

Selected Letters of the Martyrs under Queen Mary I.

Lawrence Sanders, George Marsh, Thomas Hawkes,
Nicholas Sheterden, Robert Smith, Robert Samuel.

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*Two letters from Lawrence Sanders to his Wife after his
condemnation, written on the last day of January,
A.D. 1555, out of the Compter in Bread-street.*

“The grace of Christ, with the consolation of the Holy Spirit, to the keeping of the faith and a good conscience, confirm and keep you forever as a vessel to God’s glory, Amen.

“Oh! what worthy thanks can be given to our gracious God for his immeasurable mercies plentifully poured upon us? And I, a most unworthy wretch, cannot but pour forth at this present, even from the bottom of my heart, the bewailing of my great ingratitude and unkindness towards so gracious and good a God and loving Father. I beseech you all — just as for my other many sins, so especially for that sin of my unthankfulness — crave pardon for me in your earnest prayers, commending me to God’s great mercies in Christ.

“To number these mercies in particular, would be to number the drops of water which are in the sea, the sands on the shore, or the stars in the sky. O my dear wife, and you, the rest of my friends, rejoice with me, I say rejoice with thanksgiving for my present probation, in that I am made worthy to magnify my God, not only in my life and my slow mouth and uncircumcised lips bearing witness to His truth, but also to seal the same by my blood, to the glory of my God, and the confirming of his true church. And yet I testify to you, that the comfort of my sweet Christ drives from my mind the fear of death. But if my dear husband Christ, for my trial, leaves me a little to myself alone, alas, I know in what case I will then be. But if for my proof, he does so, yet I am sure he will not be long or far from me. Though he stands behind the wall and hides himself (as Solomon says in his mystical song), yet he will peep in by a crevice to see how I am doing. ^{Sol 2.9} He is a very tender-hearted Joseph; though he speaks roughly to his brothers, and handles them harshly — yes, even threatening grievous bondage to his best beloved brother Benjamin — yet he cannot contain himself from weeping with us and upon us, with falling on our necks, and sweetly kissing us. Such, such a brother is our Christ to all. Therefore hasten to go to him, as Jacob did with his sons and family, leaving their country and acquaintance. Yes, this is what our Joseph has obtained for us, that Pharaoh the infidel shall afford chariots to us, in which we may be carried at ease to come to him — experiencing how our very adversaries help us to our everlasting bliss by their speedy dispatch — yes, and how all things have been helping toward this; blessed be our God! Do not be afraid of terrors which lie in the way. Fear rather the everlasting fire; fear the serpent which has that deadly sting of which those who are not grafted in Christ, shall be brought to taste by bodily death, lacking faith and good conscience, and who are not acquainted with Christ, the killer of death. But oh, my dear wife and friends! we, whom God has delivered from

the power of darkness, and has transferred us into the kingdom of his dear Son, by putting off the old man, and by faith putting on the new, even our Lord Jesus Christ — His wisdom, holiness, righteousness, and redemption — I say, we have to triumph against the terribly spiteful serpent the devil, sin, hell, death, and damnation. For Christ our bronze serpent has pulled away the sting of this serpent, so that now we may, in beholding it spoiled of its sting, boldly triumph. And with our Christ, and all his elect, we say, ‘O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory? But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.’

“Therefore be happy, my dear wife; and all my dear fellow heirs of the everlasting kingdom, always remember the Lord. Rejoice in hope; be patient in tribulation; continue in prayer, and pray for us now appointed to the slaughter, that we may be a fit offering and an acceptable sacrifice to our heavenly Father. I can hardly write to you. Therefore, let these few words be a witness of my commendations to you and all those who love us in the faith; and namely, to my flock, among whom I am resident by God’s providence, as but a prisoner.

“And although I am not so among them, as I have been, to preach to them out of a pulpit, yet God now preaches to them by me, by this my imprisonment and captivity, which now I suffer among them for the sake of Christ’s gospel, bidding them to beware of the Romish antichristian religion and kingdom, requiring and charging them to abide in the truth of Christ, which is shortly to be sealed with the blood of their pastor — who, though he is unworthy of such a ministry, yet Christ their high pastor is to be regarded, whose truth has been taught to them by me, is witnessed by my chains, and shall be by my death, through the power of that high pastor. Do not be full of care, good wife; cast your care upon the Lord, and commend me to him in repentant prayer, as I do you and our Samuel; even at the stake, I will offer myself to God. Fare all of you well in Christ, in the hope of being joined with you in joy everlasting. This hope is put up in my bosom, Amen, Amen, Amen! Pray, pray.”

Another Letter to his Wife,

“Grace and comfort, etc. Wife, you would do best not to come often to the grate where the porter may see you. Do not put yourself in danger where it is not needed. You will, I think, shortly come far enough into danger by keeping faith and a good conscience; which (dear wife) I trust you do not hesitate to reckon and count upon, by exercising your inward man in meditation of God’s most holy word, being the sustenance of the soul, and also by giving yourself to humble prayer. For these two things are the very means to be made members of our Christ, fit to inherit his kingdom.

“Do this, dear wife, in earnest, not abandoning this; and so we two, with our Christ and all his chosen children, shall enjoy the blessed world in that everlasting immortality — whereas here nothing else will be found but extreme misery, even by those who most greedily seek this world’s wealth.

“And so, if we continue as God’s children grafted in our Christ, the same blessing of God which we receive will also settle upon our Samuel. Though we shortly depart from here and leave (it seems) the poor infant at all risks, yet he will have our gracious God to be his God; for so He has said, and He cannot lie: ‘I will be your God,’ he says, ‘and the God of your seed.’ ^{Gen 17.7} Yes, if you leave him in the wilderness destitute of all help, being called by God to do his will, either to die for the confession of Christ, or any work of obedience — that God who heard the cry of the poor little infant of Hagar, Sarah’s hand-maiden, and succored it, will do the same for your child, or any others who fear Him, and who put their trust in Him.

“And if we lack faith, as we do indeed many times, let us call for it, and we shall have the increase both of it and also of any other good grace which is needful for us. And be joyful in God, in whom I am also very joyful. O Lord, what great cause for rejoicing we have, to think upon that kingdom which he granted for Jesus Christ’s sake to freely give us, forsaking ourselves and following him! Dear wife, this is truly to follow him: even to take up our cross and follow him. And then, as we suffer with him, so shall we shortly reign with him everlastingly. Amen.”

“LAWRENCE SANDERS.”

*An Exhortational Letter of George Marsh
to the faithful Professors of Langton.*

“Grace be to you, and peace be multiplied in the knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

“I thought it my duty to write to you, my beloved in the Lord at Langton, to stir up your minds, and to call to your remembrance the words which have been told to you before, and to exhort you (as that good man, and full of the Holy Spirit, Barnabas exhorted the Antiochians) that with purpose of heart you continually cling to the Lord, and that you stand fast. Do not be moved away from the hope of the gospel, of which, God be thanked, you have had plenteous preaching to you by your late pastor, Master Sanders, and other faithful ministers of Jesus Christ. Now when persecution arises because of the word, they do not fall away like shrinking children, and forsake the truth, being ashamed of the gospel, of which they have been preachers. But they are willing and ready for your sakes (who are Christ’s mystical body) to forsake not only the chief and principal delights of this life — I mean their native countries, friends, livings, etc. — but also to fulfill their ministry to the utmost; that is, with their painful imprisonments and blood sheddings, if need requires, to confirm and seal Christ’s gospel, of which they have been ministers. And as St. Paul says, they are ready not only to be cast into prison, but also to be killed for the name of the Lord Jesus.

