

Builders of Babel Confounded with their own Language.

Being an exposition by Mr. John Webster, at the end of a disputation at All Hallows Lombard Street. He being then requested to dismiss the multitude with some profitable exhortations; which were given from Genesis 11 the 9 first verses.

"And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech, &c." Gen.11:1.

The judgment set, and the books opened. Religion tried, whether it be of God or of men. For the time is come that judgment must begin at the House of God. To separate the sheep from the goats and the precious from the vile. And to discover the blasphemy of those that say that they are apostles, teachers, alive, rich, Jews; but are found liars, deceivers, dead, poor, blind, naked, the synagogue of Satan.

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A Late Chaplain in the Army & Servant of Christ.

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"And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. And they said one to another, go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the LORD said, behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do; and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth; and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth, and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth." Gen.11:1-9.

This is a portion of Scripture, which in the letter and history is apparent to all that hear or read it, and everyone knows the meaning thereof; but what is the mind, the mystery and meaning of the Holy Ghost, is only made known to them that are taught of God; and making no question, that those who have the Spirit of God will own the mystery and divine sense, {"it is written in the prophets, and they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me," Jn.6:45,} we will through the Lord's

assistance proceed to open them to you; for to them it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom, {"unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God, but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables," Mk.4:11,} but to all others they are parables and paradoxes, which they neither will, nor can understand.

"And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech." Gen.11:1. The whole earth; that is, that natural lost condition, in which all the sons of men are, all being gone down into the earth to seek a happiness there. Having forsaken their life and happiness in God, they have all digged unto themselves broken cisterns, Jer.2:13, hoping to find a life and a happiness below among the creatures. A this is the condition of all the sons of men; this is the condition; that is, the language of the whole earth. In this all the sons of men are equal; darkness is come upon all, the image of God is defaced in all. All, the whole nature of man hath but one tongue, but one language. "They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." Psal.14:3. There is not one better than another among all the sons of men; but all are equally lost, all equally departed from God. All are under the same condemnation, they all speak one language; and with one mouth they all blaspheme. What one doth, all do; there is no difference. And in this condition men proceed and go on, they are journeying from the East. Gen.11:2. What way soever any of the sons of men go, they are still journeying on, in and under this misery. The

nature of man is laboring and traveling further from God, from the East, from the light of God, from the life of God, which they have lost, and are now walking on in darkness, misery and blasphemy, and all saying and concluding in their practice, that there is no life to be had in God, no comfort in him, he is as a helpless dead image, a mere name, and there is nothing at all in him to relieve and help them; he hath neither power, nor mercy, nor goodness, nor wisdom, nor all-sufficiency; he is a dry tree. And therefore they have turned their backs upon him, and will seek out a rest, and a god, and a help of themselves; and they are journeying, whither? To the land of Shinar, what's that? To the city of drowsiness or the land of sleepiness; when men think that by their own industry and endeavors, and by their acquired parts, or by their rules and forms, or by their religion which they have taken up, to secure themselves, and to find rest. Here now they begin to erect a Babel, a tower that may reach to Heaven, which may secure them from all danger, and that they may ascend and dwell there, where no destruction may reach them, thereby to prevent the overflowing deluge, that it may not come at them.

When man is once gone out from God, who was his life, and his light, and his rest, and his happiness, being not content with him alone, nor with the tree of life, Gen.2:9, of which he might eat freely, but casting his eye upon the tree of knowledge of good and evil, Gen.2:17, he lusts to eat thereof, for it is pleasant to look upon, Gen.3:6, man would by no means live exclusively upon the

Lord, and have a dependence out of himself, but he will take a secure course and provide for himself; he likes well this tree; and here he feeds and eats; he travails in this pleasant plain of Shinar, and here he begins to bethink himself to dwell and to take up his rest; here he can sleep quietly under his own labors, and sit reposedly under his own vine, and here now is the place where all men consult together to raise a Babel; this is done by, and in every man, man having lost himself and gone out of his way, having no house nor tabernacle, having departed from his house built by God without hands, II Cor.5:1, he bethinks himself of building himself a house made with hands, by his own study and invention, and this shall be his abiding, and here he will dwell, and here with his own hands he will make himself a shelter from all storms and from all destruction.

