonies from the sense of sin and wrath, and from the presence of death and hell working in them. And we must believe Christ to be such an one as the Gospel represents him, that we may come to him with comfort, and put our whole trust in him, in all times of sin and sorrow, and in all hours of darkness and temptation; and let us never entertain any other thoughts of Christ than these, but let us hold him unchangeably for such an one as the Gospel reveals him, whatever the law, or our evil consciences, or the devil shall suggest to the contrary; and then, in all our distresses, we shall not be afraid of Christ, as of a severe lawgiver, and an inexorable judge; but

may run to him as to our merciful and powerful Saviour, whose proper office is among the afflicted. And thus we see that Christ is known by his works, and what kind of works they are.

Secondly, Christ would be known by his word. And as Christ is known by his works, so also by his word; and therefore he saith, "go, and show John, the things you see and hear," and the things you hear, as well as the things you see, and that is, that the poor have the Gospel preached to them. For Christ's works and Christ's word do always go together. Christ's life is always accompanied with Christ's doctrine, and his works with his word. The best works that any man can do, without the word of the Gospel accompanying them, are not Christ's works; and the most glorious word that any man can hold forth, without the works of Christ accompanying it, is not Christ's word; but Christ's works and Christ's word go always together, both in himself the Head, and in the true church his body. Wherefore Christ saith, "go, show, to John the things you see and hear, the things you see; the blind receive their sight, &c., the things you hear; and the poor have the Gospel preached to them." Now the Gospel is the free promise of God, in which nothing but mere love, mercy and grace is conveyed in Jesus Christ to them that believe, though they be never so great and grievous sinners in themselves. And nothing is more joyful than this to the soul that is under the sense of sin and wrath; and he that receives this word of grace by true faith, doth not weigh a feather all the terrors of law, sin, death and

hell. So that all the outward works of Christ are a small matter, if compared with the Gospel. Now this Gospel is preached to the poor, that is, to the poor in spirit; and these are such, who do not love, nor desire, nor delight in present things, but are so afflicted and oppressed in their hearts and consciences, with the sense of sin and wrath, that they regard not the world, nor the riches, pleasures and honors of it; but all they mind or care for, is Jesus Christ, and in him the love of God, and the remission of sin, and the gift of the Spirit. These are the poor to whom Christ preaches the Gospel, and they only regard and entertain the Gospel; whilst the lovers of this world, and the lovers of themselves and this present life, care not for it.

And thus is Christ known, by preaching the Gospel to the poor. The ministry of Moses was full of wrath, terror, and death to sinners; but Christ's ministry holds forth nothing to the greatest sinners in the world, that are sensible of sin, but the free grace and mercy of God to them, even to them, in pardoning their sin, and giving them righteousness; and by this word, Christ is well known to the whole true church of God.

And as Christ is known by his word in himself the Head, so also in the church his body; for wherever Christ is present, there is his word as well as his works; and where Christ's true word is not, neither is his presence there. Wherefore all the faithful, as they have received the Gospel themselves, so they hold forth the same Gospel to others upon all opportunities; according to the

covenant which God made with Christ, touching his seed, which is mentioned, Isa.59:21, "as for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the LORD; my spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, {that is the Gospel,} shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and forever." By which scripture we may learn, that the ministry of the New Testament is a common ministry, belonging equally and alike to all the seed of Christ, that is, to all true believers; for when Christ dwells in their hearts by faith, who shall hinder Christ in them, from speaking the word of God by them?

For God doth not consider men as the world doth, to wit, as they are tradesmen, or gentlemen, or scholars, or clergymen, but he considers men as believers, or unbelievers. And if they be unbelievers, then are they destitute of the true presence of Christ, and of the true word of Christ, whatever their outward condition be in the world; yea, though they are scholars and clergymen; and if they are believers, then have they Christ's true presence and word with them, whatever their outward condition is in the world, yea, though they are gentlemen or tradesmen; and every one of them saith with David, and with Paul, "I believed, therefore have I spoken."

So that we are not to conceive of the spiritual church, according to any outward state or condition in the world, but according to faith, through which Christ dwells in the hearts of believers; and if Christ,

the living word of God, dwell in them, he will not keep silence.

And this confession of the word before the world, Christ requires of all believers alike, saying, "he that confesseth me before men, him will I confess before my Father," and before his angels; and there is no true and right confessing Christ, without holding forth the word and doctrine of the Gospel. So then, every one that is of God, speaks God's word; and he that speaks it not, is not of God; for in all the true children of God, the Spirit of their Father speaks in them. And thus the true presence of Christ is known, by the word of the Gospel in the church his body, and in every one of his members, as well as in himself the Head. This doctrine, the carnal church is a great enemy to, and will not suffer Christ to speak by whom he pleaseth, that so all men may be necessitated to hear its clergy, whether they speak the word of Christ or no. But of this, more hereafter.

And thus you have seen, how Christ gives forth himself to be known by his works, and by his word; and without these two, we can have no certain testimony of him in the world. Now Christ, having returned this full and satisfactory answer to John, to declare to him who he was, adds this in the conclusion, "and blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me." For notwithstanding the works and word of Christ, which are the works and word of God in the flesh, yet the wisdom and prudence of the flesh, and the religion and righteousness of the world, which do not much regard those things, do

find much matter of scandal and offence in Jesus Christ; wherefore Christ saith, "blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me." Now in discoursing, touching the offence which is taken against Christ by men, I shall observe this order; I shall show. 1. Who they are that are offended at Christ. 2. What those things are whereat they are offended, and why they are offended at them. 3. What a great evil it is to be so offended. 4. What a great blessedness it is not to be so offended; and finally make some use of all.

1. Point. Who they are that are offended at Christ? And here I affirm, first, that the whole world in general is offended at Christ; for they, living without the word and Spirit of faith, must needs be offended at Christ, by all those scandals which are raised up against Christ by the devil and men; and they all, having a false apprehension of Christ, do suck in as readily as a spring doth water, whatever, aspersion and reproaches are raised against him, and so must needs be offended at him; and therefore saith Christ, Matt.18:7, "woe be to the world because of offences," for offences must needs come, and the world will needs receive them, and therefore, woe be to the world. So that the whole world, that is, whosoever are not true believers, and born of God, are all offended at Christ and his Gospel; and all the children of the first Adam are offended at the second Adam, who is wholly unlike to them, yea, and in all things most contrary to them.

Yea secondly, not only the common people of the world, vulgar and contemptible men, are offended at Christ, but also all the chief and choice men of the world, kings of the earth, and rulers, and judges, and magistrates, as in the second Psalm, and all the best, and most learned, wisest, and greatest, and most honorable men, these all are offended at Christ, I Cor.2:8, "which none of the princes of this world knew," he means it of philosophers as well as of secular powers; and not knowing him, they crucified him.

Not the world only are offended at Christ, but also the worldly and carnal church, the outward, visible, national church, this is very much offended at him. This we see in Christ's time, that the only visible church of God in the world, the church of the Jews, {for the church of the Old Testament was a visible church, but the church of the New Testament is a spiritual church, and not visible,} I say, the Jewish church, which had the law of Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms, and observed all the outward ordinances of God exactly, they were all offended at Christ, and made an order, that whosoever acknowledged him, should be excommunicated, and cast out of the Synagogue. And this offence was foretold by Isaiah, 8:14, where he saith of Christ, and he shall be "for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem." So that not Babylon only, but Jerusalem; and not the heathen only, but both

the houses of Israel, were offended at Christ; and this makes the evil yet more grievous.