“Whether these are to be believed, being that good salt of the earth (that is, true ministers of God’s word, by whose doctrine, being received through faith, men are made savory unto God, and who themselves do not lose their saltness, now when they are proved with the boisterous storms of adversity and persecution); or others are to be believed, being that unsavory salt which has lost its saltness (that is, those ungodly ministers, who fall from the word of God into the dreams and traditions of antichrist) — which of these, I say, are more to be credited and believed, let all men judge.

“Therefore, my dearly beloved, receive with meekness the word of God that is grafted in you, which is able to save your souls. And see that you are not forgetful hearers, deceiving yourselves with sophistry, but be doers of the word. Christ likens these to a wise man, who builds his house on a rock, so that when the great rain descended, and the floods came, and beat upon the house, it did not fall, because it was founded upon a rock. That is, when Satan, with all his legion of devils with all their subtle suggestions, and the world with all its mighty princes, and with their crafty councils, furiously rage against us, we do not faint, but abide constant in the truth, being grounded upon a most sure rock, which is Christ, and upon the doctrine of the gospel, against which the gates of hell, *i.e.*, the power of Satan, cannot prevail.

“And be followers of Christ and his apostles, and receive the word in much affliction, as the godly Thessalonians did. ^{Rev 2:9} For the true followers of Christ and the apostles, are those who receive the word of God. They only receive the word of God who both believe it, and also frame their lives after it, and are ready to suffer all manner of adversity for the name of the Lord, as Christ and all the apostles did, and as all those who live godly in

Christ Jesus must do. ^{2Tim 3.12} For there is no other way into the kingdom of heaven, but through much tribulation. And if we suffer anything for the kingdom of heaven's sake, and for righteousness' sake, we have the prophets, Christ, the apostles, and martyrs, as an example to comfort us. For they all entered into the kingdom of heaven at the strait gate and narrow way that leads unto life, which few find. ^{Mat 7.14} And unless we are content to deny ourselves, and take up the cross of Christ, and [be] his saints, it is an evident argument that we shall never reign with Him.

“And again, if we can find it in our hearts to patiently suffer persecution and tribulations, it is a sure token of the righteous judgment of God, that we are counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which we also suffer. As the apostle says, ‘Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to those who trouble you — and to you who are troubled, rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels.’ ^{2The 1.6-7}. For after this life, the godly being delivered from their tribulations and pains, shall have a most quiet and joyful rest. Whereas the wicked and ungodly contrariwise shall be tormented forevermore with intolerable and unspeakable pains, as Christ plainly declares and teaches by the parable of the rich glutton and the wretched Lazarus. These we ought to have before our eyes always, so that in the time of adversity and persecution (of which all that are the children of God shall be partakers, and with which it has pleased God to put some of us in practice already) we may stand steadfast in the Lord, and endure even to the end, so that we may be saved. For unless, like good warriors of Jesus Christ, we will endeavor to please Him, who has chosen us to be soldiers, and fight the good fight of faith even to the end, we shall not obtain that crown of righteousness which the Lord, who is a righteous judge, shall give to all those who love his coming. ^{2The 4.8}

“Let us therefore receive with meekness the word that is grafted in us, which is able to save our souls, ^{Jas 1.21} and ground ourselves on the sure rock Christ. As the apostle says, ‘For no other foundation can any man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds upon this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, every man's work will be made manifest; for the day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test every man's work, of what sort it is. If any man's work abides which he has built upon it, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved; yet as through fire.’ ^{1Cor 3.11-15}.

“By fire here, the apostle means persecution and trouble. For those who truly preach and profess the word of God, which is called the word of the Cross, will be railed upon and abhorred, hated, thrust out of company, persecuted and tested in the furnace of adversity, as gold and silver are tested in the fire.

“By gold, silver, and precious stones, are meant those who in the midst of persecution abide steadfast in the word. By timber, hay, and stubble, are meant those who in time of persecution fall away from the truth. And when Christ purges his floor with the wind of adversity, these scatter away from the face of the earth like light chaff, which will be burned with unquenchable fire. If then, in time of persecution, those who believe stand

steadfast in the truth, the builder (I mean the preacher of the word) will receive a reward, and the work shall be preserved and saved. But if they turn back and swerve when persecution arises, the builder will suffer loss, that is to say, he will lose his labor and cost, yet he will be saved if, being tested in the fire of persecution, he abides fast in the faith.

“Therefore, my beloved, give diligent heed that you, as living stones, are built upon this sure rock, and are made a spiritual house and a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ^{1Pet 2.5} For we are the true temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwells in us, if we continue in the doctrine of the gospel. We are also a holy and royal priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices and oblations. ^{1Pet 2.9} For the sacrifices of the New Testament are spiritual and of three kinds.

“The *first* is the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, which St. Paul calls the fruits of those lips which confess the name of God. ^{Heb 13.15}

“The *second* is mercy towards our neighbor, as the prophet Hosea says, ‘I will have mercy and not sacrifice.’ ^{Hos 6.6} Read the 25th chapter of Matthew.

“The *third* is when we make our body a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God; ^{Rom 12.1} that is, when we mortify and kill our fleshly concupiscence and carnal lusts, and so bring our flesh, through the help of the Spirit, under the obedience of God’s holy law. ^{Rom 8.13} This is a sacrifice most acceptable to God, which the apostle calls our reasonable serving of God. And let us be sure that unless now, at this present time, we take better heed to ourselves, and use thankfully the grace of God offered to us by the gospel preached these years past, whereby we are induced and brought to the knowledge of the truth — unless, I say, we keep Christ and his holy word dwelling by faith in the house and temple of our hearts, the same thing that Christ threatens to the Jews will happen to us.

“That is, the unclean spirit of ignorance, superstition, idolatry, infidelity, and unbelief — the mother and head of all vices, which was cast out of us by the grace of God— brings in with him seven other spirits worse than himself; it will return again to us, to our utter destruction. And so we will be in a worse case than we ever were before. ^{Mat 12.44-45} ‘For,’ says St. Peter, ‘if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it has happened to them according to the true proverb, The dog returns to its own vomit; and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire.’ ^{2Pet 2.20-22}.

“And thus to continue and persevere in infidelity, and to kick against the manifest and known truth, and so to die without repentance, and despairing of the mercy of God in Jesus Christ, is to sin against the Holy Spirit, which shall not be forgiven, neither in this world, nor in the world to come. ^{Mat 12.32} ‘For it is impossible,’ says St. Paul, ‘for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to

come, if they fall away, to renew them again unto repentance: seeing that they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.’ Heb 6.4-6.

“St. Paul’s meaning in this place, is that those who believe God’s word truly and unfeignedly, will continue and abide steadfast in the known truth.

