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Mr. *Sergeant's*
S E R M O N
ON THE
Causes and Danger of *Delusions*
IN THE
Affairs of RELIGION.





THE
Causes and Danger
OF
DELUSSIONS

IN THE
Affairs of RELIGION,

Consider'd and caution'd against,

With particular Reference
TO THE
Temper of the present Times.

IN A

SERMON

Preach'd at *Springfield*, April 4. 1743.

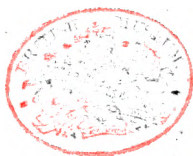
In the Audience of the associated Pastors of the County
of *Hampshire*.

By *John Sergeant*, M. A. R

Pastor of the Church of CHRIST in *Stockbridge*.


Publish'd at the Desire of the Hearers.

BASTON, Printed for S. ELIOT in Cornhill. 1743.





P R E F A C E.

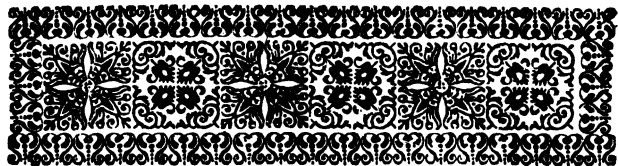
 *S* the prevailing religious Differences upon the Points consider'd in the following Sermon, and the unreasonable Heats and Animosities arising from thence, gave Occasion to treat this Subject in the Manner I have done ; so the same Temper, which I wish may not too much Bias the Minds of some Readers in the Perusal, seems to require the Formality of a Preface ; which might otherwise have been well enough spared. Truth, all will own, is the Thing we should aim at in Meditation and Reading. And impartial Examination is certainly as necessary as Truth is important. And since an infallible Judgment is a Prerogative few have the Confidence openly to challenge to themselves, 'tis an unreasonable Presumption, that Truth is wholly confin'd to a single Party. For indeed how confidently soever a Sect may boast it self to be Orthodox, certainly every other Party has equal Right to challenge the Priviledge of the same Pretence. And I believe it will hold for a general Observation, that the further you go into the Extremes of contending Parties, the less of Truth you will find in Proportion to the Want of Charity there : I have taken somewhat of a middle Way in the following Discourse ; not from an Aversion to either Side ; but because Truth seemed to lead me thither. What is here made publick is submitted to the Judgment of the Candid and Impartial. Nor do I desire any, that may think the following Pages worth their Reading, to lay aside the strictest Severity of their Judgment, provided only, that they maintain the Candour of impartial Judges.

P R E F A C E.

I am not indeed so vain, as to think, that every Thing here said, will gain the Approbation of every Reader. The Sermon is not calculated to gratify those, who are deeply engaged in a party Spirit. But I hope I shall be pardon'd, if I presume upon it, that my Situation in a remote Part of the Land, where I have had but little Occasion to be heated with intemperate Zeal, on one Side or the other, has given me some Advantage to consider and treat of these Matters with Calmness and Moderation, and without that Bias upon my Mind which, it may be, might have sway'd my Tho'ts much more towards one Side or the other, had Providence fix'd me in some other Place, where the Fire of Contention has raged to the Destruction of so much Charity. I hope therefore Readers will not invent groundless Surmises to prevent their own Profit in perusing the following Discourse. For as my Intention was to set these Matters in a true Light, I hope the Defects and Mistakes, that may be met with, will not be imputed to any direct Intention to conceal any necessary Truth in this Affair, or to misrepresent any acknowledged Doctrine of Christianity.

There is, I suppose, a Number of serious well-meaning People in the Country, affected with a true Concern about Things of the highest Importance, apprehensive of Danger, and really desirous of Information in those Things, which have been so much contested of late. For the Sake of such as these it is chiefly, that I consented to the Publication of what was heard from the Pulpit with some Degree of Approbation. If what is here publish'd serves to ease and direct the Minds of People of this Sort, or may be the Means of correcting the Mistakes of any others, it will be a Satisfaction to me, the Praise of which I desire may be given to the Father of Lights, and God of Peace.

J. Sergeant.

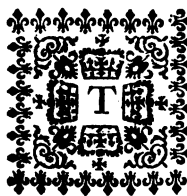


THE
CAUSES and DANGER
OF
DELUSIONS
IN THE
Affairs of RELIGION.



2 Thef. ii. 11, 12.

And for this Cause GOD shall send them strong Delusion, that they should believe a Lie : That they all might be damned, who believed not the Truth, but had Pleasure in Unrighteousness.

 THESE Words are Part of a Paragraph which begins at the 7th verse, *For the Mystery of Iniquity doth already Work : Only he who now letteth, will let, until he be taken out of the Way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the Spirit of his Mouth, and shall destroy with the Brightness of his Coming : Even him whose Coming is after the Working of Satan, with all*

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all Power, and Signs, and lying Wonders. And with all Deceivableness of Unrighteousness, in them that perish; because they received not the Love of the Truth, that they might be saved. And for this Cause, &c. In which Passage is contained a Prediction of a certain Person, that should be instrumental of perverting many from the Faith of the Gospel, and from that Holiness it requires, by Means of those artful Tricks and deceitful Wonders he should work by the Assistance of Satan; which should prove very successful in deceiving Persons prepared for such Deceit, by the Viciousness of their Disposition, and Love of Wickedness, and their Aversion to the Truth of the Gospel: Which vicious Disposition and habitual Wickedness of their's made it just in God to suffer them to be thus deluded, and made to *believe a Lie*.

Who the Person-here design'd is, I shall not now attempt to determine.

But the Reason, as you may probably conjecture, of my choosing these Words to be consider'd at this Time, is the present Posture of religious Affairs in the World, and in this Land in particular; when there is so much Matter of Amusement and Dispute, and so much Deceit supposed to prevail in the respective contending Parties.