And yet this is not all; but secondly, and not only the carnal Christians, but the carnal clergy are offended at Christ; and not only the common people of the national church, but the chief rulers, the most eminent, and in appearance, most godly and holy, and orthodox of the clergy, are above all others most grievously offended at Christ. This also we see done in Christ's time, when the Scribes and Pharisees, and rulers of the people, men of great reputation and renown for religion and righteousness, these were chiefly, and above the rest of the church, offended at Christ; and as Christ everywhere was most sharp against them, and did most reprove them, so they did most bitterly oppose Christ. And this also was foretold by the Spirit of prophecy, Psalm 118:22, "the stone which the builders refused, is become the head of the corner," and this rejected stone, is Christ himself; and these builders, were the chief rulers and governors of the church; and accordingly, both Christ and the apostles applied this scripture to them, as you may see in Matthew 21:42.

So that the builders that teach, and instruct, and govern the church, and are reputed the best and most profitable and necessary men in it, yea, the very pillars of the church, so that all would come to nought and to ruin without them, these are the men that are most offended at Christ.

These are the husbandmen mentioned by Christ, Matthew 21, that conspired against the Son of the Lord of the vineyard, and killed him; and these

have been, and still are, the chief and great outward antichrists in the world.

Now when the people see the rulers and governors of the church, who are thought to have more knowledge, learning, light and religion than others, offended at Christ, this exceedingly increases their offence; and when they see the builders rejecting, and throwing away this stone, this causes them to reject him also with the greater indignation.

And thus you see that this offence at Christ, is a great and a large evil, and is spread over all the world and worldly church, and very few there are who do escape it. And this for the first thing.

2. Point. At what things in Christ they are offended, and why they are offended at them. Now the world and the worldly church are offended. 1. At Christ Himself. 2. At his true Word. 3. At his true Worship. 4. At his true Church. 5. At his true Ministry. 6. At his true Government. Of these things I shall speak in order, according to the good hand of God with me; and shall desire to be so faithful to Christ, as not to depart one hair's breadth from his truth, though it may be, it will come to pass that all, or the greatest part of you, will be grievously offended at it. I begin with the first, and will show, that the world and worldly church are offended.

1. At Christ Himself, and they are offended at him in many respects, of which I shall mention these five.

A. They are offended at the meanness of his outward condition in the world. For indeed he was in

a very low plain, simple, and contemptible condition, in the days of his flesh, as any ordinary tradesman in this town, and lived with Joseph, in his trade of a carpenter. Wherefore Paul saith of him, Phil.2:7, that he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; that is, he was in the outward condition of any ordinary man in the world. Now this mean condition of Christ did much offend them; for, thought they, is this the Christ, of whom all the prophets have spoken such glorious things, whom all the Jews expect, and who is the desire of all nations? Is this he whose name is Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace; of the increase of whose government and peace there should be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with justice and judgment, from henceforth and forever? Is this plain ordinary man the Messiah? How can this thing be? For they thought that the true Christ, of whom such excellent things were spoken, should be some great prince, or learned priest; and that that form of a servant, and mean condition in which he was, could in no measure agree, or be suitable to the true Christ; and for this cause, they were greatly offended at him, and thought him not worthy to be in any place of reckoning.

B. They were offended, that he, being in so mean an outward condition, John the Baptist should yet speak such high things of him, and he of himself. John the Baptist testified of him, that he was the

only begotten Son, in the bosom of the Father; the Lamb of God, that takes away the sins of the world; the fountain of the fulness of all the saints; the beloved Son, into whose hands the Father had given all things; and that he that did believe in him, had everlasting life; and he that did not, should not see life, but the wrath of God should abide on him, &c., and these all were wonderful things, to be spoken of one whose outward condition in the world was so plain and contemptible. And as John had spoken these things of Christ, so Christ everywhere gives forth himself as the Son of God, and said, he and his Father were one. And this exceedingly offended the Jews, as you may see. "Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God." Jn.5:18. So, John 10:31-33, "then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, many good works have I showed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me? The Jews answered him, saying, for a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God." And so they were all offended at this mystery, God manifest in the flesh, in the flesh of so mean and despicable a person in the eye of the world.

C. They were offended at Christ, because in him was no human or worldly thing, which any natural or carnal man could possibly like of, or delight in; he exercised no worldly wit, wisdom, reason, learning, parts, nor anything that might

commend him to the world; neither did he live in any outward forms of religion or worship, which might commend him to the carnal church. There was nothing in him but the presence and manifestation of God, the word of God, the righteousness of God, the nature of God, the Spirit of God, the works of God, and God was all in all in Christ; and God is wholly contrary to the world, and the world to God; and so the world and worldly church were wholly offended at Christ, he being altogether in the Father, and the Father in him, in such sort, that the Father in him spake all the words, and did all the works, and he could neither do nor speak anything of himself; he was taken up unto so near union and communion with God.

D. They were offended at the reproaches and misreports that went commonly abroad touching Christ, raised, for the most part, by the Scribes and Pharisees, and rulers of the church, because they knew, and were assured, that Christ's prevailing would be their undoing; therefore they gave out that he was a sabbath-breaker, a blasphemer, an unlearned and ignorant man, and that made him err; a vicious man, a glutton and winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners; and that he had a devil, and was mad; these were the common reports that were commonly divulged abroad touching Christ, and that by the teachers of the best repute in the church; and the common people reckoned them to be very true, and thereupon were horribly offended, both at Christ's doctrine and works. And thus was Christ a very sign to be spoken against,

which Isaiah foreseeing in the Spirit, speaks thus in the person of the offended Jewish church, Isa.53:3, "he is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not." And Christ himself, by the prophet, complains of this usage, saying, they laid to my charge the things that I knew not; but yet these false reports so far prevailed, that he became a stranger to his brethren, and an alien to his mother's own children.

E. They were offended at him because of his bitter and shameful cross and sufferings; and herein lay the height and depth of that offence, for which the world and worldly church look at Christ. For the ecclesiastical power condemned him as a deceiver and blasphemer, and they also prevailed with the secular power to condemn him as a seditious person, an enemy to Caesar, and a rebel; and so, after all the works of God which he had done, and works of God which he had taught, they at last crucified him between two thieves, by the common consent of all the people, and thought to have destroyed the Son of God, as if he had been the son of perdition. And in all this bitter suffering, no body afforded him the least pity or compassion, but the common people mocked him, and said, "he saved others, but cannot save himself; if thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross." And this usage Christ complains of to his Father in Psalm 22:6-8, where he saith, that he, by his cries, had no deliverance, which yet others, who had trusted in God, obtained; but, saith

he, "I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn, they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, he trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him, let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him." And Isaiah saith, that by reason of this strange suffering of Christ many were astonished at him; his visage was marred more than any man's and his face more than the sons of men; and through this suffering of Christ, all the world were so extremely offended, that Christ crucified, was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness.

And thus was, and is, the world and worldly church offended at the true Christ, whom the scriptures hold forth. Indeed, the false church have fancied to themselves such a Christ as flesh and blood can like of well enough; a Christ fashioned after the mind, and will, and wisdom, and prudence and righteousness of man; and such a Christ they extol and magnify, to wit, for their own worldly advantage sake; as the Papists have fancied the poor virgin his mother, who kept Joseph's house, and provided his diet, and laid her hands to the performance of his ordinary household affairs, to be a gallant lady, and have clothed her in silk and satin, and rich attire; and such a mother of Christ they do highly esteem; whereas the poor virgin, the true believer, who lived in the plain and laborious employment of a family, they would even scorn to regard such an one. No more will the carnal church regard or value the true Christ, in his mean condition

and marred visage. And thus much for their offence at Christ himself.