“If any therefore fall away from Christ and his word, it is a plain token that they were but dissembling hypocrites for all their fair faces outwardly, and they never believed truly — as Judas, Simon Magus, Demas, Hymeneus, Philetus, and others were, who all fell away from the truth, and made a mockery of Christ. Here St. Paul calls this crucifying Christ anew, because, turning back to their old vomit, they most blasphemously tread the benefits of Christ’s death and passion under their feet. Those who are such, can in no way be renewed by repentance. For their repentance is fleshly, as was the repentance of Cain, Saul, and Judas, which being without godly comfort, breeds desperation unto death. These are not of the number of the elect. And as St. John says, ‘They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest, that they were not all of us.’ 1Joh 2.19. Also the apostle Paul says in another place, ‘For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but only a certain fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation, which will devour the adversaries.’ Heb 10.26-27.

“Those sin willingly, who out of a set malice and purpose, hold the truth in unrighteousness and lying, kicking against the manifest and open known truth, even though they perfectly know that in all the world there is no other sacrifice for sin, except that all-sufficient sacrifice of Christ’s death. Yet they will not wholly commit themselves to it, but rather despise it, allowing other sacrifices for sin, invented by the imagination of man (as we see by daily experience), if they abide still in their wickedness and sin, there remains a most horrible and dreadful judgment. This is that sin unto death, for which St. John would not have a man pray. 1Joh 5.16

“Therefore, my beloved in Christ, let us (on whom the ends of the world have come) take diligent heed to ourselves, that now in these last and perilous times (in which the devil has come down, and has great wrath because he knows his time is but short, and of which the prophets, Christ, and the apostles have spoken so much, and given us an earnest forewarning) we do not hold the truth in unrighteousness, believing, doing, or speaking anything against our knowledge and conscience, or without faith. For if we so do, for whatever cause it may be, it is a willful and obstinate infidelity, and a sin unto death. As our Savior Christ says, ‘If you do not believe, you shall die in your own sins.’ Joh 8.24 For unless we hold fast the word of life, both believing it, and also bringing forth fruit worthy of repentance, Luk 3.8 we will be cut down with the unprofitable fig-tree, which only encumbered the ground, Luk 13.7 and our talent will be taken from us and given to another who will put it to a better use. Mat 25.28 And we, through our own unthankfulness, put from the mercy of God, will never be able to pay our debts — that is to say, we will be altogether lost and undone. For the earth that drinks in rain that comes often upon it, and brings

forth herbs fit for those who cultivate it, receives blessing from God. But that ground that bears thorns and briars is reprov'd, and is near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned. ^{Heb 6.7-8}

“Nevertheless, dear friends, we trust to see better things from you, things which accompany salvation; and that you being the good ground, watered with the moistness of God’s word plentifully preached among you, will hear the word of God with a good heart and keep it, bringing forth fruit with patience. ^{Luk 8.15} Be none of those forgetful and hypocritical hearers who, although they hear the word, yet the devil comes, and snatches away that which was sown in their heart. Having no root in themselves, they endure but a season; as soon as tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, by and by they are offended; or else the cares of this world, and deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and so they are unfruitful. ^{Mar 4.15,17,19} Read the parable of the Sower. Among other things, note and mark that most of the hearers of God’s word are but hypocrites, and hear the word without any fruit or profit; indeed, it is only to their greater condemnation. For only a fourth of the seed brings forth fruit. Therefore, let us not be discouraged, who are ministers, or professors, and followers of God’s word, if very few give credit, and follow the doctrine of the gospel, and are saved.

“Therefore, whoever has ears to hear, let him hear: ‘for whoever has, to him more will be given, and he shall have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.’ ^{Mat 13.12} That is to say, those who have a desire for righteousness, and for the truth, will be more and more illuminated by God. And on the contrary, those who do not covet righteousness and truth, are even more hardened and blinded, though they seem most wise to themselves. For God here follows an example of a loving father, who when he sees that fatherly love and correction does not help towards his children, uses another way. He ceases to be beneficial to them, and to minister fatherly correction to them. He gives them over to themselves, allowing them to live as they please themselves.

“But we trust to see better things from you, my dearly beloved, and that, for fear of losing your worldly substance or other delights of this life, you will not banish away Christ and his gospel from among you, as the Gadarenes did. ^{Luk 8.37} But rather, with all diligence of mind you will receive the word of God taught to you by such ministers as now, when persecution arises because of the word, are not ashamed of the testimony of our Lord Jesus. But they are content to suffer adversity with the gospel, and in this to suffer trouble as evil-doers, even unto bonds. If you refuse to do this, your blood will be upon your own heads. As you have had plentiful preaching of the gospel, more than others have had, so if you do not repent and bring forth fruits worthy of repentance, you will be sure to be sorely plagued, and to receive greater vengeance than others at God’s hand; and the kingdom of God will be taken from you, and be given to another nation which will bring forth its fruits.

“Therefore, my dearly beloved in Christ, take good heed to yourselves, and ponder well in your minds, how fearful and horrible a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God.

Heb 10.³¹ And see that you do not receive the word of God in vain, but continually labor in faith, and declare your faith by your good works, which are infallible witnesses of true justifying faith, which is never idle, but works by charity.

“And see that you continually give yourselves to all manner of good works. Among these, the most important are to be obedient to the magistrates (since they are the ordinance of God, whether they are good or evil), unless they command idolatry and ungodliness, *i.e.* things contrary to true religion. For then we ought to say with St. Peter, ‘We ought to obey God rather than man.’ But in any way, we must beware of tumult, insurrection, rebellion, or resistance.

“The weapon of a Christian in this matter ought to be the sword of the Spirit, which is God’s word, and prayer, coupled with humility and due submission, and with readiness of heart, to die rather than do any ungodliness. Christ also teaches us that all power is of God, yes, even the power of the wicked whom God oftentimes causes to reign for our sins and disobedience towards Him and His word. Whoever then resists any power, resists the ordinance of God, and so he purchases for himself utter destruction and undoing.

“We must also by all means be promoters of unity, peace, and concord. We must honor and reverence princes, and all who are in authority, and pray for them, and be diligent to set forth their profit and commodity.

“*Secondly*, we must obey our parents, or those who are in their places, and be careful for our households, that they are provided for and fed, not only with bodily food, but much more with spiritual food, which is the word of God.

“*Thirdly*, we must serve our neighbors by all means we can, remembering well the saying of Christ, ‘Whatever you would have men do to you, do you likewise to them, for this is the law and the prophets.’ Mat 7.¹²

“*Fourthly*, we must diligently exercise the necessary work of prayer for all estates, knowing that God has therefore so much commanded it, and has made such great promises for it, and so well accepts it. After these works, we must learn to know the cross, and what affection and mind we must bear towards our adversaries and enemies, whatever they may be, to suffer all adversities and evils patiently, to pray for those who hurt, persecute, and trouble us. And by thus ordering ourselves, we will obtain a hope and certainty of our vocation, that we are the elect children of God.