Nor do I design to apply Characters here given to particular Persons or Parties of Men; leaving that invidious Province to those who have more Confidence and better Abilities.

But as you are, doubtless, all of you, more or less amused and stumbled perhaps, at some Things of unusual Aspects; and as we are all in some Degree in Danger, except we are very watchful over our own Hearts, and careful to preserve, by divine Assistance, an honest Integrity of Mind, in danger of incurring that most awful of divine Judgments, to be left of God to *strong Delusion to believe a Lie*, that we all might be damned, if we *believe not the*

the Truth, but have Pleasure in Unrighteousness : The Case, I say, being so, it will not perhaps be tho't improper, that I should give you such Instructions, and lead you to such Reflections, as the Occasion of the Times seems to require : Which I propose, by divine Assistance, to do from these Words, after I have prepared the Way in the Consideration of the three following Things, *viz.*

I. In what Sense God is said to *send Men strong Delusion that they should believe a Lie* : Or a Set of false Doctrines. *For this Cause God shall send them strong Delusion, &c.*

II. Shew what sort of Persons are most *eminently exposed* to this most awful divine Judgment.

III. That such as *believe not the Truth, but have Pleasure in Unrighteousness*, continuing so, shall not escape a most dreadful Condemnation. *That they all might be damned, &c.*

I. Then, we are to consider in what Sense God is said to *send Men strong Delusion, that they should believe a Lie* : *i. e.* A Set of false Doctrines, or erroneous Principles, in Opposition to the Truths of the Gospel. For as the Gospel is wont, in the New-Testament, by Way of Eminence, to be called *the Truth*, Eph. 1. 13. Jam. 1. 18. so those Doctrines which are contrary to it, are call'd a *Lie* ; *i. e.* false Doctrines, or erroneous Principles, and wrong Notions of Things.

What we render *strong Delusion* here, is in the Original the *Efficacy of Error*, or Deceit ; *God shall send them the Efficacy of Error*, or Delusion ; *i. e.* very prevalent or powerful Error. Thus God is said in Scripture to harden Men's Hearts. *He hath Mercy on whom he will have Mercy ; and whom he will he hardneth*, Rom. 11. 18. And he is spoken of by our Saviour, as hiding the Things of the Gospel from the *Wise and Prudent*. And he is represented, as having blinded the Eyes of the Jews, and hardned their

B

Hearts,

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Hearts, that they should not see with their Eyes, nor understand with their Hearts, and be converted, and healed, *John 12. 40.* in the same Manner, as God is said here to send *strong Delusion*, powerful and efficacious Error among Men, to make them believe a Lie; a Set of false Doctrines, and mistaken Notions of Things.

Now this is a strong Manner of speaking, to represent the Power of divine Providence concurring, and so concern'd in all Events, that nothing happens without our heavenly Father: while at the same Time, the Scripture is very careful to teach, that God is no Way the proper Author of moral Evil.

In Answer therefore to the Enquiry, I shall observe,

1. *Negatively.* That when God is said to send Men *strong Delusion*, that they should believe a Lie; we are not to take it, as if God in an immediate and efficacious Manner wrought upon the Minds to cause them to err from the Truth, and receive a Lie. This Supposition would bear too hard upon the moral Perfections of God, and make him the efficient Cause of Sin; which would be to blaspheme his holy Name: Who ever abhors that which is evil, nor can be the Author of it. As it would be plainly to contradict the Scripture, as particularly *Jam. 1. 13, 14, 15.* *Let no Man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: For God cannot be tempted with Evil, neither tempteth he any Man. But every Man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own Lusts and enticed. Then Lust, when it hath conceived, it bringeth forth Sin: And Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth Death.* As also, *1 John 2. 16.* *All that is in the World, the Lust of the Flesh, and the Lust of the Eye, and the Pride of Life, is not of the Father, but is of the World.* But,

2. *Positively.* God may be said to send Men *strong Delusion* that they should believe a Lie, when he permits and in his holy Providence directs those Errors to be propagated with

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miserable Fate, in the Times of our Saviour and his Apostles. Thus also God dealt with the Gentiles, suffering all Nations in Times past to walk in their own Ways : The Reason of which is assigned by St. *Paul*, in the first Chapter to the *Romans* : For “ Because that when they
“ knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither
“ were thankful, but became vain in their Imaginations,
“ and their foolish Heart was darkened. And changed
“ the Glory of the incorruptible God into an Image made
“ like to corruptible Man, and to Birds, and four-footed
“ Beasts, and creeping Things. Wherefore God gave
“ them up to Uncleaness, thro’ the Lusts of their own
“ Hearts, to dishonour their own Bodies between them-
“ selves : Who changed the Truth of God into a Lie,
“ and worshipped and served the Creature more than the
“ Creator, who is blessed for ever. For this Cause God
“ gave them up to vile Affections. And even as they
“ did not like to retain God in their Knowledge, God
“ gave them over to a reprobate Mind, to do those
“ Things which are not convenient.

Thirdly, God may moreover give Men up to the powerful Infatuations of the Devil. And accordingly that wicked one is said to be *the Spirit that worketh in the Children of Disobedience*, Eph. 2. 2. And we read of some, *that are snared and taken Captive by him at his Will*, 2 Tim. 2. 26. And this seems clearly supposed in the Case before us, where the wicked One, the Man of Sin, and Son of Perdition is described, as coming after the working of Satan, with all Power, and Signs, and lying Wonders, and with all Deceivableness of Unrighteousness in them that perish.