2. The world and worldly church are offended at Christ's true word, because Christ, under the New Testament, hath given forth a new word, which is the word of the Gospel; and this also they are offended at in many respects.

A. Because it is the word of faith; the word of faith, and not of sense; the word of faith, and not of works. For this word of faith is wholly a spiritual word, and hath nothing in it that is suitable to flesh and blood; nothing in it that pleaseth the fancy, or reason, or understanding of man; it hath nothing in it wherein a natural or carnal heart can take pleasure, but is throughout a word of faith.

B. They are offended at the new word of the New Testament, because it exalts Christ alone, and in him the power of God, and the wisdom of God, and the righteousness of God, and the things of God; and cries down all the things of the world, in which men trust and delight, and all the common religion and righteousness of the world, and makes Christ all in all, and God in Christ, and all other things nothing. So Paul preached to them that did believe, I Cor.1:24, Christ the power of God, and Christ the wisdom of God, and nothing else.

E. They are offended at this word, because it cannot be learned as human arts and sciences can, to wit, by the teaching of man, together with their own pains and endeavours, but only by the teaching of God and his Spirit, as it is written, "they {that is, the true children of the spiritual church} shall be all

taught of God," he therefore that hath heard and learned of my Father, {saith Christ,} cometh to me. "All my divinity," {said Luther,} consisteth in this, "that I believe that Christ only is the Lord, touching whom the scriptures speak, and that neither my grammar, nor Hebrew tongue taught me this, but it is the work of the Holy Spirit." Now when God teacheth us his word himself, we have another understanding of it than other men, who hear and read the same outward words, and yet want that inward teaching; for then have we the spiritual meaning of the word, and the very mind of Christ in it, which others want, that are not so taught; and this offends the carnal Christians grievously, that the spiritual Christians have another knowledge and understanding of the word than they; whereupon they thus break out, "what, say they, are you the only men who have the word of God, and is all wisdom and knowledge comprehended in your breasts? And do you know more of the mystery of Christ, than the grave and learned men who have studied the scriptures all their life? And will you, with your pretended teaching, overthrow that orthodox sense of the scriptures that we have had so many years?" And thus they are greatly offended.

F. They are offended at this word, because it discovers the wickedness of the world and worldly church, at a very high rate. The world doth not seem the thousandth part so wicked anywhere else, as it doth where the Gospel comes. For where this clear light of God shines, and the word comes in any degree of truth and power, there, not only the

wickedness of the world appears out of measure wicked, but also the religion, and righteousness, and works, and duties of the carnal christians, are manifested to be gross hypocrisy, and the deceivableness of unrighteousness, and wholly contrary to Christ, the righteousness of God, and so nothing else but a more plausible way to death and hell. Where the word of Christ, or the Gospel of God comes in power, there many who before seemed very godly and religious people, and very good christians, and very quiet and peaceable men, do presently become full of wrath and rage, and cursed enmity against it; and call it error, and heresy, and blasphemy, and so do no less than spit in the very face of the truth and Gospel of Christ, which he hath magnified above all his name; and no man could ever have imagined they had been such children of the devil, before the word came. And thus, by the coming of the word in the spiritual sense and doctrine of it, many that did once seem to be Christ's friends, are manifested to be his utter enemies. And this also was foretold by Simeon, Luke 2, where he saith, that by the coming of Christ in his word, the thoughts of many hearts shall be revealed, and then that unbelief and enmity against Christ, that before lay hid, is discovered and brought forth by the preaching of the word as we have seen heretofore, and still see by daily experience; and for this cause also they are offended.

G. They are offended at the true word, because everywhere so few entertain it, and embrace it, as when Christ himself preached, there

were very few in all Judea and Jerusalem that entertained his doctrine; and though sometimes many thronged to hear him, yet at another time they were so offended at this doctrine, that they all forsook him; so that Christ said to the twelve, "will ye also go away?" John 6:67. Now this makes many to be offended at the true word, that when it comes to any town or people, the far greater part should reject it, and speak evil of it; and they, for the most part, the greatest, wisest, and most learned men; and that only a few poor and contemptible people should receive it; this also exceedingly offends.

H. And lastly, they are offended because the true word of Christ, where it comes in any evidence and demonstration of the Spirit, brings troubles, tumults, stirs and uproars in the world, according to that of Christ, Matt.10:34, "I came not to send peace, but a sword; for I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law." For the true word of Christ, is such a sword as cuts in sunder all natural and civil relations, and takes away the peace of any place where it comes in power. Christ saith also, "I am come to send fire on the earth, and what will I if it be already kindled?" Luke 12:49. This fire that Christ sends is the word, in the ministration of the Spirit, of which the Lord saith by the prophet, "is not my word like as a fire, saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" Jer.23:29. And this word comes to burn up all the corrupt manners, fashions, customs; yea all the

lusts and sins of the world, and all the antichristian doctrine, and forms of worship in the outward church. And when this fire begins to burn anywhere, presently all the people are in an uproar, and lay all their heads, and use all their hands together to quench it. So that, wherever the true word comes, the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing; the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against it, and say, "let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us," Psal.2:3, which no flesh and blood, especially the rich, wise, learned, and honourable, would endure to be bound in. Now this exceedingly offends; for they say, before this kind of word came in, all things were better and quieter. Under Episcopacy all things were well and in good order; but since this new doctrine came in, all things are full of trouble, mischief, wars and death; and therefore they reckon this word the cause of all the evils we have and do endure. But yet the cause of all these tumults are not truly in the word, but in the world, and in the devil. Christ will have his christians to publish his word, and thereby to gather together his elect unto him. Now the world and the devil, the prince of it, will not suffer this to be done quietly, and hence arise all tumults. The devil, who hath the first possession of the world, would have all things quiet, that he might keep his possession; but Christ will not suffer it to be so, but he will have all those whom his Father hath given him, out of the devil's possession, by the might and efficacy of his word; but the devil will not endure that this should be done

quietly, but stirs up all the world against the word. And so wherever the word comes in truth, there are always troubles and uproars; but where the word is preached, and the world is quiet, that for certain is not the true word of God.

Wherefore the dull and drowsy divinity of synods and schools, cannot be the true word of Christ, for that meets with no opposition and contradiction at all from the world, or worldly church; it meets with no enemies and avengers amongst them, but it is rather praised and embraced, and honoured with degrees and scarlet; and the professors and publishers of it are in credit with men and worldly powers, and receive from them riches, honour, and quiet life; whereas the true doctrine of Christ can never be published without the offence of the world. And thus much for their offence at the true word of Christ.