“And thus I commend you, brethren, to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified, Act 20.³² — beseeching you to help Master Sanders and me, your late pastors, and all those who are in bonds for the gospel’s sake, with your prayers to God for us, that we may be delivered from all those who do not believe, and from unreasonable and froward men; and that this, our imprisonment and affliction, may be to the glory and profit of our Christian brethren in the world; and that Christ may be magnified in our bodies, whether it is by death or by life. Amen.

“Greet for me all the faithful brethren; and because I do not write separate letters to them, let them either read or hear these letters of mine. The grace of our Lord be with you all. Amen. The 28th of June, by the unprofitable servant of Jesus Christ, and now also His prisoner,

“GEORGE MARSH.”

*A Letter to the Congregation,
by Thomas Hawkes.*

“Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, always be with you all, my dear brethren and sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ, forever; and his Holy Spirit conduct and lead you in all your doings, that you may always direct your deeds according to his holy word; that when he appears to reward every man according to his works, you may as obedient children be found watching, ready to enter into his everlasting kingdom, with your lamps burning; and when the Bridegroom shows himself, you need not be ashamed of this life which God has lent you, which is but transitory, vain, and like a vapor, that for a season appears and vanishes away, so soon pass away all our terrestrial honor, glory, and felicity. ‘All flesh is grass (says the prophet), and all its goodness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades; because the spirit of the Lord blows upon it. Surely the people are grass.’ Isaiah 40.6, 7. For in this transitory and dangerous wilderness, we are like pilgrims and strangers following the footsteps of Moses, among many unspeakable dangers, beholding nothing with our outward man except all vain vanities and vexation of mind — subject to hunger, cold, nakedness, bonds, sickness, loss, labors, banishment, in danger of that dreadful dragon and his sinful seed, to be devoured, tempted, and tormented; who does not cease to lay a bait behind every bush, when we walk awry, to have his pleasure upon us — casting abroad his apples in all places, times, and seasons, to see if Adam will be allured and enticed to leave the living God and his most holy commandments, whereby he is assured of everlasting life — promising the world at will, to all who will fall down in all ages, and for a bowl of stew to sell and set at naught the everlasting kingdom of heaven. So frail is flesh and blood. ‘And especially Israel is most ready to walk awry, when he is filled with all manner of riches,’ as the prophet says.

“Therefore I am bold in bonds, as entirely desiring your everlasting health and felicity, to warn you and most heartily desire you to watch and pray. For our state is dangerous, and it requires continual prayer. For the most plentiful grass does not grow on the high mountains; nor are the highest trees farthest from danger, but they are seldom sure, and always shaken by every wind that blows. Such a deceitful thing, says our Savior, is honor and riches, that without grace it choaks the good seed sown in his creatures, and so blinds their seeing, that they go groping at noon-day in darkness. It makes a man think himself to be something, who is nothing at all. For though, for our honor, we esteem ourselves and stand in our own light, when we stand before the living God, there will be no respect of persons. For riches do not help in the day of vengeance, nor can we make the Lord partial for money. But as we have ministered to the saints, so we will receive the reward, which I am fully persuaded and assured will be plenteously poured upon all, for the great goodness shown to the servants of the living God. And I most heartily beseech Almighty God to pour forth a plenteous reward upon you for the same, and that he will assist you with his Holy Spirit in all your doings, that you may grow, as you have begun, to such a perfection that it may be to God’s honor, your own salvation, and the strengthening of the weak members of Christ. For though the world rages, and blasphemes the elect of God,

you know that it did so to Christ, to his apostles, and to all who were in the primitive church, and so he will do unto the world's end.

“Therefore believe in the light while you have it, lest it be taken away from you. If you neglect the great mercy of God that has been opened to you, and your hearts consent that it is the very and only truth pronounced by God's only Son Jesus Christ, by the good will of our heavenly Father. Therefore I say in the bowels of my Lord Jesus Christ, stick fast to it. Never let it depart out of your hearts and conversation, so that you with us and we with you at the great day, being one flock, as we have one Shepherd, may rise to life immortal, through Jesus Christ our only Savior. Amen.

“Yours, in Him that lives for ever,

“THOMAS HAWKES.”

A Letter of Nicholas Sheterden to his Mother.

“After my humble and bounden duty remembered, well-beloved mother, this will be to wish you increase of grace and godly wisdom, so that you may see and perceive the crafty bewitching of Satan, our mortal enemy, which, as I have diverse times declared to you, does not openly show himself in his own likeness, but under color of devotion deceives those who do not keep a diligent eye upon him. But having confidence in men’s traditions and customs of the world, leaving the commandments of God, and the testament of his Son Christ Jesus our Lord, they grow more into superstition and hypocrisy than into wisdom and true holiness. For this is most true: that Satan, the enemy of souls, makes many believe by his ministers, that those things which they compel us to, for their stomach’s sake, have many godly significations, even though they are most contrary to God’s will, as doubtless they are, even as the serpent did in Paradise to our first mother, Eve. What? (he asked) has God commanded you shall not eat of all the trees in the garden? The woman said, We may eat of the fruits of the trees in the garden; but of the tree in the midst of the garden, God said, see that you do not eat of it, lest you die. Even so our ministers now-a-days, say, has God commanded you shall not make yourself any image or likeness of any thing? Yes, truly. Tush, they say, what harm can they do? May we not remember God better when we see his image or picture? For they are good books for the laymen; but indeed they are better for the priests, because they receive the offerings.

“And look how truly the promise of the serpent was kept with Eve; even so, the persuasion of our priests is found true to us. For as Adam and Eve became like God in knowing good and evil, so are we in remembering God by his image. For Adam’s eyes were so open, that he lost both innocence and righteousness, and he became the most miserable of all creatures. Even so, we remember Christ so well by images, that we forget his commandments; and we consider his testament, confirmed in his blood, as stark madness or heresy. We have so miserably remembered him, that of all people, we are most blind. This follows upon our presumption, when we remember God by breaking His law. And therefore surely, unless we repent, God will shortly remember us in his wrath, and reward us with his plagues. As sure as there is a God it will come to pass.

“But I know (I thank God) the craftiness of those in this who will say; Where did he go to school? Is he wiser than our great doctors who studied all their life? And behold, they say it is good hay, even though we smell that it is musty; yet we must believe it is sweet, and then pay them well for so saying, and all is safe. But I might say again, What, sir, are you wiser than Christ, and God his Father, or the Holy Spirit? What, are you wiser than the prophets, and the holy apostles, and all the holy martyrs? I pray you, sir, where did you get your high learning? Is it higher than God (in heaven) is able to reach, or have you set it lower in hell than Christ ever dared to venture? For it is some strange learning, assuredly, that Christ and his apostles could never attain the knowledge of it. But vain men are never without some shift: for perhaps they would not be ashamed to say that Christ, coming on his Father’s message, forgot half his errand on the way. For I dare say that the greater half of their ceremonies were never commanded by Christ. Indeed, I

doubt it would be hard to find one in the church perfectly as he left it — so Romishly has antichrist turned the church upside down for lucre's sake.