“And they said one to another, go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly, and they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar.” Gen.11:3. They say to one another; that is, not as if men singly spake thus to one another, but every man enters into a consultation with himself, and with the Prince of darkness. And now they having forsaken God the true guide, they hearken to the devil, and to the father of deceit and lies, and take his counsel, and him they will follow, and his works now they do, and not the works of God. {“Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his

own, for he is a liar, and the father of it." Jn.8:44.} And what do they? And they say to one another, "go to, let us make brick and burn them thoroughly," that is, they think and resolve to act like wise men, and make all secure for themselves; their building shall be strong and durable, and their materials accordingly, bricks thoroughly burnt, which shall not fail and molder away; that is, the things that he chooses shall be things agreeable to his own liking, and they must be his own inventing, else he will put no confidence in them; none shall choose for him, whatever it be that will advance man and make him something and great, as to himself and others, and things that men esteem highly of, those he will choose. Nay, and not only so, but he will have something of his own to trust to, to come into the presence of God with, and he will frame to himself a religion and a righteousness that shall avail before God, which he shall accept, and in which himself may put confidence. And here now poor man hath deluded himself, and they have made themselves aprons, Gen.3:7, and {as they think} a secure covering; here hath he made himself a shelter and a tabernacle, and built up to himself a tower reaching to Heaven, and so shall prevent destruction and condemnation. When man begins thus to build, he chooses {as he thinks} the likeliest and probablest means for his security, and in his conceit builds so strong, that no winds nor any storms can shake him, nor no deluge overthrow his building; and so confident he is, that he thinks the power of Heaven and Earth can never shake this building; for

the top thereof shall reach to Heaven; he is so far safe, that he is sheltered from the wrath of God, from the frowns of the Almighty; he hath gotten unto himself such a righteousness, and such a conformity to the rule and mind of God, that he is as it were a perfect man, he sees little amiss in himself; and though he may in words confess that he is a sinner, yet let but any one sin be charged upon him, and he hath {as he thinks} a sufficient excuse, and will clear himself from all sin.

But is this all the end of this strong and stately building? No, "but let us make us a name, lest we be scattered upon the face of the whole earth," lest we should be in as bad a condition as others are, and as the wicked of the world are; we will be wiser, and condemn them, we will not be like the publicans, who are wicked and profane; but we will forsake sin and live uprightly, and we will do something that we may get us a name, that we are holier than others, Isa.65:5, and we will be no less than master builders, I Cor.3:10, no such wise men as we; no such strict holy men as we; and the end of all this, is, lest death and misery, and sin, hell, and condemnation should break forth and seize upon them, with the rest of the world.

But now in all this time what doth God do? He beholds their works, and their doings, and their contrivings, "and the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded," verse 5, which is not to be understood as if God removed or came down locally, as leaving Heaven, to come down to the Earth, as men when

they remove from one place to another, but God came down, that is, he began to manifest himself, he began to show himself to the sons of men; prior to this he 'let them alone,' and they thought themselves secure and that all was right, safe and well, which they had done; but now the Lord begins to appear, to confound their thoughts and inventions, and to show all the sons of men their folly, vanity and madness, in all this they were so confident of, they thought that they were securing themselves from ruin, when alas poor souls, they are running as madly upon their own ruin and destruction as any else in the whole earth; nay, are further from returning, than any other, inasmuch as they are more wise, more holy, and more confident than others. {"The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican." Lk.18:11.} And herein is their misery the greater, Lk.13:28, therefore it is high time for the Lord now to come down, to scatter this building, and to make it Babel and Confusion. "And the LORD said, behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do, and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do." Gen.11:6. As if the Lord should say, all the sons of men are running headlong to their own destruction, they are all as one man, all do one and the same thing, and they have one name and one language, and all go one way. Satan hath almost gotten his full possession, and they will be wholly guided by him, and follow his

counsel, they are all departed from me, and he is almost finished and irrecoverably lost and gone; and yet every man thinks that he is right, and no man considers what he doth, nor once thinks of returning; for every man is right in his own eyes, and nothing will be refrained from them, and if I go not down, if I do not discover myself, and make their folly and madness, and their misery appear, they are running on confidently, never to return. Therefore, "I will go down and confound their language," I must bring to nothing all their works, all their wisdom, all their confidence, and all their inventions, that I may save man from destruction. Now the work of the Lord is to pull down, to ruin, and to destroy all this stately building of man's erecting, and to lay it all flat, and to let man see, that whatever he plants is in vain, for every plant, which the "heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up," Matt.15:13, whatever man hath wrought by his own power, and in his own wisdom, must be brought to confusion, and to be made Babel, {"I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it; and it shall be no more," Ezek.21:27,} and not a stone left upon a stone, {"the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down," Lk.21:6,} though the Temple which the sons of men have set up, be ever so glorious and precious in their beholdings, yet all must be destroyed, and they and all their works and endeavors, all their forms and inventions turned into a ruinous heap. Isa.17:1; 25:2.