3. They are offended at his true worship. For Christ, under the New Testament, hath instituted a new worship, and this the world and worldly church are also greatly offended at. Because this worship is wholly spiritual, and hath nothing carnal in it, but consists altogether of grace and truth, according to that of Christ, Jn.4:23, "the hour cometh, saith he, and now is, that the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him; God is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth," and there is no worship in truth, but that which is in Spirit. And Paul saith of true believers, Phil.3:2, "we are the circumcision, who

worship God in the Spirit, and have no confidence in the flesh." Now this spiritual worship stands in faith, hope and love, whereby our old nature is mortified, and we bring forth spiritual fruit unto God, and to our brethren in Christ. And this worship of the New Testament being wholly spiritual, is free from time, place and person, as all spiritual things are; and so at all times, and in all places alike, this worship may be performed by all persons alike, who are true believers; and so accordingly do all true believers, at all times, and in all places alike, believe in God, and trust in him, and fear him, and love him, and delight in him, and speak good of his name; and also do good to their brother, in instructing, teaching, exhorting, comforting him, and helping him as freely as Christ hath helped them; and this is the chief, and indeed the only true worship of the New Testament. For the Gospel hath taught us that Christ is the true temple, wherein the Church of the New Testament, which is a kingdom of priests, are all alike to worship God, without any difference or distinction of persons; and also, that Christ is our rest as well as our righteousness; and it is as great a sin to make another rest than Christ, as it is to make another righteousness than Christ; for in him alone we are complete, and furnished to all things that appertain to the kingdom of God; and stand in need of nothing out of him; wherefore it is said, Heb.4:3, "he which hath believed, is entered into the rest," that is, into Christ and his righteousness; and so hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Now the world and worldly church are greatly offended at this

spiritual worship; and that first, because it makes no great show, and presents no glorious outside to the world, to win their favour and applause, and so they despise it as a notional or melancholic thing. And secondly, because this is wholly out of the reach and power of the natural man; and no man, by his free will, or natural abilities, can attain thereunto. Wherefore they are offended at this kind of worship, and would have a worship in the days of the Gospel, after the manner of the worship of the law; a worship standing in outward works, and duties, and ceremonies, and in observation of days, times, places, and persons; and much scandalize that worship, which stands only in faith and love, and makes void all other things.

A. They are offended at the true church of Christ, because Christ, under the New Testament hath set up a new church, which is not outward and visible, as the church of the Old Testament was; neither carries in it any worldly pomp, power, and glory, as the church of antichrist doth, but is wholly spiritual and invisible, and as utterly unknown to the world, as Christ himself. The true church, under the new law, is the congregation of spiritual men gathered together; not in one outward place, but in one faith, hope and love, in one Spirit, in one Christ, in one God. It is the company of the faithful and elect, which have Christ for their Head. And this church is not known by any outward orders, or forms, or ceremonies, or manner of life, but only by the word of faith; seeing this true spiritual church is conceived and formed, is brought forth and brought

up, is fed and clothed, is strengthened and adorned, is protected and perfected by this word of faith alone; yea, the whole nature, and life, and being, and action of this church, is in the word of faith.

B. They are offended at this church, because it is the habitation of God, and his very kingdom, wherein he himself is present, is manifested, speaks, works, reigns, is glorified, and is all in all in it; and so it will not receive unto itself anything of the power, wisdom, and righteousness of man. They are much offended to hear that this church is the temple of the living God, and that God hath said it himself, that he will dwell in them, and walk in them; and that God is in them of a truth, and not by fancied habits of created grace; and that they are filled with all the fulness of God; and that they are living stones in that building, wherein Christ himself is the chief corner stone; and that they are all built together by the Spirit, to be the habitation of God. This doth so exceedingly offend them, that is, causeth them to blaspheme, in crying out against this doctrine of the Spirit of God, as blasphemy.

C. They are offended at this new church of the New Testament, because it will be the church of God alone, and will not acknowledge any to be of it but such as are born of God, and have obtained like precious faith with them; and so will have no constant communion with any, how skillful soever in the letter of the word, and how eminent soever in outward forms of religion, but only with such who have true fellowship with the Father and the Son in the Spirit.

D. They are offended at this church, because usually, God calls unto it, not the great, and honourable, and wise, and learned; but mean, plain, and simple people, according to that of Paul, I Cor.1:26, "you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen; yea and things that are not, to bring to nought things that are." So that this true church consists of a small company of poor, mean, simple, base and despised men, in the eyes of the world and worldly church; yea, of such, who in their judgment, deserve to have no place nor being in the world; and who, now, out of their own choice, would willingly join themselves to such a congregation?

E. The great and worldly-wise people are much offended at this church, because of its outwardly afflicted condition in the world, it having fellowship with Christ in all his sufferings; and so is always reproached, despised, slandered, torn, spit on, buffeted, crucified and mocked; and from all, most, or some of these sufferings, the spiritual church is never privileged in the world; and by reason of these things, the visage of the true church seems foul, deformed, and offensive in the eyes of men, whilst the national and carnal church is highly favored, esteemed, and preferred itself, and hath its chief teachers honoured with scarlet and furs; so

that, if Christ were on the earth again, in his mean and plain condition, he would be ashamed to own them, and they would be as much ashamed to own him. And thus much for their offence at the true church.

5. They are offended at the true government of this church, because Christ, under the New Testament, as he hath set up a new church, so also he hath set up a new government of this church; and this also offends in many respects.

A. In that Christ will have none brought to his church by outward violence and compulsion, though he have all power in heaven and in earth; but in the day of his power, that is, of the Gospel, he only entertains the willing people, and compels no body against their wills, Psal.110:3, seeing he seeks not his own profit, but ours. Our Lord Jesus Christ gathers his true church on earth, according to the counsel and mind of his Father in heaven, and so will entertain none but whom his Father draws. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Jn.6:37.

B. They are offended at his government, in that, in his true church, he makes an equality between all christians through faith; and will have none over one another, but will have all to serve one another in love; and so he will have him that would be the greatest, to be the least of all; and him that would be the chief, to be the servant of all; as himself came not to be served, but to serve and to give himself a ransom for many. And he was greater than all the children of God, not through any worldly

greatness, lordliness or dominion, but through his teaching, and instructing them, and loving them, and serving them, and suffering, and dying for them; and besides this greatness, there is nothing but equality in his church.

C. They are offended at his government, in that Christ doth nothing in his church by the decrees or constitutions of ecclesiastical men, or by the secular arm and power of the magistrate; but he doth all by his word and Spirit, and nothing else, and these alone, without the addition of anything else, are infinitely sufficient to do all that Christ would have done in his kingdom.

D. In that he will have us to love our enemies, and to do good to them that do evil to us, and to pray for them that persecute us, and despitefully use us. He will not have us to be enemies to any, or to do evil to any, or to persecute and use despite to any; he will have us to beware of false prophets, but not to destroy them; and to avoid heretics, but not to kill them; and will have neither of them burnt with any fire, but the fire of love.

E. In that he will have all things in his kingdom, ordered and done only by the law of love, and nothing by any law of violence or compulsion. Now this kind of government of the true church, doth grievously offend the world and worldly church, and the governors of both; because they know no government of the church at all, but that of the ecclesiastical and civil power intermingled; and if this be made void, they can do nothing at all in the government of the church; but think, according to

their unbelief, all things presently will come to confusion; for they want faith to commit the government of Christ's own church to his own care, by his Word and Spirit. And thus they are offended at this true government also.

F. And lastly, {for I will name no more particulars at this time,} they are offended at Christ's true ministry. Because Christ, under the New Testament, hath erected and constituted a new ministry; not through any ecclesiastical ordination, but merely through the unction of his Spirit, without any regard at all to a man's outward calling or condition in the world, but whether {as I said before} a man may be a scholar, or clergyman, or gentleman, or tradesman, if Christ call him, and pour forth his Spirit on him; that, and that only makes him a true minister of the New Testament.