“Beloved mother, as I have often said to you, even so now I beseech you from my very heart in Christ, to consider that your own soul's health is offered you; do not cast it off. We do not have a long time here. Why should we deceive ourselves either for ease of our flesh, or for the winning of this world's treasure? I know that some will say to you, Why should we condemn our fathers who lived this way? God forbid that we should condemn anyone who did according to their knowledge. But let us take heed that they do not condemn us, for if they had heard the word as we have heard it, and had been warned as we have been, it is to be thought that they would more thankfully have received it than we do. Indeed, they were more faithful in what they knew, than many now are. Therefore they will be our condemnation if we do not embrace this grace offered to us. And surely look how many of them God will accept and save, those we will never see, nor have any part among them. For our disobedience is greater than their ignorance. Therefore, if we will meet our fathers in bliss and joy, let us not refuse His mercy offered more largely to us than to them, even according to Christ's promise, which said, after such great ignorance as to seek Him from country to country, and not find Him, ‘Yet the gospel,’ he says, ‘shall be preached in all the world, and then the end shall come.’

“And now let us know the time of our visitation, and not turn back again, seeing we are once delivered. For surely God will not bear it at our hands to turn backward. O remember Lot's wife. God must punish out of hand our shameful backsliding, either with induration and hardness of heart, so that they will persecute his church and his true servants; or else He will reward it with open vengeance and plagues. And therefore, good mother, accept this simple letter of mine, as a fruit of my love and obedience to you. Would to God we might be so knit in faith, and trust in God's word and promises here in this life, that we might together enjoy the bliss and consolation of eternal life; which I desire and seek above all worldly treasure, as you partly know. If I were to seek the good will of men contrary to my conscience, I could make some of them my friends, who now perhaps are jealous ¹ over me amiss. But I thank God, let them weigh the matter between God and their conscience, and they have no just cause to do so. Nevertheless I pray they would yet refrain and put their matter and mine into the balance of God's most holy word, there to be weighed by the mind of the Holy Spirit, expressed to us by the holy patriarchs and prophets, and by Jesus Christ our only Savior and mediator, and by his holy apostles. And then I do not doubt that our matter shall be ended with peace, and joyfulness of heart. God grant us this for his mercy sake. Amen,”

“Your own child, Nicholas Sheterden,
prisoner for the truth, in Westgate, 1555.”

¹ Here, *jealous* means protective and suspiciously watchful.

A Godly Letter of Robert Smith.

“To all who love God unfeignedly, and intend to lead a godly life according to his gospel, and to persevere in his truth to the end: grace and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

“Do not be afraid, most dearly beloved in our Savior Jesus Christ, at these most perilous days, in which, by the sufferance of God, the prince of darkness has broken loose, and rages in his members against the elect of God with all cruelty, to set up again the kingdom of antichrist. Against him, see that you are strong in faith to resist his most devilish doctrine with the pure gospel of God, arming yourselves with patience, to abide whatever will be laid to your charge for the truth’s sake, knowing that you are called to this, not only to believe in [Christ], but also to suffer for him. Oh! how happy are you who, in the sight of God, are counted worthy to suffer for the testimony of Christ. Quiet yourselves therefore, oh! my loving brethren, and rejoice in him for whom you suffer. For to you remain the unspeakable joys, which neither the eye has seen, nor the ear has heard, neither the heart of man is able to comprehend in any way. Do not be afraid of bodily death, for your names are written in the book of life. And the prophets record that precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints. Watch therefore, and pray that you are not prevented in the day of temptation. Now comes the day of your trial, from which the waters rage, and the stormy winds blow. Now it will appear whether you have built upon the fleeting sand, or upon the immovable Rock, Christ, which is the foundation of the apostles and prophets; on which every house that is built, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, by the mighty working of the Holy Spirit. Now approaches the day of your battle, in which it is required that you show yourselves the valiant soldiers of Christ Jesus, with the armor of God, that you may be able to stand fast against all the crafty assaults of the devil. Christ is your captain, and you are his soldiers, whose cognizance is the cross, to which he willingly humbled himself even unto death, and thereby spoiled his enemies. And now he triumphs over them in the glory of his Father, making intercession for those who here remain to suffer the afflictions that are to be fulfilled in his mystical body. It behooves, therefore, everyone who will be counted his scholar, to take up his own cross, and follow him, as you have him for an example. And I assure you that He being on your side, nothing will be able to prevail against you. And that he will be with you, even to the world’s end, you have his promise in Matthew 28. He will go forth with his host as a conqueror to make a conquest. He is the man who sits on the white horse, crowned with immortality; and you, brethren, are his fellowship, of which he is the head. He has your heart in his hand, as a bow bent according to his godly will. He will direct the same according to the riches of his glory, into all spiritual and heavenly cogitations. He is faithful and will not permit you to be further assaulted, than he will give you strength to overcome, and in the utmost danger he will make a way, that you may be able to bear it.

“Do not shrink back, therefore, dear hearts, when you are called to answer for the hope that is in you; for we have the comforter, even the Spirit of truth who was sent from the heavens to teach us. He shall speak in us, he shall strengthen us. Who is he then that will be able to confound us? No indeed, what tyrant is there who now boasts of his strength to

do mischief, whom the Lord shall not with the same Spirit, by the mouth of his servants, strike down to hell fire? Yes, suddenly the Lord will bring down the glory of the proud Philistines, by the hands of his servant David. Their strength is in the spear and shield, but our help is in the name of the Lord who made both heaven and earth. He is our buckler and wall, a strong tower of defense. He is our God, and we are his people. He shall bring the counsels of the ungodly to naught. He shall take them in their own net. He shall destroy them in their own inventions. The right hand of the Lord shall work this wonder. His power is known among the children of men. Their fathers have felt it, and are confounded. In like manner they shall know that there is no counsel against the Lord, when their secrets are opened to the whole world, and are found to be against the living God. However craftily they work, however strongly they build; yet their rabble shall fall down, and the builders themselves shall then be scattered upon the face of the earth, as accursed of God. The just shall see this and be glad, and praise the name of the Lord, who has dealt so marvellously with his servants, as to bring their enemies under their feet. Then the fearful seed of Cain shall tremble and quake. Then the mocking Ishmaelites shall be cast out of the door. Then the proud Nimrod shall see his labor lost. Then the beast of Babylon shall be trodden underfoot. Then the scribes and Pharisees shall fret and rage from madness. Then their painted wisdom shall be known as extreme folly. Then the bloody dragon shall be void of his prey. Then the whore of Babylon shall receive double vengeance. Then they will scratch their crowns for the fall of their mistress harlot whom they now serve for filthy lucre — when no man will buy their wares any more. Then the popish priesthood shall cry away with care, even when the Lord will help his servants. This day is not far off, the day in which the kingdom of antichrist will have an end, and never rise any more. In the meantime, abide in certain and sure hope, clinging to the promises of God, which shall be fulfilled in their own time.

“Acquit yourselves like men against the enemies of God in all humbleness of mind; be strong in spirit to acknowledge one God, one only Savior Jesus Christ, one only, everlasting and sufficient sacrifice for the remission of sins, even the precious body of the Lord Jesus, once offered for all and for ever. He now sits at the right hand of God, and from there he shall come to judge both the quick and the dead at the last day. And until that time, that blessed body occupies no other place to dwell in, to be kept in, to be enclosed in, except in the heavens, even in the glorious majesty of God, personally abiding there in the flesh, not coming down from there till the last day. And as he never ceases to be man, so he never loses the similitude of man. His body there has his lineaments; he does not leave them. So his body there has his highness, and does not shrink, and he does not alter his manly shape at anytime. He is, in what he took from the Virgin Mary, a natural man in all conditions except sin.