And the Lord will not only say this, but he will also do it, verse 8, "so the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth; and they left off to build the city." When man is once convinced of his miserable condition, and sees himself and all the sons of men thus deluded and befooled, and begins to see that all their confidence is madness, and all their works sin, and all their duties as filthy rags, Isa.64:6, and all their forms and inventions no other but Babel and destruction; then and not before, they leave off to build this city; for then they see themselves {as it were} swallowed up in death and misery, and at their best actions are but dung and dross, and abominable things; and that there is no stability in any of the sons of men; and this is the Lord's work alone, this man hath no hand in, for it is the Lord that saith and doeth it, to confound this language, and scatter men from this building; so that they can now no more contribute their wisdom or counsel, their strength or endeavors to this City of Confusion.

"Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth," verse 9, all that is of man, from the power, excellency, righteousness of man, may it ever be so beautiful, and ever so esteemed, all is mere Babel, but a city, a temple, a refuge of confusion; and the Lord will scatter and confound every building thereof, that is, he will commix, confound their language, they shall be all amazed and confounded to behold what the Almighty hath done, to see their strong mountains so removed,

and their strong city of refuge ruined and blown asunder.

My friends, so far as the Lord hath declared to me, this is the mystery and the living sense of this portion of Scripture. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear," Matt.11:15, and he that hath eyes to see, shall see; he that can receive it, let him receive it. The truth and things of God carry light, power and demonstration in themselves; he that thinks by his own power, or by his own wisdom, or by his own light, or by his own learning to discover them, he is still in darkness, he is to this day raising Babel, and the Lord is not yet come down to confound his language, and the truth his hid and sealed up from him.

Now that I may come to make a little further application of these things to ourselves; the first use let it be this, from what hath been spoken we may conclude, that all the sons of men, the whole race and every particular person is equally in one and the same condition. They are all of one mass, of one lump; not one wise, and another foolish; one righteous, and another sinful; not one earthly and another heavenly; not one in light, and another in darkness; not one carnal, and another spiritual; but the whole earth is of one language. They all, even the best are nothing but sin, rebellion, death and enmity; they are all carnal, all departed from the Fountain of Living Waters, Jer.2:13, they are all gone astray and become abominable, and not one that doth good, no not one. Psal.14:3. Every one of the sons of men are under wrath, with all their works

and righteousness; everyone is no other but a child of hell, and a son of perdition and confusion. And there is no good that any of them can appropriate, or lay the least claim to; for there is no wisdom, but the wisdom of God, nor no righteousness, but the everlasting righteousness of that only ONE and all sufficient Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ. He that says that there is any good thing in man, any righteousness, wisdom, power, any endeavors after any good or the like, he is no other but a most abominable blasphemer. And this conceit and presumption the Lord hath cursed and will confound. For can an evil tree bring forth good fruit? Either make the tree evil and his fruit evil, or else make the tree good and his fruit good. Matt.12:33. Can man be evil and wholly evil, and yet bring forth anything that is good? Or is there any good or any holiness but what is from the Fountain of good? For any to dare to say otherwise is high blasphemy to God and Jesus Christ, to take that which is proper and peculiar to the ever blessed God, and to ascribe it to a sinful, nothing, empty creature; for any man to take the crown from the Head of Jesus Christ, and to set it upon his own head, and say this is his, what greater indignity! What higher blasphemy than to say that which is crooked is straight, and to call darkness light, and evil good? Isa.5:20. Who are these that darken counsel by words without knowledge? Job 38:2. From what principle think you, cometh all the religion of this nature; and from whence cometh this kind of teaching? That man must be something, and man must do, and he must