And of this new and offensive ministry to the world and worldly church, Christ himself was the first. For he was not of the tribe of Levi, as the apostle saith, Heb.7:13-14, "but of the tribe of Judah, of which Moses speaks nothing touching priesthood." How then did Christ become the first and chief minister of the New Testament? The Spirit of Christ tells us by Isaiah and Christ himself tells us, saying, "the Spirit of the Lord is upon me; for he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor, to preach good tidings to the meek, to bind up the broken-hearted, &c." So that our Lord Jesus Christ, being {according to the dialect of antichrist} a layman, and having never learned letters, nor been brought up a scholar, but being brought up with

Joseph in the trade of a carpenter, and not ordained, neither by the church of the Jews, nor allowed by them, was yet the first and chief minister of the New Testament, through the unction of the Spirit only.

Now the worldly church were extremely offended at this very thing, as you may see in the Gospel, Matt.13:54-55, Jesus came into his own country, and taught them in the Synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, {for no man spake like him, for he taught with authority, and not as the Scribes,} but they said, whence hath this man {this ordinary man} this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary, and are not his brethren and sisters all with us? And they were offended in him; that such a man that had no degrees, nor ordination, should yet be a minister.

And as Christ himself was the first minister of this sort, so he chose others in the same manner. He chose fishermen, and tent-makers, and publicans, plain men, and of ordinary employment in the world, and only put his Spirit on them, and this was their sufficient unction to the ministry. And thus it was foretold by Joel, 2:28, "and it shall come to pass in the last days, saith the Lord, that I will pour out of my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and daughters shall prophesy." There needs nothing to the ministry of the New Testament but only God's pouring out his Spirit. Wherefore Christ bids his disciples stay at Jerusalem till they should receive the promise of the Spirit, and then they should go forth and teach. And so after, as believers received

the Spirit, so they became ministers of the New Testament, as we see in the Acts of the Apostles, and in the first three hundred years after Christ. For there is but one only ministry of the New Testament, which is common to all men alike, who have received the Spirit of God, and to none else, though never so excellently qualified with natural abilities, and human learning. For the things of the Gospel are altogether invisible things, and cannot be known but by the teaching of the Spirit, though a man have all the wisdom and knowledge in the world. As Paul declares, I Cor.2:8-10, "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man understood the things that God hath prepared for them that love him; but God hath revealed them to us {believers} by the Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, but the spirit of a man that is in him; even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world {which, for its highest perfection, hath only human wisdom and knowledge} but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." Where we learn, that the things of the Gospel, and of the kingdom of God, are not known at all, nor discerned in the least measure, but by God's Spirit; which Spirit is given to all that believe, and this Spirit alone is sufficient, both to enable us to know clearly and certainly the things of God, and also to publish them unto others, and nothing of man, or the creature, can add to it.

Wherefore, when Christ chose his ministers, according to his Father's counsel, he chose not the wise and learned, but plain, simple men; that it might appear to all the world, throughout all ages, how infinitely able the unction of his Spirit alone is, without any addition of anything else, for the ministry of the New Testament. And Christ, upon the serious consideration of this strange choice of God by him, breaks forth into this thanksgiving, Matt.11:25, "I thank thee, Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, that thou hast hid these things {that is, the word of faith, and mystery of Christ, and his kingdom} from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to babes; even so, Father, because it pleased thee." And David, admiring this wonderful dispensation, speaks thus in the joy of his heart, Psal.8:1-2, "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the world, who hast set thy glory above the Heavens," and then showing wherein this high glory of God appears, saith, "out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength, because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger." God useth no other instrument to overcome the greatest enemies and avengers that arise in the world and worldly church, than the strength he ordains out of the mouth of babes and sucklings, that is, true believers, who live only on the sincere milk of the word. The Lord had all the world before him, to have chosen out of it whom he pleased, to be the instruments by whom he would hold forth his word and Gospel to all nations; yet in his infinite wisdom, and gracious

counsel, and good pleasure, he would pass by the wise and learned men, and great philosophers, and subtle disputants, as Paul affirms, I Cor.1:19, that God hath said, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent." God is so far from making use of human wisdom and prudence in the Gospel of his Son, that he quite destroys it, and brings it to nothing; wherefore Paul adds, verse 20, "where is the wise; where is the learned, {or lettered man,} where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe." By the foolishness of preaching, that is, by the word of faith, out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, which the world reckons foolishness; by this alone, doth God bring about the salvation of the elect.

Now at these things how grievously are the worldly wise, and deep learned ones {as they esteem themselves} offended; that God's Spirit alone should be a sufficient unction for the ministry of the New Testament, and that God should, on set purpose, lay aside the wise and prudent men, and choose babes, and out of their mouths ordain his great strength, to set up Christ's kingdom in the world, and to destroy the kingdom of Antichrist.

Yea, this doctrine will chiefly offend the University. Objection. For you will say, if this be so, what need is there then of our philosophy, and of our arts and sciences, to the ministry of the New

Testament? And what need is there of our acts and ecclesiastical sermons? And what need is there of our scarlet and tippets? And what need is there of our hoods and caps, &c. If the unction of the Spirit alone be sufficient for the right ministry, and Christ do perfect his praise by the mouths of babes and sucklings, then what need is there of all these things? I answer. No need at all, as to Christ's kingdom, and the ministry of that; for it is one of the grossest errors that ever reigned under Antichrist's kingdom, to affirm that universities are the fountains of the ministers of the Gospel, which do only proceed out of Christ's flock. And because you will be greatly offended at me for speaking thus, you shall hear what Luther saith to this matter, upon these words, "but there were false prophets among the people, as there shall be false teachers among you," II Pet.2:1, the word Peter uses here is false doctors, or false masters; and Luther saith it came to pass by the singular counsel of God, that our teachers should be called doctors and masters, that it may appear to all whom Peter here means; and he further saith, that Peter hereby doth undoubtedly tax the universities, in which such men are created, and out of which have proceeded all the preachers in the world; so that there is no town or city under the whole kingdom of Antichrist, which hath not such doctors and masters as are created in the universities. For the whole world {saith he} is of this opinion, that the universities are the fountains whence they should flow, who ought to teach the people. Now this {saith he} is a most horrible and abominable error,

so that nothing has proceeded, in all the world, out of anything, so much to be opposed, as out of the universities. Wherefore {saith Luther} Peter saith that all these are false masters and false doctors.

Objection. Now if any say, this doctrine being commonly taught and received, will throw down the universities; I answer. If the universities will stand upon an human and civil account, as schools of good learning for the instructing and educating youth in the knowledge of the tongues and of the liberal arts and sciences, thereby to make them useful and serviceable to the Commonwealth, if they will stand upon this account, which is the surest and safest account they can stand on; and will be content to shake hands with their ecclesiastical and antichristian interest, then let them stand, doing the good pleasure of God; but if they will still exalt themselves, above themselves, and place themselves on Christ's very throne, as if they had ascended up on high to lead captivity captive, and to give gifts to men for the work of the ministry; and so will presume to darken the glory of Jesus Christ, and his true ministry, which He sends forth, as his Father sent Him; then let them, in the name of Christ, descend into that darkness, out of which they first sprang, that the glory of Christ may fill the world.

And thus have I declared how the world and worldly church are offended at Christ, and his word, and worship, and church, and government, and ministry; and so consequently at all his things.

And now I proceed to the third general that I propounded; to wit, to show, how great an evil it is to be thus offended at Christ and his things. And this appears in many particulars.