And thus God may be said to send *strong Delusion*, when he permits false Doctrines and erroneous Notions to be propagated with great Appearance of Truth, in artful Disguises, for the Trial of Men’s Integrity ; and when those *who have Pleasure in Unrighteousness* are deserted by
his

his Grace, and left to their own Hearts Lufts; and are moreover given up to the Infatuations of the Devil.

II. I am to shew whatSort of Persons are most *eminently* exposed to this awful divine Judgment, to be given up to *strong Delusion to believe a Lie*. On this Head I need not dwell long, having in a great Measure prevented my self, in what has been said already. Their Character is with sufficient Plainness pointed out in the Context and Text, as well as in other Parts of Scripture. They are such as *receive not the Love of the Truth*; but *have Pleasure in Unrighteousness*; Persons of resolved and obstinate Wickedness: Such as the Scripture describes under the Characters of *Hardness and an impenitent Heart*; an *Heart fully set in them to do Evil*; *selling themselves to work Wickedness*. Persons who *hate the Light* of divine Truth, and *rejoice in Iniquity*; who *grieve the Holy Ghost*, and obstinately resist his Strivings with them. In a Word, those who in an eminent and emphatical Sense, are habitual and wilful Sinners, whether in openProphaneness of Life, as some, or under the Disguises of Hypocrisy, as others; which was eminently the Case of the Scribes and Pharisees in our Saviour's Time; and is now the Case of all those, who *turn the Grace of God into Lasciviousness*; and presume upon Impunity in Sin, because they *are not under the Law, but under Grace*. Persons of this Character are of all Men most in Danger of being given up to *strong Delusion, that they should believe a Lie*.

I proceed to observe,

III. That such as *believe not the Truth, but have Pleasure in Unrighteousness*, continuing so, shall not escape a most dreadful Condemnation. *That they all might be damned, &c.* I say, *continuing so*, because 'tis possible, and sometimes no doubt, the Case, that those, who answer to this Character in a great Degree, who do not *believe the Truth, but have Pleasure in Unrighteousness*, are afterwards convinced and converted by the Power of divine Grace; God acting

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ing in this Matter with the *Freedom of a* sovereignly good and righteous Governour, *having Mercy on whom he will have Mercy, and hardning whom he will.* "For tho' it
"be without Doubt a Truth, that God never *hardens*
"any, but such as have highly deserved to be made signal
"Examples of his just Severity; yet among the many
"who give him sufficient Provocation to treat them in
"such a Manner, it is certain, that *he hath Mercy on some,*
"*and hardens others,* as it seemeth good in his Sight," *.
But however this be, it is a certain Truth, that those, who
continue not to receive the Love of the Truth, but still to have
Pleasure in Unrighteousness cannot escape a most awful
Condemnation. For they reject the only Means of their
Recovery from a State of Sin and Death; refusing the
Truth, which alone can *make them free.* And this is plainly
supposed in the Text; *that they all might be damned, who*
believe not, i. e. continued not to believe the Truth, but had
Pleasure i. e. continued to have *Pleasure in Unrighteousness.*

The IMPROVEMENT follows.

1. Let Sinners be hence caution'd against throwing off
the Blame of their own Wickedness from themselves, and
casting it upon the infinitely *holy* God. Do not say, nor
suffer your selves to think, if I am under the Power of
strong Delusion how can I help it, since 'tis God that sends
those *Delusions* that I should believe a Lie: And *who can*
resist the Power of his Might? Let no Man say when he is
tempted, *I am tempted of God.* Then is a Man tempted,
when he is drawn away of his own Lusts and enticed. And if
God in any Measure leaves you to *Delusion*, to embrace
Error for Truth; to be govern'd by your *own Heart's*
Lusts without the further *Restraints* of his Grace, or gives
you up to the *Infatuations* of the Devil; it must in this
Case be supposed, that you have first harden'd yourself,
rebell'd

* See Dr. *Wigglesworth's* two Discourses on *Rom. ix.*
18. where this Matter is treated with great Judg-
ment and Correcness.

rebell'd with obstinate Wickedness, and griev'd his holy Spirit; that you have not received the Love of the Truth, but have had Pleasure in Unrighteousness. 'Tis your own Sin and Folly therefore has undone you.

2. Hence let all be stirred up to take heed to themselves, that they do not indulge themselves in any Course of *known habitual* Wickedness in the Love of Unrighteousness, and in Opposition to the Truth, lest they provoke God to send them strong Delusion, to believe a Lie, under the Power of which they will flatter themselves into eternal Destruction. 'Tis true, your meer forc'd Abstinence from the gross Acts of Sin does not give you any Title to the divine Mercy, tho' if it be done out of Regard to divine Authority, it will be a probable Step towards it: As on the other Hand, it is certain, that by giving a loose to your corrupt Inclinations, you put yourselves into the Way to be infatuated in the Practice of Sin. How many unhappy Instances in Life are there of this, that Persons beginning and yielding by Degrees to the Practice of Debaucheries, so habituate themselves to it, that 'tis next to impossible ever to reclaim them! This is abundantly evident in the Instance of Drunkenness: When an Habit of it is once contracted, the beastly Appetite becomes entirely Master of the Man. And in vain almost does Reason remonstrate against it, in vain does Conscience check in a sober Hour, in vain does Interest and Self-Preservation plead against it, in vain are the Terrors of divine Wrath set against such Persons; and in vain almost do they form any Resolutions to refrain. How wretched is their Condition, and how sure do they seal their own Damnation! This is an awful Consideration, but a too melancholy Truth; and ought to sink deep into the Hearts of such Wretches; and be a solemn Warning to others, who have not yet been suffer'd to fall into that most hateful and dangerous Vice. And the same is true of other the like Habits of Wickedness. *Can the Ethiopian change his Skin? Or the Leopard his Spots? Then may ye also that are accustomed to do Evil, learn to do Well.*