act, and he must believe, and he must repent, and there is something required of him to do by way of condition, or else the grace of God is frustrated. Certainly these men are no other but Babel builders; for they never yet knew the confusion of languages in themselves; they were never yet undone, made nothing, nor stripped of their own power, wisdom or righteousness; not convinced of the vanity and nothingness of all their power and endeavors. They never yet saw that these things were all alone proper to Jesus Christ. But they must work, they must do, and they must act. These certainly {whatever they say} never yet were convinced, that man is a lump of sin and weakness, never yet saw where the bottomless pit is, never yet cried out misery and shame upon themselves, but think they have some goodness and some power, and whilst they are in this condition, they do behold much goodness in themselves, and many fine things of their own making; many silver shrines and goodly performances, Acts 19:24, for they can reform and repent, they can give laws, and take ability to themselves to keep them; and thus miserable man deludes himself and erects Babel!

But when the Lord comes down to see what the children of men are doing, and begins to show them their madness and folly, and to open the mouth of the bottomless gulf in them, then a man appears to himself black and ugly; and that he is as a black African that can never by all his endeavors change his skin, or alter his course, {"can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots;

then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil," Jer.13:23,} but that he is mere weakness and nothing but emptiness and confusion, but until this time, what a proud conceited creature is man; and how does he look upon himself, and upon his riches and his parts, and his endowments before others, and thinks everyone should admire him, as he doth himself, and all his actings tend to this end, to be admired and to get himself a name, and he is still speaking of his rules and of his doings, and of his righteousness, and of his strictness; and all this is but to magnify and make himself as great and as excellent as may be. This beloved is the condition of all the sons of men; their folly is their wisdom, and contrariwise, their wisdom is their folly. For man to be made nothing, and emptied of all his glory, to be made naked and bare, and poor, and blind, and miserable, Rev.3:17, and to forsake himself, and take up the cross of Christ, this he abhors and spits at; this doctrine is heresy and blasphemy; this is the preaching which he calls folly and ignorance, antinomianism and mere ranting, any reproaches that can be invented. And if Christ himself were upon the earth, they would call him a heretic, an enemy to Caesar, and a seducer, and the devil, what not? And who would be so forward to scourge and crucify him as those that so much outwardly attached themselves to him, and said that they were his servants and pretended to walk according to his life and commandments?

In the hearts of all the sons of men there is nothing but this confused language, for "who can

bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" Job 14:4. This is the language that comes out of man, that defiles man, {"not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man," Matt.15:11,} yea all the sons of men, the wisest, the most learned, the holiest. Who sought more after a conformity to the rules of the Scriptures than the Pharisees? Who more exact in those rules? Who attained more external learning than they? The spirit of man being once gone out from this one and only rest, {"thus saith the LORD, stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, we will not walk therein," Jer.6:16,} he hunts and pursues after a thousand things to make up his emptiness, having lost the center of eternal joy, he is in continual motion and rests nowhere, he walks up and down through dry places, and find no rest, Lk.11:24, he hunts up and down for the land of Shinar, a place to sleep in, but cannot find it.

Consider O ye sons of men, whereto tend all your labors, all your endeavors, all your unweariedness? Is it not to get something to rest upon, some pillow, something to lay down your troubled and unquieted spirit upon? Is there not something of self in all you do, to provide for yourself, to lay up for yourself? Are you not traveling from the East to the land of Shinar, that you may get to the land of sleepiness? Land of Shinar, to find a rest, to repose themselves upon, and to trust in.

Some, they are journeying after riches, some after honor, some to vainglory and esteem of those whose estimation they think to be a happiness; and these things {and such like} of the lowest and poorest things, many make their Shinar, their happiness, their glory, their rest. And others there are, who do go a little higher; these things do well, that the others rest in, but those things they think somewhat too low, and therefore they will seek some better things, as they conceive, as learning and arts, as skill in tongues and languages, as philosophy, astronomy, astrology, geometry, and the like, and to excel others, and to be more able than other men. These and some of these they count it their glory and excellency, this is their Shinar, their place of sleepiness; but moreover some there are, who rest not here, that cannot sleep here; but they think if they can but attain to some higher things, that concern the soul and Heaven, and Eternity, then they could herein indeed take their contentment and rest; the others who contended themselves with riches and honor, and the like; or those that gloried in their arts and sciences, they are convinced, that all these were too short, because they reach but to the body, and to human things, to those glories that men esteem highly of. But, so they reason that if they could but attain to something to please God withal, if they could but worship God after this or that form, in observing strictly these and these duties, and get into this or that Fellowship, this or that gathered Church, which worship God after the purest and most primitive way, and nearest the rule