1. One evil is, that to be offended at Christ and his things, is a certain evidence that men are wholly ignorant of Christ and of God, though they be called christians, and have the name of God always in their mouths, for if men knew Christ aright, and God in Christ, it were impossible they should be offended at Him; and inasmuch as they are offended, it is certain they do not know Him by any revelation from the Father. Wherefore Christ tells his disciples, John 16:3, that the chief ground of that offence which the world and worldly church should take against them who are his true members, and have received the same word and Spirit with him, through true faith, is, because they have not known the Father, nor him. For he that knows Christ in christians, is not offended at them; and he that knows God in Christ, is not offended at Him. But they that are offended at Christians, know not Christ; and they that are offended at Christ, know not God.

2. When men are offended at Christ and his things, it is a sign they are real unbelievers, whatever forms of godliness they may live under; and though it may be they have been old professors; for Peter saith, Christ is precious to them that believe; wherefore, they that are offended, are destitute of faith.

3. They that are offended at Christ, lose all that spiritual and eternal advantage that comes by

Christ to true believers; and so fall short of the love of God in Christ, of reconciliation with God in Christ, of the righteousness, wisdom and power, and of all the fulness of God in Christ; of eternal redemption from the law, sin, death, and hell by Christ; and of all that great salvation that is in and by him; and Jesus Christ is wholly in vain to them.

4. When men are fully and irreconcilably offended at Christ and his things, it is a sign they are of the wicked one, of the seed of the serpent; as Christ told such offended Jews, "ye are of your father, the devil; and my sheep hear my voice; but you hear it not, {but are offended,} and therefore you are none of my sheep."

5. They that are offended at Christ are utterly ruined through such offence; wherefore Christ is called a stone of stumbling, and rock of offence to them that are disobedient, and stumble at the word, and he is said to be set for the fall and ruin of many in Israel. Christ saith, "whosoever shall fall on this stone, shall be broken; but on whosoever it shall fall, it shall grind him to powder." Matt.21:44. For whoever stumbles, or dashes against this stone, dashes against God himself in the nature of man. He dashes against the counsel and decree of God; against the wisdom and understanding of God; against the love, mercy, righteousness, truth, and power of God; against the eternal Word and Spirit of God; and no man perishes like that man, for he incurs all that wrath, vengeance, destruction, and damnation, which the Lord God himself, in all his infinite wisdom, knowledge, righteousness, justice,

and power, can inflict on him to all eternity; and so he is indeed ground to powder.

Yea further, that man that stumbles against Christ, is not only ruined by such offence, but ruined without all means or hope of recovery. They that are broken against him, and by him, are broken in pieces like a potter's vessel, which can never be made up again; they that fall against him, never rise again; they that are ruined by him, are never repaired again. If a man were dashed in pieces by Moses, he might be repaired again by Christ; but he that is destroyed by the Saviour, by whom shall he be saved? He that was condemned by the justice of God for sin, might recover again by the love and mercy of God in Christ; but he that is destroyed by the love and mercy of God, is past all hope and remedy.

Wherefore I entreat you to consider this thing with all your hearts, for nothing makes such ruins in the world, as the sin of being offended against Christ and his Gospel. This is the sin that ruined Jerusalem of old, and Germany of late; and if anything undo this Commonwealth, this will undo it; the offence that is taken by mean men, and by men in place and authority, against Christ and his Gospel.

And this is the sin also that is like to undo and ruin the university, and to raze it down to the very ground, even your horrible envy, enmity, and opposition to the truth of the Gospel. When Christ's word, or the truth as it is in Jesus, is hated, opposed, derided and scoffed at in your colleges, in your schools, in your meetings; yea sometimes in your

pulpits; this sin will dash you in pieces, that you shall find none to recover you. This sin will engage against you the Son of the living God; and when his wrath is kindled against you not a little, but to the very utmost, for so great wickedness, shall then your masters, Plato, Aristotle, Pythagoras, &c., be able to deliver you? Or shall Thomas and Scotus, and other schoolmen, with their cold, vain, and antichristian divinity, help you? Or shall the secular arm, and worldly power {whom you have seduced for many ages} be able to shelter you in such an hour? No certainly; but if you continue in your bitter enmity against the true and spiritual word and Gospel of Christ, Christ lives and reigns to bring you down wonderfully, and to make your name a shame and a curse to the whole true church of God. And this poor contemptible doctrine of the Gospel, which you hear today, and {it may be} most of you despise, and esteem no more than a straw for strength; this very word shall prevail against you, and triumph over you; and the poor people of God, that small handful of believers that are amongst you, whom you despise in your hearts, and reckon but as the filth and off-scouring of the place, even they shall see your downfall, and shall say, "thou art righteous, O Lord, who hast judged thus," and shall say again, "even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments."

And this now have I spoken in faithfulness to Jesus Christ, and in faithfulness to his true church, and in faithfulness also to the university, that they might hear, and avoid that ruin, which will otherwise

inevitably befall them for their offence at Christ and his Gospel. And now let them that can receive it, receive it, and let them that cannot, deride and reject it; but whether you receive it, or whether you reject it, sure I am, I have spoken the truth, which God himself, in his due time, will witness to, and so much also for this point.

The fourth point is, the blessedness of them that are not offended at Christ, according to Christ's word here, "blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me." Now those very few who are not offended at Christ and his things, when the whole world and worldly church are offended, their blessedness does appear in many particulars.

1. As first, in that it is evident that they all are taught of God, and have heard and learned from the Father himself, touching the Son. And they that see Christ by the revelation of the Father are not at all offended at him, when all other men are. For such do clearly see Christ's power in his weakness; his glory in his reproach; his exaltation in his abasement; his divine nature in his human; they see his sufferings were for our sins, his stripes to heal us, his death to deliver us from death; and all this they know, not only by the letter of the word, but also by the revelation of the Father in their hearts, and so they cannot be offended at Christ, who see him thus. Wherefore when the world and worldly church had many different opinions of Christ, and Peter, notwithstanding, acknowledged him to be the Son of the living God, Christ replied, "blessed art thou, Simon, for flesh and blood hath not revealed

this to thee, but my Father which is in heaven." And this is thy blessedness, that thou knowest me by the revelation of the Father, and so knowest me aright, and art not offended. He then that is not offended at Christ, when all other men are, hath for certain the Father's teaching, and sees Christ far otherwise than the world and worldly church do; he sees Christ in all his mystery, and in all his glory; and when we see him thus, we value him never the worse for the form of a servant, nor for all his reproaches and sufferings from the world, but we rather behold these things with the greater wonder and comfort; seeing, for our sakes, he humbled himself from the form of God, to the form of a servant, and in that form to the death of the cross.

2. They are blessed, because, through this revelation of the Father, they have true faith in Christ wrought in them. For true faith in Christ doth necessarily follow the Father's revelation, and when God teaches us Christ, we must needs believe in him; and through this faith we know him by experience; and he that knows Christ through the experience of faith, finds and feels Christ to be all that to him, which the scripture speaks of him. He, through this faith, feels "Christ to be made unto him of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption," and all things; and Christ, being through faith, made all that to him, which he is in himself, it is not possible he should be offended at him. Further, through this experience of faith, Christ becomes precious to him; as Peter saith, I Pet.2:7, "to you who believe, he is precious," that very

Christ, which to others is a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, is precious to them who have been given faith, and know him by experience; so precious, that they esteem all the greatest and most excellent things in the world but dross and dung in comparison of him; and such believers have chosen to part with their liberty, their estates, their relations, and their own lives, all which are precious things in themselves, rather than they would part with this infinitely more precious Christ.