So

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So far is it from being true, what some have, in strange Contradiction to *Reason, Experience* and the *Scriptures*, inculcated of late, that the most *notorious* Sinners are in a more *probable* Way for *Conversion* and the Grace of God, than Persons of a more *regular* and *moral* Life. Such Persons may indeed be awaken'd, and in some Degree humbled and reform for a Time: But, alas! How often does it happen, that they relapse into their old Habits; and after they have felt much of the Power of God's Word and Spirit, return again to their former Folly. *As the Dog to his Vomit, and the Sow that was washed to her Wallowing in the Mire.*

Be advised therefore to keep at the greatest possible Distance from all known Sin. And wait on God with earnest and incessant Prayer, to renew you in Soul, Spirit and Body, that from a good Principle of Sanctification within, you may be prepared with Cheerfulness and Delight to perform all Acts of holy Obedience.

3. Let all be hence caution'd to watch against all *Error* in Judgment, as well as *Wickedness* in Life. God most reasonably expects of us the *honest* Use of the Powers of Nature he has given us; that we use our Reason and Understanding to find out his Will; and that our Wills and Affections be govern'd by Reason and Judgment; that what we *judge* to be wrong we avoid, and what we *know* to be right we carefully put in Practice.

And yet I do not mean, that we should *lean to our own Understanding*, or *be prudent in our Sight*. But that we honestly and sincerely take those Measures to inform our selves, which God has afforded us; and with Dependance on divine Assistance heartily set our selves to the Practice of those Things we *know* to be right.

There are a thousand Ways, in which Persons may be deluded in the great and important Affairs of Religion and Eternity; and to which they are exposed, if they *do not*

not love the Truth, or if they have Pleasure in Unrighteousness. Nor is it improbable, that many do at this Day thus impose upon themselves. One would indeed hope better Things of those, who make Profession of Religion from what they suppose the Experience of the effectual Work of divine Grace upon their Hearts. And yet if the *Work* so much talk'd of be not, in this Respect, more extraordinary, than has been known in past Ages, (and I would to God it was!) 'tis to be feared, there are not a few, who in the Notion of christian Experience are left to miserable Delusion: While others, on the other Hand, who make little or no Pretences to such inward sensible Experience on their own Hearts, are many of them left, at least are liable to be left, to the same strong Delusion, that they should believe a Lie; that they might be damned; and both Sorts, because they receive not the Love of the Truth, but obey Unrighteousness.

What I propose now therefore is, with all Humility and Care, to make some Observations, that may perhaps be proper to be tho't of, and useful to direct both Sorts of Persons in the present State of religious Affairs in the Land. And I trust, I may so far presume upon the Candour of my Hearers, as to assure my self, that no one will vainly surmise, that what I shall now say on this Head, is designed in a Spirit of Opposition to any Man or Party of Men, but that it will be taken, (as indeed it is) for the sincere Judgement of my own Mind, without any partial Regard to the Opinions or Doctrines of any Party at all.

And first, I would observe a few Things relating to that Experience which is so much talk'd off, and made the almost only Mark of Difference between the Children of God, and the Children of the Devil. And that I may be the better understood, I would consider,

I. What we are to understand by Experience.

C
2. What

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2. What Experience is to be look'd upon as *genuine*; and the *ordinary* Steps, at least, by which Persons are brought to the *effectual* Understanding and Practice of Christianity.

3. Point out those Delusions Persons are liable to in this Matter.

1. Then, if it be ask'd, what we are to understand by *christian Experiences*---I answer only in the General, that by *christian Experience* we are to understand all that Train of Thoughts, inward Feelings of Heart, in the Exercise of the several Passions and Affections, which precede and accompany the effectual Acceptance of Christ, and the Gospel Salvation.

The Subject is *antecedently* supposed in the Language of Scripture, *to be dead in Trespasses and Sins*, to be under the habitual Government of Lust and corrupt Affections. Nor can it be thought any one is brought out of this State of Sin and Guilt into a State of Peace and Reconciliation with God, and to a Dominion over the reigning Power of his Lusts without sensible previous Preparation, a successive Train of Tho'ts, Reasoning and Reflection; struggles of Corruption, Tumults of Passion, the inward Sense of Perverseness and Opposition. In a Word, it is not to be supposed, that a Person can pass under that divine Change, which the Scripture calls *being born again, passing from Death to Life, being turned from Darkness to Light, and from the Power of Satan to God*, or becoming a true and sincere Penitent, without a *sensible* Commotion in the Soul; the various Exercise of the Tho'ts, Passions and Affections. The least Reflection upon human Nature, will, I think, convince any one of the Truth of all this. Now the inward Feeling of this Revolution in the Soul is what is, or should be meant by *christian Experience*. We are,

2. To consider what Experience is *genuine*, and the ordinary Steps at least, by which Persons are brought to the

the effectual Understanding and Practice of Christianity ; when the Subject is before supposed entirely destitute of the true Spirit of Religion and Devotion to God ; which 'tis to be fear'd, is the unhappy Case of the greater Part even of Christians come to Years of Understanding. *

And,

1. It is, I think, plainly necessary to suppose, that a Person, thus under the habitual reigning Power of Sin, must be *awaken'd* to consider and apprehend his Danger in such a State of Sin and Rebellion against God. Without this the Springs of Action cannot be moved. The Person will still remain thoughtless and unconcern'd about himself ; and therefore give the Reins to his corrupt Inclinations. This is so manifest upon the plain Principles of human Action, and so agreeable to the universal Doctrine of Scripture, that it need not be insisted on.