of Christ, if they can but leave this sin and that evil, or if they could but leave all known sin, herein and the like, many men make this their peace and their rest; this is their Shinar, and place of sleepiness and slumbering. And having gotten thus far, they think that they can patch up a righteousness that will be pleasing to God himself; for they can hardly see a slip or a falling really in themselves, though they are ashamed to say so, yet let them but examine their inward parts and they shall find it so. They think they have in a Gospel way performed the conditions required on their part, and they are sincere in what they do; and if at any time they come short, then Christ by his righteousness will supply and make it up, and herein is their peace, and this is in their esteem, a goodly and a glorious, and an excelling righteousness. None so high as they, none so holy as they, stand farther off, for I am holier than thou, and I am thus and thus qualified. And he looks upon other men with disdain because they come short of him, and because they are not so strict as he, nor have taken so much pains in religion, and done so many duties and walked up to such rules as he. As the Pharisee, I bless God, &c., that I am no whoremonger, drunkard, swearer, not as these base publicans, Lk.18:11, I make conscience of omitting the least duties, I fast twice a week, and I relieve the poor, and pay my dues to the minister, and I would leave all sin, and I would do every duty; and thus men thinks they have covered themselves warm, and this is their Shinar, the place of their desires and rest, here they have found a place to

sleep in, and a pillow to repose and lay their heads upon, and to rest their travailing and wearied thoughts, and they could never rest until they came to this Shinar.

But here I proclaim to all such, be they never so secure in themselves and applauded, and cried up as happy and blessed men by others, yet all this is, but this Shinar, this is but the Babel which here the Lord speaks of, and it shall be no other but the place of confusion. Nay publicans and harlots shall go into the kingdom of Heaven, Lk.13:28, when they themselves, these perfect men in their own minds, and in others esteem shall be thrust out. Alas, they cover themselves with a covering, but not with the Lord's Spirit, Isa.30:1, the bed is too short, and the covering too narrow, Isa.28:20, they cannot cover themselves therewith; ye have indeed preached in my name, and prophesied in my name, and in my name done many great works, and wonderful, but for all this depart from me, you are no other but workers of iniquity, says Christ to such, Matt.7:22; the highest and most glorious, and the most seemingly holy of all these things cannot be the place of rest, for "except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." Matt.5:20. "Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest, because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction." Mic.2:10. Arise therefore and depart, for indeed there never is, nor ever was, nor ever shall be any other but one only place of rest for all the sons of

men, and that is only and alone Jesus Christ, that eternal rock and refuge for all nations and generations, that perfect sacrifice of the eternal Son of God, to which nothing in the least can be added, and nothing else was ever required for acceptance, but only this beloved Emmanuel, in whom alone God is well pleased. "And lo a voice from heaven, saying, this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Matt.3:17.

But when thou thinkest that thou must do this duty and that, leave this sin and that evil, and why? Because this is the condition on thy part which thou must perform or else Christ will not perform the promise of Life and Salvation on his part; and herein men are deluded and for all their pains and endeavors and strictness, yea they fall short of the kingdom of Heaven. For it is not thy works, nor thy duties, nor thy forms, nor thy notions, nor thy Church gatherings, nor anything else of thine which is the accomplishment of the promises, but they are all Yea and Amen only and alone in Christ Jesus, II Cor.1:20, in whom the promises are made. If these works be wrought by thy industry, by thy care, by thy watchfulness, by thy wisdom, by thy power, they are all odious and abominable. God will as soon accept the offering up of swine's blood, and regard as soon the cutting off a dog's neck as any of these thy duties. Isa.66:3. For whatsoever is done by thee or in thee, except it be done by the wisdom, power and hand of Jesus Christ, who is the promise maker, and the promise worker and accomplisher, they cannot be in him Yea, and in him Amen; for he alone