3. They are blessed, in that, through this faith they have been establishment, as Christ saith, on this rock I will build my church; and he that hath Christ for his only foundation, is never offended at him, whatever scandals the world and the devil raise up against him; but he that hath another foundation than Christ, to wit, either his own works and righteousness, or the world, and the things of the world, when scandals come, they are presently offended, and their offence against Christ declares they are not built on him. But they whom nothing can offend, are surely built and established on Christ, and in this they are blessed.

4. They who have received the revelation of the Father, and through this revelation, true faith, and through this true faith, firm establishment, are further blessed, in that all such are past perishing; for he that cleaves so inseparably to Christ, that nothing can offend him, and is so firmly built on Christ, that nothing can remove him, it is impossible for him to perish by anything. Wherefore it is said, "behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect and

precious; and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded." And saith Christ, "on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail."

5. And last of all, they that have escaped the offence of Christ, are sure of salvation, for such do truly partake of all that infinite and everlasting advantage that is by Christ; they partake of his own righteousness, and wisdom, and truth, and power, and nature, and life, and word, and Spirit, and of all his fulness; and thus they have true possession of the beginnings of eternal life, as John saith, "these things have I written to you that believe, that ye may know that ye have eternal life abiding in you," I John 5:13, and Christ saith, "I give unto my sheep eternal life," that very life which was in the Father, and was communicated to Christ, and manifested in his human nature. And in all these respects are they blessed that are not offended at Christ, as Christ affirms, "blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me." And so now I proceed to some uses.

To warn all sorts of men, that they take special care that they be not offended at Christ, and the things of Christ. You have heard that the world, and the wisest, and greatest of the world, and that the worldly church, and the most holy and religious in that, are offended at Christ; and you have heard also how great an evil it is to be offended, and how great a blessedness it is not to be offended; wherefore I do advise you from the word, to take

care that you be not found amongst them who are offended at Christ.

Objection. But you will be ready to say, we hope we are not offended at Christ, but we do love, honour, and embrace both Christ, and the things of Christ. To this I answer, that many do usually say they are not offended at Christ, and it may be, some may think so too, who yet indeed, and before the Lord, are grievously offended at him; as may thus appear.

1. For first, he that is offended at the true word of Christ, is offended at Christ himself; for Christ is the word, the Gospel word, the word that was with God, and was God, that came into the flesh; and that spake, and suffered, and died, and overcame all in that flesh; and Christ said it was expedient for the church, that he should withdraw his flesh, or bodily presence, and only continue that presence of his with them, which is by the living word of God, through the Gospel; and this is that Jesus Christ who is present with believers to the end of the world. And so he that is offended at the true spiritual word, held forth by the confession of faith, is offended at Christ himself, who is present in that word; wherefore saith Peter, I Pet.2:8, "he is a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence to them that stumble at the word." Most people adore the outward name of Christ, but yet cannot endure the true word of Christ. Now all that are offended at the true spiritual word of Christ, and right doctrine of the Gospel, are offended at Christ himself, and stumble at that stumbling-stone. And thus multitudes are

offended at Christ, who think themselves very free from this sin.

2. They that are offended at true believers are offended at Christ himself. For they are in the world as he was, and walk as he did walk; and they are one flesh and spirit with him; they are his members, they are Himself; and whosoever is offended at them, is offended at Him. For Christ is the self-same, both in himself the Head, and in believers his members. And these are the children of God, together with Him the first-born, and these are comprehended in the same love, chosen with the same choice, called with the same calling, sanctified with the same holiness, kept by the same power, and glorified with the same glory; these partake of the same divine nature, and have the same word and spirit dwelling in them, in the same righteousness, wisdom, grace and truth; and there is no difference between Christ and them, but what is between the Head and the members, the first-born and his brethren. And so, they that are offended at these, would as certainly and necessarily be offended at Christ himself, if he had lived in their time, or if they had lived in his time. It is manifest then, that they who are offended at the word of Christ, and at the works of Christ, at the nature and life of Christ in believers, would have been offended at them in Christ himself. Yea, they who are offended at Christ in believers, would much more have been offended at Christ in himself; because what is in a Christian but in part, was fully in Christ; and what is in a Christian in a small measure, was

in Christ without measure; and there was in Christ a far more glorious presence and manifestation of God, than in any Christian; and proportionably would they have been offended at Him in himself, who are truly offended at him in his members.

3. They who are offended at the sufferings which come on christians for Christ's sake, are offended at Christ himself, because they suffer not on their own account, but on Christ's, and the cross they take up and bare, is His, and not their own. If they would live as other men, in the common religion of the nation, and make use of the form of godliness without the power; and comply with that doctrine and discipline which the clergy shall allow for orthodox, and the magistrate accordingly approve and confirm, then might they live as quietly and prosperously as other men; but because they cleave only to Christ, and take him for their only master in the things of God, and receive his word in faith, and then hold it forth to others, therefore the world hates them; as Christ said, "I have given them thy word, and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, as I am not of the world." Wherefore every true Christian, who speaks and professes the word of faith, the word which exalts Christ alone and his things, and throws down all other things of the world, though in the highest esteem with men, must needs meet with his enemies and avengers, his Scribes and Pharisees, his Herods and Pilates; and now, when the carnal church, which hath the favour and countenance of the state, sees poor christians, for the word's sake,

suffering all the hatred, malice and rage of the world, and worldly church, they are greatly offended at them; and in being offended at them, they are offended at Christ himself; for it is his cause in which they suffer, and not their own; and it is he who suffers in his cause, more than they, as is evident by that complaint of his, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" I say, as it is Christ that is, and doth all in his true saints, so also it is he that suffers all in them; and they who are offended at these sufferings of believers, which they suffer in and for Christ are offended at Christ himself. And in these three respects it doth plainly appear, that many who pretend to honour the outward name of Christ, are yet indeed grievously offended at him.

The second use is another caution, to warn all men to take heed, that they be not offended themselves at Christ, neither be troubled nor offended with the offences of others, but when we see the whole world and worldly church offended at Christ and his things, let us take care that we be not offended also; but let us consider.

1. That it is no new thing that Christ and his Gospel should be stumbled at, and contradicted by the world and worldly church. For thus it was foretold by the prophets, and thus it hath been done ever since Christ was manifested in the flesh. In the days of his ministry, his doctrine was so contrary to carnal reason, and the human apprehensions of men, in matters of religion, that many of his disciples said, this is a hard saying, who can bear it. Yea, many of his disciples murmured at his doctrine,

and went back, and walked no more with him; and all along, during Christ's ministry, many were snared, and stumbled, and fell, and were broken thereby; and he that is troubled and offended at this, must get him another Christ, and another Gospel; for the true Christ is set for a sign to be spoken against; and the true Gospel is set for a word of contention and contradiction to the carnal christians, and to the whole world. Wherefore, when we see, in our time, the world and worldly church offended at Christ and his Gospel, let us know that thus it hath been from the beginning; and let us know that as Christ and his Gospel, are the same now as they were then, so the world and antichrist, and the devil, the head of both, are the same also; and therefore it cannot be, but Christ and his Gospel must suffer the same contradiction in our time, as they have done in all former times.

2. That we may not be offended with the common and general offence of others, let us consider that Christ and his Gospel are never the worse for the offence which the world takes at them; but Christ is still the Son of the living God, and the Gospel is still the power of God to salvation, to everyone that believes; and Christ and his word do still remain a sure foundation for the true church of God; that Christ crucified, which is to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness, is, notwithstanding, to them who believe, Christ the power of God and Christ the wisdom of God. So that Christ is not the worse for the world's being offended at him, neither do the faithful think him the worse.