“And what he took of his blessed mother, by the working of the Holy Spirit, he took it forever, and will not exchange the same for any other. He took the shape of a man with the substance of his manhood, in one sacred womb. There the two were united together by the Holy Spirit, never to be divided asunder. He retains the one with the other, inseparably. As he will not alter the substance of his flesh into the substance of bread, no

more will he alter the shape of his body into the form of bread. There cannot be a greater absurdity against the truth, than to think that he would leave the shape that he took in the Virgin's womb, being an incidental to his manhood, and join to the same a wafer-cake baked in an oven, or between a pair of irons. As he is in heaven a true man, the one and only Mediator between God and man, even the man Christ Jesus, it is He that is the propitiation for our sins. Be bold, therefore, to confess this most pure and apostolical doctrine; and also that all favor, mercy, and forgiveness comes only by him. He alone of God the Father, was made for us all wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. All these are the gifts of God the Father, freely given to us by Christ Jesus, God and man, through faith in his blood, and not by the merits of men. They are gifts, I say, freely given to us of favor, without our desert — by believing, and not by deserving. To this the law and the prophets bear witness.

“All the blessed martyrs of Christ's church have witnessed with their blood that this doctrine is true. The consciences of all true believers have subscribed to this truth ever since the ascension of Christ. This witness is not of man, but of God. What better quarrel can you then have to give your lives for, than the truth itself? That man who gives his life for the truth, takes the readiest way to life. He that has the pope's curse for the truth, is sure of Christ's blessing. Well then, my brethren, what will now hinder you, but that you go forward as you have begun? No, rather run with the runners, so that you may obtain the appointed glory. Hold on the right way; do not look back; have the eye of your heart fixed upon God, and so run, that you may get hold of it. Cast away all your worldly wealth, and worldly respects, such as the favor of friends, the fear of men, sensual affection, respect of persons, honor, praise, shame, rebuke, wealth, poverty, riches, lands, possessions, carnal fathers and mothers, wife and children, with the love of your own selves. And in respect to that heavenly treasure you look for, let all these be denied, and utterly refused by you, so that in no condition will they abate your zeal, or quench your love towards God. In this case, take no account of them, but rather repute them as vile in comparison to everlasting life. Away with them, as thorns that choke the heavenly seed of the gospel where they are suffered to grow. They are burdens of the flesh, which encumber the soul. Exchange them therefore for advantage. Does he not gain, who finds heavenly and immortal treasure, for earthly and corruptible riches? Does that man lose anything, who is forsaken by his carnal father and mother, when he is therefore received by God the Father to be his child and heir in Christ? Heavenly for earthly, mortal for immortal; transitory things for permanent, is great gains to a Christian conscience.

“Therefore, as I began, I exhort you in the Lord, not to be afraid. Do not shrink back, my brethren; do not mistrust God; be of good comfort; rejoice in the Lord; hold fast your faith, and continue to the end. Deny the world, and take up your cross, and follow Him who is your captain, and has gone before. If you suffer with him, you shall reign with him. What way can you glorify the name of your heavenly Father better, than by suffering death for his Son's sake? What a spectacle it will be to the world to behold so godly a fellowship as you servants of God, in so just a quarrel as the gospel of Christ is, with so pure a conscience, so strong a faith, and so lively a hope, to offer yourselves to suffer most cruel

torments at the hands of God's enemies, and so to end your days in peace, to receive in the resurrection of the righteous, life everlasting?

"Be strong, therefore, in your battle. The Lord God is on your side, and his truth is your cause; and against you are none but the enemies of the cross of Christ, such as the serpent and his seed, the dragon with his tail, the marked men of the beast, the offspring of the Pharisees, the malignant congregation, the generation of vipers, murderers, as their father the devil has been from the beginning.

"To conclude, they are such as the Lord God has always abhorred, and in all ages resisted and overthrown. God, from whom nothing is hidden, knows what they are. He that searches the hearts of men, has revealed them to be crafty, subtle, full of poison — proud, disdainful, stiff-necked, devourers, raveners, and barkers against the truth, filthy and shameless. And therefore the Spirit of God, by the mouths of his holy prophets and apostles, calls them by the names of foxes, serpents, cockatrices, lions, leopards, bulls, bears, wolves, dogs, swine, beasts.

"Thereby he teaches us to understand what their natural inclination is; to deceive, poison, and destroy the faithful and elect of God, as much as it lies in them to do so. But the Lord with his right arm shall defend his little flock against the whole rabblement of these worldlings, who have conspired against him. He has numbered all the hairs of his children's heads, so that not one of them shall perish without his fatherly will. He keeps the sparrows; much more will he preserve those whom He has purchased with the blood of the immaculate Lamb. He will keep them until the hour appointed, in which the name of God shall be glorified in his saints. In the meantime, let them work their wills, let them envy, let them malign, let them blaspheme, let them curse, ban, betray, whip, scourge, hang, and burn. For by these means, God will try his elect as gold in the furnace; and by these fruits, they shall also bring themselves to be known what they are, for all their sheep's skins. For as the one who, in suffering patiently for the gospel of God, is thereby known to be of Christ, even so likewise is the persecutor of him known to be a member of antichrist.

"Besides this, their extreme cruelty shall be a means to sooner provoke God to take pity upon his servants, and to destroy those who so tyrannously treat his people. We may learn this by the histories, as well in the bondage of Israel under Pharaoh in Egypt, and also in the miserable captivity of Judah in Babylon. Where and when the people of God were in the most extreme thralldom, then the Lord stretched forth his mighty power to deliver his servants. Though God for a time suffers [his enemies] to be exalted in their own pride, yet they shall not escape his vengeance. They are his rods; and when he has worn them to the stumps, then he will cast them into the fire. This shall be their final reward. Our duty, in the meanwhile, is to patiently abide the will of God, which works all things for the best.

"Thus he deals with us, partly for our trial, partly also for our sins, which we most grievously have committed to the great slander of his gospel — whereby the name of God was evilly spoken of among his enemies. For this He now punishes us with his fatherly correction in this world, so that we might not be damned with the world. By this means

he seeks his sheep that were lost, to bring them home to the fold again. By this way he seeks to reform us, that we may be like him according to the image of his Son Jesus Christ, in all holiness and righteousness before him. Finally, His godly wisdom uses this way to make us know him thereby, and ourselves in him, who previously had in a manner forgotten him, praised be His name therefore. And as for those Balaamites who now molest us, commit them to the hands of God. Give him the vengeance, and he will reward them. Fall to prayer, and let these belly-gods prate. For He is in heaven, and does not sleep, who keeps Israel. He is in heaven, who made the seas calm when the disciples were afraid. Let us now faithfully call upon him, and he will hear us. Let us cry to the Lord, for he is gracious and merciful. When we are in trouble, he is with us, he will deliver us, and he will glorify us. If we come to him, we will find him turned to us. If we repent us of our wickedness done against him, then he will take away the plague that he has devised against us.