is the promise, that is the maker and fulfiller; he must work it by his power; but as long as thou thinkest thou canst do anything, or hast anything to offer, or anything to accomplish, and thou must do it on thy part as a condition, the Lord abhors all such sacrifices as abominable. When thou thinkest such and such rules are prescribed, and I must obey and submit to every rule, not the least but I must do it, and then the promise is mine, for now I am in the right way; and then sayest to thy soul, "soul take thy ease, for this is the true place of rest," here thou mayest lie down in safety, Lk.12:19, examine thyself, is not this thy end? Howbeit all this is nothing else but the building up of Babel in the land of Shinar. All this while when thou thoughtest thou wast traveling to thy rest, thou art traveling quite contrary, traveling to ruin, to destruction and confusion; thou art but traveling from the East, to the plain of Shinar, a place beautiful indeed and pleasant to the sons of men, when they had turned their backs upon the East, and were gone out from God, from their rest, and were not content with the fountain, {"for my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water," Jer.2:13,} but followed the streams which in the end are dried up, and where there is no water to quench thy thirst, but only a mere hell and place of torment, and not one drop to cool thy tongue. Lk.16:24.

Secondly, we may see here that sleepiness is the end that all these builders of Babel propound to

themselves; they would have some rest from their doings, and from their labors, and from their wisdom, and from their endeavors; their end in all they do is security, that they may sleep quietly, that they may not fear, neither death, nor hell, nor judgment, that they may say to their souls, "peace, peace, when there is no peace," Jer.6:14, and now they having made a Covenant with death and hell, Isa.28:18, here they will rest, and here they will build, and here they will sleep. Being come to this pleasant plain, here they resolve to secure themselves, and to build a tower reaching to Heaven. They consult and conclude, now they have their hearts desire, and nothing shall be restrained from them; and all this they do, says the Holy Ghost, "lest we should be scattered;" all these things, and all these devices, are but coverings of men's invention to save themselves from wrath and from the guilt of conscience, which else would gnaw within them, and be in them the worm that never dies, Mark 9:44; for hereby they think they have made themselves a shelter from the storm and the wind, Isa.4:6, but 'tis but as the house built upon the sand having no foundation, Matt.7:26, it can never stand, here is no security; though they think to provide for, and secure themselves, and think themselves wiser and holier than all other men. Their end is always selfishness, to secure and provide for themselves, and the means by which they attain all, is also within themselves, by their own wisdom, power, parts, righteousness, endeavors, and the like.

Also in this way of man to come to life and rest, what does he, for he bethinks himself with all the wisdom he can, to choose wisely and discreetly; we will here build {say they to themselves} and we will build sure and safe, and we will make brick and burn them well, and so their building may endure, and not fall upon their heads. They have still something or other, that they themselves invent, and pretend the rule of the word to go by, as the safest way; sometimes that they find out, that their own self tells them is a likely way, saying to themselves, Christ has promised that if men believe and repent, then they shall be saved. Well, I will go and perform these, and reform my life and the like, {says man,} and then these promises are mine. The Jews {especially the Pharisees} were very expert and nimble at this, who were strict according to God's own rule, who more searched after every iota of the Law, and as far as they were convinced strived after perfect conformity. Herein lay the top of their religion, and here they build up their Babel. Now when Christ comes and strips them of their righteousness and pulls down their Babel, and by his doctrine lays them open to the world, and makes them appear as they are, to be open sepulchers, dissembling hypocrites, to be but pretenders to righteousness when they have none at all, Matt.23:1-39, but to make religion a cloak to devour widows houses, and to serve their own turns, to make for their entertainment with the world, &c. Christ now opening these filthy sepulchers, shows what they were within, how fair, and beautiful, and

holy soever they seemed to be without; and this made them so mad, as to persecute him even to death, nothing would serve them but his blood, and the cruelest death was too good for him. Yet these were men of no low principles, {as men think,} for they were the gravest, the soberest, the wisest, the most learned, and the strictest observers of the Law, and the teachers of it to others. Men highest in esteem, the strictest for worship, according to the pattern; men that feared God {as they, and generally all men thought,} and loved their neighbor, and did righteous things to men, and herein was their glory.