Nay, the more vile he is to others, he is still the more precious to them.

3. Let us consider that notwithstanding all the offence of men, Christ and his Gospel still remain and continue what they are, and cannot be prevailed against. Men may be offended at Christ and his word, but they cannot destroy and extinguish them; but they still remain, and do always prevail against all things that oppose them. Wherefore, to deliver us from the scandal of all men's being offended against Christ, we are to consider, that as all the world have been, are, and will be against Christ, so Christ and his kingdom shall rise up and increase against all the world, and against all their thoughts and endeavours; and all their councils, contrivances, and industrious actings, shall not be able to hinder the kingdom of Christ from prospering, and growing great; but it shall arise, and stand up in all its glory, out of the midst of all the offences and contradictions in the world. Wherefore, Christ and his kingdom are called a tried stone; for he hath long ago endured whatever the world and worldly church could do against Him, and whatever the might and malice of men and devils could do against Him, and yet hath overcome all. All that have opposed Him have been dashed in pieces by Him, in the several ages of the world; and he and his kingdom still remain, and shall remain forever; for he is a sure tried stone. And they, in this town and university, who are the most grievously offended at the word, shall not, by all their subtilty, malice, slanders, evil-speaking, nor by anything they can say or do, design or undertake,

be able to prevail against it; but they must shortly die, and depart out of the world, and in despite of them, leave this word of God behind them, to live and flourish, and overspread the world. And these considerations, if entertained by faith, may keep us from being offended at the offence of the whole world. And thus for the second use.

In the third place, I shall show you how believers ought to carry themselves in the midst of those offences that are taken against Christ, and against themselves for Christ's sake, that is, his life and doctrine's sake.

1. First then, we ought to be careful to abide in Christ, and to walk in Christ; to speak all our words, and to do all our works, and to live our whole life in Christ, and in his Spirit; that so the world may not be offended at us who are nothing, and do nothing in ourselves, but at Christ in us, who is and doth all in us; and then, as we shall certainly be established and preserved in Christ, through our abiding in him, so they shall as certainly perish, and be ruined through His abiding in us, and their dashing against Him in us.

2. To carry ourselves aright in the midst of offences, let us be sure that the word we believe and hold forth is Christ's word, and then we may be very confident that this truth and cause shall and must remain, how many adversaries soever it may have; and though the world and devil may rage against it, yet {as hath been said} they shall never be able to overthrow it, much less to root it out. A true Christian must be able to say, I know the word which

I believe and profess, is the only word of the Lord God, and his everlasting and unchangeable truth, and the last manifestation of his will by his own Son; and whatever word agreeth not herewith is false, and of the devil, and antichrist; and therefore, by this word will I stay, though all the world be against me. And when we are thus certain of the word of God, through faith and the Spirit, it comforts the heart, and makes it glad, and settles it in inward peace and rest, in the midst of all outward oppositions and troubles, as through God's goodness we have found by experience. For when we know that the word which we have received and profess, is the very doctrine of the Son of God, then also we know that it shall prevail against all kingdoms, commonwealths, states, governments, societies, universities; against all laws, orders, decrees, acts, and against all sorts and degrees of worldly and ecclesiastical powers, which are contrary thereunto; and shall, in the time appointed by God, utterly consume them, and bring them to nothing. And by these means, to wit, by abiding in Christ, and being all in Him; and by being sure that the word we believe and profess, is His word, we may live safely in the midst of all offences, without the least prejudice.

Lastly, I shall speak a few words to those in this university and town, who are offended at Christ and his Gospel; and also a few words to those, who {through the grace of God} have escaped this offence, and so shall conclude this matter.

And first for you who are offended at Christ and his word, {which we must needs say is come amongst you in truth, and in plainness,} and are angry at it, and storm at it, and reproach it, and think and contrive how to resist it, and to hinder the free course and passage of it in this place; because it is not only contrary to the philosophical divinity of the schools and university, and the common carnal religion of the nation, but doth also reprove and condemn them, and will have the haughtiness of men bowed down, and the pride of men laid low, and the Lord Jesus Christ and his things only exalted; and that here, where the wit, and wisdom, and parts, and learning, and accomplishments of men, have ruffled it, and reigned hitherto; I say, you that are thus offended for this cause, are offended at Christ himself, and at God in Christ, and you do stumble at the stumbling-stone, and shall so fall thereby, as to be broken in pieces; yea, this stone itself shall fall upon you, and shall grind you to powder, and you shall "be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power," and this destruction shall be poured on you with the greatest severity and wrath, that God himself can inflict in all his infiniteness and eternity; for if {as the penman of the epistle to the Hebrews saith} the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, what escaping can there be for them who neglect that great salvation, which was published at first by the Lord Christ, and afterwards confirmed by the first

believers, and witnessed to by signs and miracles, and gifts of the Spirit, by God himself, Heb.2:2-3, and if, {as the same believer saith,} he that despised Moses' law, died without mercy, of how much sorer punishment shall he be guilty, who treads underfoot the Son of God? And assuredly it had been much better for you, if you had lived among the Heathen and Pagans, where the Gospel of God our Saviour had never been heard, than to hear this joyful sound, which manifests the love of God, and brings along with it remission of sins, and the gift of the Spirit, through faith in Christ, and to be offended at it, and so to be destroyed by the word of salvation, and to be immediately punished with eternal death, by Him who is the true God and eternal life. And this is the heavy burden which the word of the Lord hath laid on your shoulders, and you cannot remove it.

And then for you true believers, you little flock, you few chosen out of the many called, who hear the word of Christ, and are not offended at it; though you hear it everywhere, and that with both ears, in this university and town, contradicted, misreported, reproached, scandalized, and called error, heresy, new light, faction, schism, sedition; and hear all manner of evil spoken against it falsely, not only by the rude and ignorant people, but also by the Scribes and Pharisees and hypocrites of this place; and yet for all these offences, you are not offended at it, but own it, and love it, and embrace it, notwithstanding all the extreme disadvantages it hath from this place, which is counted by carnal

people the very fountain of religion and the ministry; knowing by God's own teaching, that it is the word of righteousness and life, and the truth as it is in Jesus, though contrary to the sense of the university and schools, who have generally their teaching from man; to all such, I say by the word of the Lord, blessed are ye, of the blessed of the Lord, for you are all taught of God touching Christ, and have heard and learned the Son from the Father, and through dissent from so many worthy and gracious men, that have been, and are otherwise minded; yet it is the less grievous to me, because I differ from them, {I can say it in truth before the Lord,} not out of any desire to be singular, or for any worldly or carnal end whatever, but only that I might cleave to the clear and evident word of God alone; even there, where I see the very faithful to leave it; seeing I am rather to join to the word, without men, than to men without the word; and where I find the most holy men in the world, and the word parting, I am there to leave them, and to go along with the word.

And so, in all love and meekness, I tender this discourse to thee; desiring, that if thou canst not at present agree to what is therein contained, yet that thou wouldst not rashly judge and reproach it, seeing, through God's goodness, it may come to pass, that what thou knowest not now, thou mayest know afterwards.

But because I see this present generation so rooted and built up in the doctrines of men, I have the less hope that this truth will prevail with them; and therefore I appeal to the next generation; which

will be further removed from those evils, and will be brought nearer to the word; but especially to that people, whom God hath and shall form by his Spirit for himself; for these only will be able to make just and righteous judgment in this matter, seeing they have the anointing to be their teacher, and the Lamb to be their light.

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