“Let us therefore earnestly repent, and bring forth the worthy fruits of repentance. Let us study to be His. Then we will not need to fear what these hypocrites do against us, who with their pretended holiness deceive the hearts of the simple, and abuse the authority of God in his princes, causing them (by their procurement) to testify to their ambitious prelacy, and to erect their idol again with the Romish mass. God, in whose hands are the hearts of kings, open the heart of the queen’s highness to espy what they are, and to so weed them out, that they no longer are suffered to trouble the congregation of God, and to poison the realm with pope-holy doctrine. God Almighty, for his Son Jesus Christ’s sake, deliver the queen’s highness and this her church and realm, from these proud prelates who are as profitable in the church of Christ as a polecat in the midst of a warren of rabbits.

“To conclude, my brethren, I commit you to God, and to the power of his word, which is able to establish you in all truth. His Spirit be with you, and work always so that you may be mindful of your duties towards him, whose you are both body and soul. See that you love, serve, dread, and obey Him above all worldly powers, and for nothing under the heavens defile your conscience before God. Do not dissemble with his word; God will not be mocked. Indeed, those who dissemble with him, deceive themselves. Such the Lord shall deny, and cast out at the last day. Such, I say, who bear two faces in one hood; such who deny the known truth; such who obstinately rebel against Him — all such, with their partakers, the Lord shall destroy. God defend you from all such, and make you perfect unto the end. Your sorrow shall be turned into joy.” — “ROBERT SMITH.”

*A Letter or Exhortation to the patient suffering of Afflictions
for Christ's Cause, by Robert Samuel.*

“A man does not know his time. But as the fish is taken with the hook, and as the birds are caught with the snare, even so men are caught and taken in the perilous time when it comes upon them. The time comes; the day draws near, Ezekiel 7. It would be better to die (as the preacher says) than to live and see the miserable works which are done under the sun — such sudden and strange mutation, such woeful, heinous, and lamentable divisions approach so fast; and none, or very few, thoroughly repent. Alas! for this sinful nation, a people of great iniquity and seed of ungraciousness, corrupting their ways. They have forsaken the Lord; they have provoked the Holy One of Israel to anger, and have gone backward. Who does not now live in such security and rest, as though all dangers were clean past? Who now does not blind and buffet Christ, who sees me, and does not see me? ^{Luk 22.64} Indeed, who does not now live in such felicity, worldly pleasures, and joys, wholly seeking the world, providing and craftily shifting for the earthly clod and all carnal appetites, as though sin were clean forgotten, overthrown, and devoured? Like hoggish Gergesenes, we are now more afraid and ashamed of Christ our Messiah, fearing the loss of our filthy pigs, I mean our transitory goods, and the disquieting of our sinful and mortal bodies in this short, uncertain, and miserable life, than we are of a legion of devils, seducing and driving us to vanities, lies, and fables, and to this bewitching world, and away from hearing, reading, and believing Christ, God's eternal Son, and his holy word, the power to save our souls.

“Oh! perilous abundance of goods, too much abundance of foods, wealth, and quietness, which destroyed those goodly cities, Sodom and Gomorrah, with so many souls! Jeroboam, so long as he was but a poor man, and not yet advanced to his dignity, lived in the laws of God without reprehension. But once he was brought to wealth and a prosperous state, he became a wicked and most shameful idolater.

“And what made the covetous young man so loath to follow Christ when he was bid to forsake the worldly wealth which he then enjoyed? Woe be to these false illusions of the world, baits of perdition, hooks of the devil, which have so shamefully deceived and seduced full many from the right path to the Lord, into the highways of confusion and perpetual perdition.

“Dear Christians, we might now worthily, lament and bewail our heavy state, miserable condition, and sorrowful chance. Yes I say, we might well accuse ourselves, and with Job curse these troublous, wicked, and bloody last days of this world, were it not that we both see and believe, and find in God's sacred book, that God has in all ages reserved a remnant, I mean the faithful, as many as have been from the beginning of the world, exercised, whetted, and polished with diverse afflictions, troubles, and tossings, cast and dashed against all perils and dangers, as the very dross and outcasts of the earth. And yet they will in no way halt between God and Baal. For God truly abhors two men in one. He cannot [ignore] those who are between both, but He casts them away as a filthy thing. Christ will not divide the spoil with his mortal enemy the devil; he will have all, or lose all.

He will not permit the devil to have the service of the body, while he stands contented with the heart and mind: 'For you are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are his,' as St. Paul says, 1Cor 6.20. For he has made, bought all, and dearly paid for all, as St. Peter says, 'Who himself bore our sins in his own body on the tree, so that we, being dead to sins, might live unto righteousness — by whose stripes you were healed.' (1Pet 2.24)

"Now what harm, I pray you, or what loss do you sustain by this? Why are you, O vain men, more afraid of Jesus your gentle Savior, and his gospel of salvation, than of a legion of cruel devils, going about with false delusions, utterly to destroy you both bodies and souls? Do you think you to be more sure than under your captain, Christ? Do you promise yourselves to be quieter in Satan's service, than in Christ's religion? Do you more esteem these transitory and pernicious pleasures, than God and all his heavenly treasures? Oh, palpable darkness! horrible madness! and willful blindness! without comparison, too much to be suffered any longer! We see and will not see; we know and will not know; yes, we smart and will not feel — and our conscience well knows that. Oh, miserable and brainless souls! who would for foolish pleasures and slippery wealth, lose the royal kingdom and permanent joys of God, with the everlasting glory which he has prepared for them that truly love him, and renounce the world. The children of the world live in pleasure and wealth. And the devil, who is their God and prince of this world, keeps their wealth which is proper for them, and lets them enjoy it. But let us who are of Christ, seek and inquire after heavenly things which, by God's promise and mercy in Christ, will be peculiar to us. I say, let the Cretians, Epicures, and other such earthly Belials and carnal people, pass for things that are pleasant for the body, and pertain to this transitory life. Yet once will they (as the kingly prophet says) run about the city of God, to and fro, howling like dogs, desiring one scrap of the joys of God's elect, but all too late, as the rich glutton did.