What Degrees of *Terror* one shall have, or how near he may apprehend his Danger to be, is no Way necessary to be determined. It is only necessary to be supposed, that he is so far *awaken'd* as to be put upon Consideration, and to be stirred up to Action. Agreeable to what the Psalmist observes of himself, *I thought on my Ways, and turned my Feet unto thy Testimonies.* †

* Whether there are not some, who, from their earliest Infancy, by the secret, powerful Influence of divine Grace, have the Genius and true Spirit of Christianity, gently infused into them, without any such sensible Commotion, is a Question does not fall within the Compass of my present Design to determine. That the Case may be so, none, I believe, will question ; And that in some rare Instances at least, 'tis really so in Fact, has generally been agreed. Would to God there were a thousand Instances of it where there is one !

† Psal. 119. 59.

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A Person being awaken'd to consider and apprehend Danger,

2. There must be supposed to follow or accompany it a *Conviction of Guilt* : i. e. a Sense of Sin, or a *Consciousness* of having transgressed the Law of God : Done those Things he ought not to have done, and left undone those Things he should have performed ; A Sense of an evil Disposition, a great Depravity and Corruption of Heart. This must be suppos'd as the Ground and Reason of Repentance. For if one is not conscious to himself of Guilt, he has nothing to repent of ; nor any Ground to apprehend Danger, or to fear the divine Displeasure : This is self-evident ; and a Matter about which no one can entertain any reasonable Doubt.

And here a vast Multitude of Sins, with a thousand aggravating Circumstances, may occur to the Mind, which may heighten a Person's Guilt, in his own Sense of Things, to an high Degree, and fill him with great and distressing Concern about himself ; while his Sins are set in Order before his Eyes, and appear more in Number than the Hairs of his Head. And yet, at the same Time, his Heart may seem as hard as a Stone : i. e. He cannot find any Relentings and ingenuous Grief of Heart, for having been thus wicked and unmindful of God : But is perhaps at Times in a sort of an Amazement and bewilder'd State, that he knows not which Way to turn himself : Sensible of Sin, but as seems to him incapable of Repentance. But whatever strange and unusual Posture one may be in by the Tumult of his Thoughts, and the Concurrence of a Variety of Passions, mixt and blended together, or following each other in swift Successions, while he is under the Apprehensions of unpardoned Sin ; the true Conviction, properly speaking, is nothing else, but a Consciousness or inward Sense of Guilt, or in the Language of Scripture the Conscience accusing, and the Heart condemning, for having done those Things which are wrong and forbidden, or being wanting in what should be found in one.

And

And here in some there may be great Resistance and Opposition to this Sense of Things; a thousand Excuses, Extenuations and Apologies for a Time made: And this generally in Proportion to the Love one has to those Things and Ways, which are now acknowledged to be wrong.

3. There must be supposed *Sorrow of Heart* in some Degree, for having provoked the just Resentments of divine Anger. We can scarcely suppose a Person in any due Measure awakened, and convicted of Guilt, without some Degree of Sorrow for it; *i. e.* at least a sincere and hearty Wish, that the Case had been otherwise. 'Tis true, the Heart may yet, notwithstanding Awakenings and Convictions, be destitute of that ingenuous Melting, Softening and tender Grief which may be afterwards, and arises from a Sense of having abused divine Goodness and Grace, and is the proper Character of true Penitents.

To this we may add,

4. There must be a deep Sense of one's *Inability to help one's self*, and procure Deliverance from this State of Distress and Guilt, either by making Attonement for Sin, and giving Satisfaction to the Demands of the divine Law, and the Rights of Justice; or even to deliver one's self from the Dominion of Sin: 'Tis I think, universally agreed among those, that own the Doctrine of Christ's Satisfaction, that the Pardon of Sin, and the Right of Life consequent upon it, are entirely owing to Christ's Merits in his mediatorial Obedience to the Death. If this therefore be the Case, (as I think the Scripture abundantly teaches) 'tis the most reasonable Thing in the World, that the guilty Rebel should be brought to acknowledge his own Forfeiture of Life and every Blessing, and that it is not in the Power of his Hand to ransom his own Soul: For if he could, why should Christ have laid down his for that Purpose.

'Tis moreover acknowledged by all that own the *Concurrence* and *Efficacy* of divine Grace in *Regeneration*, that 'tis

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'tis not in the Sinner's Power to beget himself to a divine and spiritual Life; and to gain the Conquest over his own Lufts: Which, if it be the Case, as undoubtedly it is; what can be more reasonable, than that a Person should be brought, with a feeling Sense, to acknowledge his own moral Impotency, when he has *voluntarily yielded himself the Servant of Sin, to obey it in the Lufts thereof*: For if it be true, that God begets us *again of his own Will*, and if those, who are made the Children of God are *born not of Blood, nor of the Will of the Flesh, nor of the Will of Man, but of God*, 'tis certainly reasonable that this Point should be owned. But while one apprehends himself able to help himself, he will not readily apply to another for it. To suppose this, were to suppose what is contrary to the natural Pride of Men's Hearts. Why indeed should one apply to another for Help, when he can help himself? *The Whole have no need of the Physician, but they that are sick*. If I can *establish a Righteousness of my own*, that will answer my Necessities, what need have I to *submit to the Righteousness of God*? If I can atone for my Breaches of the Law, what need have I to look to Christ's Attonement? Or if I can do some singular Honour to the broken Law, so as to be justified by it, what need I depend upon the Grace of God thro' Christ for a Right to Life? Or if I can subdue my own Lufts, and by my own native Strength get the Victory over Sin, what occasion have I of Help from another? So that without this Sense of ones *Inability* to save one's self, no Body will seek Salvation from Christ, who is *the only Name under Heaven given, whereby we must be saved*. This Sense of one's own Inability, seems therefore a necessary Part of *christian Experience*.