Now some among us go further than all this, for we strive to walk according to the rule, and wherein we come short, we have a Mediator and an Intercessor, and that is Jesus Christ who died at Jerusalem, whom the Jews would not acknowledge, but crucified; and we will repent and believe in him. And now beloved, these have builded up Babel higher than the other; for alas, this is nothing but wearing a garment of linsey-woolsey, Lev.19:19, this is nothing but sewing a new piece into an old garment, and making the rent worse. Matt.9:16. This is but putting new wine into old bottles, and the bottles are broken, and both bottles and wine {and so these men} utterly lost. They think that man must do, and man must teach, and man must inform, and see not that Jesus Christ is the only Teacher, the only Master, the only Guide! They must find out, and they must study, and they must collect, and they must gather here flower and there a flower,

and this they present to the people as a precious posy, whereof they themselves in their own experience know nothing at all; but they have sought it out by their learning, and stole it out of other men's labors. Are these {think you} prophets and laborers of the Lord of the harvests sending? Lk.10:2. No never, all these things must be lost, esteemed as dirt and dung; for you know what Christ says, for "no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish." Lk.5:37. If all that we do, be anything but what Christ does for us and in us; if all we teach, be not Christ teachings himself; if all our works be not from the new man, born of God which cannot sin; if all be not the works of Christ, whatever it be that man erects and sets up to direct and guide him, but only the wisdom from above; whatever it is that strengthens him, but the power from on high, all must be pulled down and scattered, all made Babel. "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up," Matt.15:13, for if it be not wrought and acted by his Spirit in us, it cannot stand.

When men think that by their power and wisdom, and by their authority to act for God, and that they can propagate the Gospel and establish truth and settle religion, and that they can make a uniformity which all men ought to submit to, whereto doth all this tend, but that man should take upon him the Work and Sovereignty of the Almighty? And this is the plain English, God is not wise enough, nor powerful enough, nor all-sufficient enough to

erect the kingdom of his Son; but we must do something, and we will contrive, and we will send forth laborers as we shall think meet, and what we judge to be truth and wisdom, and holiness, that and no other, shall be established. What is all this, but to establish the wisdom of man, and the power of man; nay indeed the weakness and ignorance, and the blasphemy of men above the strength, wisdom, righteousness and all-sufficiency of the eternal God! What is this, but charging of God with weakness and insufficiency, and ascribing that to man, which alone is due to God? Is this any other, than to make the weapons of our warfare strong in man, and in the power of his might? II Cor.10:4. Now the blessed work of God, is to pull down this Babel, built by the sons of men. O says man, let's have the wisdom and power of the magistrate, and let him show himself strong for God, and what he judges evil, and sinful, and schismatic, and heresy, let that be rooted up; and we will make the crooked thing straight, Lk.3:5, and we will undertake to make men religious and to reform their lives. What is all this, but to be wise in his own wisdom, and consistent in his own strength, and holy in his own holiness, and that he alone is judge in the things of God. What greater blasphemy can there be! Instead of being strong in God and the power of his might, Eph.6:10, they are mighty and strong in man and in themselves. Now all these works the Lord will ruin and destroy; all this strong building he will make Babel, he will turn it to confusion; all this language will the Lord confound, scatter and destroy. Whatever it be, which is of man

or by man erected {though pretending a service and a worship of God} either found out and invented by himself, or else pretending a prescribed rule in the word for it, and this done by the power and wisdom of man, it is no other but a Babel, and it shall be made a city of confusion. And this the Lord will certainly do and bring to pass in man; either that both he and his works, his wisdom, righteousness, power, &c., may be destroyed and confounded together, that both himself and all his works may be burnt up together, or else that his work shall be burnt, and yet he may be saved, yet so as by fire, I Cor.3:13, for this fire of the Lord shall try every man's work of what sort it is; if the Lord in mercy descends and comes down amongst the sons of men, to burn up all their works, their wisdom, their strength, and all things of this nature, to strip man of all his abilities and righteousness, and make him nothing in himself, and abominable in his own sight, Ezek.20:43; this destruction of the flesh is that he may be delivered from death and wrath, and that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord, I Cor.5:5, and that he may bring him to rest, peace, wisdom, righteousness and glory in that alone and all-sufficient Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom alone are all these; but in the creature nothing but trouble, confusion, death, sin, hell and condemnation, in which all the sons of men are concluded, and all their best works, and Christ alone is ordained of the Father to be our strength, wisdom, righteousness, redemption and salvation. I Cor.1:30. Him alone hath God exalted with his right

hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. Him alone I say, being made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption, that so no flesh should glory in his presence, I Cor.1:29, but according "as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." I Cor.1:31.

FINIS