"Let us, therefore, pass for those things that pertain to the Spirit, and are celestial. Here we must not be (says St. Paul) as inhibitors and home dwellers, but as strangers; not as strangers only, but according to the mind of St. Paul, as painful soldiers appointed by our King to fight against the ruler of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in heavenly things. The time has come; we must get to it; the judgment must begin first at the house of God. Did they not first begin with the green and sappy tree? And what followed then on the dry branches? Jeremiah 25.29, speaking in the person of God, says, "Behold, I begin to bring evil on the city which is called by my name:' but as for you (meaning the wicked) shall you be as innocents, and not once touched? No, the dregs of God's wrath, the bottom of all sorrows, are reserved for them in the end. But God's household shall drink the flower of the cup of his mercy. And therefore let us, like Hezekiah, play the men, and not shrink back. Let us comfort ourselves, for the Lord our helper is with us, and fights for us. 'The Lord is (he says) with you, when you are with Him; and when you seek Him, he will be found by you. And again, when you forsake him, he will forsake you.' (2Chr 15.2)

“Therefore we should not be dismayed, nor discourage ourselves, but rather be of good comfort; not be sad but merry; not sorrowful, but joyful, in that God of his goodness will grant to take us as his beloved children, to subdue our sinful lusts, our wretched flesh and blood, to His glory, the promoting of his holy word, and edifying of his church. What if the earthly house of this habitation of ours (says St. Paul, meaning the body) is destroyed? We know assuredly we shall have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, with such joys as faith does not take, hope does not touch, and charity does not apprehend. They surpass all desires and wishes. They may be gotten by Christ; they cannot be esteemed. Therefore the more affliction and persecution the word of God brings, the more felicity and greater joy abides in heaven. But the worldly peace, idle ease, wealthy pleasure, and this present and pleasant transitory life and felicity, which the ungodly foolishly imagine to procure for themselves by persecuting and thrusting away the gospel, shall turn to their own trouble, and at last, to horrible destructions and mutations of realms and countries — and *after* this life, if they do not repent, to their perpetual infelicity, perdition, and damnation. For they would rather, with Nabal and his temporal pleasures, descend to the devil, than with Christ and his bodily troubles, ascend to the kingdom of God his Father. But an unwise man (says the Psalmist) does not comprehend them, nor does the foolish understand them: that is, these bloody persecutors grow up and flourish like the flower and grass in the field. But to this end they so flourish: that they might be cut down, and cast into the fire forever. For as Job says, ‘Their joy lasts but for a moment,’ and death shall lie gnawing upon them, as the flock does upon the pasture; yes, the cruel worm, late repentance (as St. Mark says), shall lie gnawing, tormenting, and accusing their wretched conscience for evermore.

“Let us, therefore (good Christians), be constant in obeying God rather than men. For although they slay our sinful bodies (indeed, rather our deadly enemies) for God’s truth, they cannot do it except by God’s sufferance and good will, to His praise and honor, and to our eternal joy and felicity. For our blood shed for the Gospel will preach it with more fruit and greater furtherance than our mouths, lives, and writings did, as the blood of Abel, Stephen, with many others did. So what if they laugh Christ and his word to scorn, those who sit in the chair of perverse and pestilent scorners? To them, as to the wise Gentiles of the world, the gospel of Christ is but foolishness, as it was to the Jews a slander and a stumbling-stone; whereas, now having fallen, they have provoked the wrath and vengeance of God upon themselves.

“These are the days of vengeance, says St. Luke, so that all things written may be fulfilled. And surely it will be no less than a huge storm of evils that come upon us, because a long and cursed obstinate maliciousness of us has gone before, crying in the ears of the Lord God of Hosts who, so many times and in so many ways, has been provoked with the unspeakable riches of his goodness, his patience, and long suffering, to relent. And we have nevertheless despised the same, and proceeded forward to worse and worse, provoking and stirring the presence of God’s majesty to anger. “Now, therefore, says God, by the mouth of his prophet, ‘I will come to you, and I will send my wrath upon you’ —

upon *you*, I say, O England, and punish you according to your ways, and reward you according to all your abominations.

“You have kindled the fire of God’s wrath, and stirred up the coals. For you were once enlightened, and had tasted of the heavenly gift, and become partaker of the Holy Spirit, and had tasted of the good word of God. Indeed, it is still in your mouth, says the prophet. Alas, O England, you knew your Lord and Master’s will, but did not obey it. ‘You must, therefore,’ he says, ‘suffer many stripes,’ and many sharp strokes, and walk in the glittering and hot flame of your own fire, and on the coals that you have kindled. This comes to you from my hand, says the Lord; namely, ‘That you shall sleep in sorrow,’ yes, even so you shall. The plain truth tells the tale; the immutable justice of the everlasting God, and the ordinary course of his plagues from the beginning, confirms the same. The joy of our heart, says Jeremiah, has gone, our glory has fallen away, our merry singing is turned into mourning, the garland of our head is fallen. Alas! alas! that ever we sinned so sorely. Woe to all abominations and wickedness; woe to cloaked hypocrisy; woe to our carnal liberty; woe to our most cursed idolatry. For, because of these things, says the Lord, you shall perish with sword, hunger, and pestilence.

“Therefore, let all the wicked enemies of Christ, and all the unbelievers, look to be tormented and vexed with all plagues, and be entirely without hope of God’s accounting day, who do not know God in Christ to be their very righteousness, their life, their only salvation and sole Savior, nor believe in him. They must, says St. John, abide and perish with their sins in death and in eternal damnation. But we are the children of saints, as the early Tobias answered, and look for another life, which God will give to all those who do not change their faith, nor shrink back from him. Rejoice, therefore, you Christian afflicted brethren, for they cannot take our souls and bodies out of the hands of the Almighty, we who are kept as in the bosom of our most sweet and loving Father. And if we abide fast in Christ, and do not turn away like weathercocks, surely we shall live forever. Christ affirms the same, saying, ‘I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and I know my sheep, and am known by mine. As the Father knows me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.’ No, nor yet this flattering world, with all its vain pleasures, nor any tyrant with his great threats and valiant boasts, can once move them out of the way of eternal life. What consolation and comfort may we have that is more pleasant and effectual than this? God is on our side, and fights for us; he suffers, he smarts, and is afflicted with us. Just as the world can do nothing against his might, nor take away or diminish his glory, nor put him from his celestial throne; so it cannot harm nor hurt any one of his children without his good will. For we are members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones, and as dear to him as the apple of his eye.

“Let us therefore, with an earnest faith, take fast hold and sure feeling upon the promises of God in the gospel, and let us not be turned from it by any temptation, tribulation, or persecution. Let us consider the truth of God to be invincible, inviolable, and immutable, promising and giving us, his faithful soldiers, life eternal. It is he alone who has deserved it for us; it is his benefit alone, and of his mere mercy; and to him alone must we render

thanks. Therefore, do not let not the vain fantasies and dreams of men, and the foolish baubles and toys of the world, nor the crafty delusions of the devil, drive and separate us from our hope of the crown of righteousness, that is laid up in store for us against the last day. Oh that happy and joyful last day! I mean to the *faithful*, when Christ by his covenant shall grant and give to those who overcome, and keep his words to the end, that they may ascend and sit with him, as he has ascended and sits on the throne with his Father. The same body and soul that is now afflicted with Christ, shall then be glorified with Christ; now in the butchers' hands, as sheep appointed to die, but then sitting at God's table with Christ in his kingdom, as God's honorable and dear children. There we shall have for earthly poverty, heavenly riches; for hunger and thirst, the enjoyment of the pleasant presence of the glory of God; for sorrows, troubles, and cold irons, celestial joys and the company of angels; and for a bodily death, life eternal. Oh happy souls! Oh precious death, and evermore blessed, right dear in the eyes of God! To you the spring of the Lord shall be ever flourishing. 'Therefore,' as Isaiah says, 'the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion, and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away.' ^{Isa 51.11} Yes, I am He, says the Lord, who in all things gives you everlasting consolation. To whom with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be glory and praise forever, Amen.

ROBERT SAMUEL."