5. It must be suppos'd in *genuine christian Experience*, that the Soul is *humbled* before God: I mean brought to such a *Sense* of Guilt as to acknowledge God's *Right* to punish it by the Execution of the Sentence of the broken Law; to own the Equity of the righteous Governour, if he should condemn. And thus the Mouth must be stopped, and the Person become guilty in his own Sense
of

of Things before God : And acknowledge that *he would be just if he should speak, and clear if he should judge.* And so to throw himself at the Foot of divine Mercy, in the Sense of the humble Publican, saying, *God be merciful to me a Sinner.*

This may be done, while a Person is *uncertain* in his own Apprehension, whether God will ever be merciful to him or not ; and it may be is even upon the **Borders of Despair.** But that *he should really despair* of Help in the Mercy of God is by no Means necessary, as some seem to teach. For this would be to cast Reproach on the infinite Mercy of God in Christ, and to contradict his gracious Invitations to the greatest of Sinners. Much less is it any necessary Part or Concomitant of this *Humiliation*, that a Person should be brought so to resign himself into the Hands of an *angry Judge*, as to be put into a Sort of *calm Composure* of Mind, in a Kind of *Indifferency* what becomes of him, whether he be saved from the Wrath of God, or cast into the everlasting Flames of Hell ; as some seem to express themselves. But certainly in my Opinion those, who teach thus, are sufficiently ignorant of human Nature, and very inattentive to the Doctrines of Scripture : For why are we *threatned* with the awful Terrors of Hell, but to excite us to *fly from the Wrath to come* ? But the Fear of Hell is inconsistent with such a supposed State of Indifferency, whether we be cast into it or not. And still *more absurd* is it to suppose, as some have done, that 'tis a *necessary Part of Humiliation*, that a Person should be made *willing* to go to Hell, and reside in Torments for ever : Which certainly in the *Nature of Things* is impossible to one, that has any *Sense* of what Hell means. This cannot be till we first suppose Hell to loose all its Terror : Which is in Effect to *take away* the very Notion of that *Place of Torment.*

'Tis true, a Sinner in his *Humiliation* must be supposed to be brought to the *Foot* of sovereign Mercy, so as to forego all Pleas of *Right* to the divine Favour, and to ask for

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for Grace in the *humble Sense* of an *unworthy Beggar* : To see himself *widone* by his own Folly, and to acknowledge himself a *lawful Captive* in the Hands of Justice ; and as our Saviour expresses it, *condemned already*. Further than this I know not, that either the Reason of Things or the Doctrines of Scripture carry us.

Thus the *Publican* pleads ; and thus the *Prodigal* comes to his Father with this Confession, *Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in thy Sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son* : While it is evident, that the *Hope* he conceived of his Father's Compassion was *one Consideration* that mov'd him to return to his Father's House.

6. It is moreover to be supposed, in *genuine christian Experience*, that a Person, at some Time or other, has an *affecting Sense* of the *Sufficiency*, Fullness and Willingness of Christ to save ; and that accordingly from the Testimony of God concerning him in the Scriptures he does *receive* and *submit* to him in *all the Parts* of his Character, as *Prophet, Priest, King* and *Exemplar*, to whom he is to endeavour to conform himself both in *Temper* and *Life*. And this is what, I suppose, is commonly called *closing with Christ by Faith*, or in the better Stile of Scripture *receiving him*. *As many as received him to them gave he Power to become the Sons of God, even to them that believed on his Name*. Now to *receive Christ* plainly means upon the *Credit of the Testimony of God concerning him*, sincerely to acknowledge him in *all Parts* of his Character, since the same *Testimony of God*, which is the *Ground of Faith* in any *one Part* of his Character, is the *Ground of it in every other* ; and in Consequence of this Acknowledgement of the *Truth* of the divine Testimony, to resign our selves to him, to put our Trust in him, having our only Dependance upon him for Pardon and for Life in the Way of his Appointment, and therefore heartily to embrace that *whole Scheme* of Religion, which he has taught and revealed in the Scripture. For 'tis plainly not enough, either in Reason or in the Scripture Sense of Things,
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barely to assent to the Testimony of God, while that Assent rests only in the *Head*, as a meer speculative Notion ; but it must reach to and affect the *Heart*. For as every Truth and Doctrine is to be received with that *Attention of Mind* and *Affection of the Heart*, which belongs to the *Importance* of it ; so Faith taken in that *practical* Sense, in which 'tis ever consider'd in the New Testament, when spoken of with Commendation, always supposes in it the *Consent of the Will* and the *Concurrence of the Affections* towards the Object believed. All this seems so evident in *Reason* and *Scripture*, that I need not dwell on this Head.

I will only further observe, that it is no *uncommon* Thing perhaps, that Persons, especially if somewhat *ignorant*, or if they have been *deeply* concern'd about the Affairs of their Souls, have in this Case some *strong Impressions* made upon their Imaginations, and seem to apprehend the Person of Christ, in a more *lively* Manner than usual, as it were with *open Arms* ready to receive them *. But certainly this in itself is of no Importance : It seems only necessary here, that the *Understanding* be in some good Measure *informed* of the Dignity of Christ's Person, as *Mediator*, and that he be acquainted with the *Nature* and *Design* of his Offices, and the Doctrines of his Religion. Without this a Person's *Faith* in him will be *very imperfect*.

* If such Impressions made upon the Fancy or Imagination were consider'd only as natural Effects, People would not be apt to lay so much Stress upon them. And yet, I think, he is but little acquainted with humane Nature, that does not know that such Impressions naturally arise from or accompany the Passions raised high and strongly fix'd upon any Object. There are few People but have experienc'd this in worldly Matters : And why it should not be suppos'd, where the Object of the Passion is divine, it will be hard to assign a Reason.

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7. Consequent to this 'tis usual for Persons in a greater or less Degree to be fill'd with *Comfort* and *religious Joy*, at least to have *Peace of Conscience*, founded in the *Apprehension* of having complied with the *Terms of Pardon* and *Acceptance* with God. Nor is it, in my Opinion, *unreasonable* to suppose, that God may in *gracious Condescension* to an *humble* returning Sinner, give him *special Views* at that Time of his Favour towards him, and give him Joy in believing: That *as there is Joy in Heaven over one Sinner that repenteth*, so the Sinner himself may take a Part of that Joy. That the *Mind* in this Case should at least be *composed* to Calmness and Resignation in a *comfortable Hope* and *Peace* in God seems very reasonable to suppose. And indeed, I believe, it is no uncommon Thing for a *new Convert*, especially if in the *Heat of Youth*, when the *Passions of Nature* are *vigorous*, to have from Time to Time *more sensible* Emotions of *religious Joy*, than afterwards, when perhaps the *Judgment, Will* and *Resolution* are more *strongly fixt* for God; which, in my Opinion, is a Thing of *far greater Value*, than *present Starts* of *Passion*, and the *transient Sallies* of devout Affection.

8. *Lastly*, After such an Acceptance of Christ with the whole Heart, and some Apprehension of the Mercy of God in him, 'tis usual for the *Heart* to melt in *ingenuous Grief*, and the Eyes perhaps to flow in Tears; and be *deeply affected* with a *Sense* of the Baseness of Sin, and to be filled with *Shame* for having provok'd a God of so great Goodness and *Compassion*; and to form the most *zealous* Resolutions against offending him any more. And this Temper perhaps is the *most sure* Evidence of *true Repentance*, and an *effectual* Work of Grace in the Heart, of any Thing else whatsoever. And yet, if it could be supposed, all this, that has been described, and *whatever* else of this Kind may be *thought of*, is nothing, unless it be confirmed by the *after Fruits* of new and holy Obedience, with a tender Conscience in the *faithful Discharge* of all the Duties and Offices of a christian Life. For indeed the *End* of all this *Preparation* is, that Men might live *wholly*

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to God, purging themselves from all Pollutions of Flesh and Spirit, and perfecting Holiness in the Fear of God; while they look for the blessed Hope and glorious Appearing of the great God, and their Saviour Jesus Christ, coming to render to every Man according to his Works.

Before I proceed to the next Head, I would take Notice of two Things relating to this *inward Experience* before described.

1. First, That it *often* happens, that a great Part, or perhaps the *Whole* of this Process, is carried on by some *particular* Texts of Scripture *powerfully impress'd* upon the Mind. However, this, I think, is no Way necessary to be supposed. For we are *begotten again with the Word of Truth*, i. e. the *whole* Scheme of the Doctrines of the Gospel, not any *one particular* Text, tho' this Work in the Heart may be *much* carried on in this Way.

2. Again, It may be observ'd, that this whole Process may be pass'd thro' by some in a *shorter*, by others in a *much longer* Time. The precise Space of Time for it cannot be determined. Only in the *General*, I believe, it will hold for a true Observation, that by how much the more *sudden* a supposed *Conversion* is, by so much the more Reason there is *to doubt* of the Genuineness of it, and *to suspect* it will not prove *effectual*. This Observation is agreeable to the *general Character* of humane Nature in *all other* Determinations, and I believe *Experience* will confirm it in this. And this, I think, our Saviour plainly eno' intimates in several of his Discourses, particularly in the 14th Chapter of *Luke* 28,---33. " For which of you
" intending to build a Tower, sitteth not down first and
" counteth the Cost, whether he have sufficient to finish
" it? Least haply after he hath laid the Foundation, and
" is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock
" him, saying, This Man began to build, and was not
" able to finish. Or what King going to make War
" against another King, sitteth not down first, and consult-

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“ eth, whether he be able with ten Thousand to meet
“ him that cometh against him with twenty Thousand?
“ Or else while the other is yet a great Way off, he sendeth
“ an Ambassage, and desireth Conditions of Peace. So
“ likewise, whosoever he be of you, that forsaketh not
“ all that he hath, cannot be my Disciple. ”

I proceed,

3. To point out those *Delusions* Persons are liable to in this Matter of *Experience*. And here,

1. The *great Danger* lies in taking the *Appearance* of this Process of Experience for the *Truth* of the Thing, and so *resting short* of an *effectual Conversion* to God.

In almost every one of these Parts of Experience I have taken Notice of, there is Danger of Mistake. One may be in a *little Degree* awaken'd, and yet not be *thoroughly* stirred up to the *Resolution* of Action.

In Conviction Persons may take the *meer panic* Fear of Hell, and *present* Apprehensions of *immediate* divine Vengeance for the *Conviction of Sin*. Whereas, in Truth, there may be the *most awful* Amazement and Terror of Mind, so as to *deprive* one of the Use of *Reason*, and *Strength of Body*: And yet be no *true* Conviction at all. For *Conviction*, properly speaking, is nothing else but the *Conscience of Guilt*, in a Sense of having *transgressed* the Law of God. But there may be the *greatest Horror* and *Distress* of Mind without any such *Sense of Guilt*: as is manifest in the Case of many *melancholly* Persons, who yet would not be guilty of Sin for all the World. And Persons also in a *meer Fright* may be fill'd with all imaginable Distress without any sufficient Cause. And truly good Men from the *meer Softness* of their Disposition, and the *Tenderness* of their Consciences are, perhaps, especially if Persons of *weak* Understandings, as liable to such *panic* Dread, as any others. When their Consciences acquit them, *meer groundless* Fear may condemn them.

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As some *notoriously* wicked Persons also may be thrown into all the Amazement of *distressing* Fear without any true Conviction of their Sin. Here therefore Persons of corrupt Minds are liable to *strong Delusion*.

In *Humiliation* also Persons are liable to be deceived, by depending upon some *outward Expression* of it, instead of the true *Temper* of Humility wrought in the Heart. Persons may in great Amazement and Agony of Mind throw themselves upon the Ground and wallow in Althes; and yet their *Hearts* be never *humbled*: But may do all this in *meer Hypocrisy*, and under a Notion of doing some *extraordinary Honour* to God in *Atonement* for their former Offences: While the Heart still *rebells* against God, and *secretly* justifies it self. One may *despair* of the Mercy of God, and yet not be *humbled* before him. For he may despair from wrong Apprehensions of God, and the Redemption of Christ; and not see truly his own Guilt, nor own the Justice that might *strike him dead*.

Again, In the Point of *receiving Christ*, nothing is easier than for one to be deluded and made to *believe a Lie*; especially if he be one that has *Pleasure in Unrighteousness*. For he that receives Christ *receives* him just as he *apprehends* him; if therefore his Apprehension be *wrong*, his receiving him is *vain*. He may consider him *only* as a *kind condescending* Saviour, ready to rescue him from Hell, without *apprehending* him as a *Prophet* to teach him, or as a *King* to rule, or as a *Pattern* to whose Example he is to be conformed. Certainly in *receiving Christ* is included the receiving the *Religion* of Christ; at least this is implied, as the *Consequence* of it: And yet how easy is it for a Person to *flatter* himself, that he has *received* Christ, when he *understands* little of the *Religion* he has taught, and is perhaps in many Instances, actuated by a Spirit *directly contrary* to it! Would to God there were no unhappy Instances of this Sort!

Again,

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Again, If one understand by receiving Christ the persuading himself that *Christ's Righteousness is his*, and depending with *Confidence* upon it for Justification: As some seem to mean nothing else by it. May not this be a meer *groundless* Presumption and *strong Delusion*? For why may not a Man, if he be ignorant and so taught, depend on the *Righteousness of Christ* with the most confident Persuasion, and expect to be justified by it, while yet he is an *Enemy to God by wicked Works*? That this is a *supposable* Case few, I believe, will question, and that it was in *Fact* the Case of some in the Beginning of Christianity, there are Intimations plain eno' in the *Epistles*. Why else does St. Paul take Notice of that Reproach cast upon the Doctrine of Grace, *Let us do Evil that Good may come*? And why does he ask, *Shall we continue in Sin that Grace may abound*? And why again does he say, *If while we seek to be justified by Christ, we our selves also are found Sinners, is Christ therefore the Minister of Sin*? God forbid. And why does St. James in his Epistle, undertake to correct with so much Exactness and Propriety, some *mistaken* Notions concerning *Faith*? And why does he ask that *convincing* Question, *What doth it profit, my Brethren, though a Man say he hath Faith, and hath not Works*? *Can Faith save him*? And why are we told of some, that *turn the Grace of God into Wantonness*? Certainly to receive Christ truly, is to receive him in the *whole* of his Character, and *all* the Doctrines he has taught.

If again to receive Christ be *only to believe*, that he *died for me*, and *loved me with an everlasting Love*; which seems to be some Men's Notion of Faith; may I not flatter my self of this *in vain*? How know I but this is a *strong Delusion*, that I should believe a *Lie*, that I might be *damned*; because I receive not the whole Truth, but have *Pleasure* in some *unrighteous* Practice: Which yet, I may persuade my self, that Christ will *over-look*, because he has set his *Love* upon me from *Everlasting*.

Again,

Again, With Regard to *religious Comfort and Joy*, nothing is easier than Deceit in this Point. Joy is a good Symptom, or otherwise according to what 'tis founded on. There is a false, or rather a *groundless* Joy in Religion, as well as a true Joy in believing. Joy, tho' raised to the highest Pitch, directly proves nothing, but a certain *Persuasion* of Mind. If therefore your Persuasion be wrong, your Joy is without Foundation: A Person, that by the meer Force of Fancy persuades himself, that he shall in a little Time wear the Crown of *Great Britain*, may be as much, nay more transported with that Expectation, than he that has a true Title to it. How many vain Enthusiasts have had the highest Transports of Joy without Foundation? As a *Mahometan* may be carried away with the Expectation of *Paradise*, under the Influence of the vain Imagination, that his *Prophet* has a particular Kindness for him; tho' he can give no Reason why.

Again, There may be some *Meltings* of Heart for Sin, and Tears shed on the Account of it; (which, as I have observ'd, is perhaps the most evident Token of true Repentance) and yet all this Appearance rise nothing above the meer Principles of Nature; at least such Remorse may be so *slighty* as to make no *lasting* Impression, nor be *effectual* in the Life. Experience is a sufficient Witness to this. How often is this the Case of *sick-bed* Penitents? This Sense of Things may wear off, and the same Habit of Mind still remain.

Thus thro' the whole Process of this Experience, there may be the *Appearance* of the Thing, without the *Reality* of it, at least in any *abiding* Effect; which is the great Thing to be regarded.

I may well therefore caution you to take heed; lest in this Matter you be left to *strong Delusion*.

Not

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Nor let any one presume with too much Confidence to say, I know *assuredly*; that my Experience is *right*, nor can I doubt, but 'tis the *very Work* of divine Grace in my Soul. 'Tis, in my Opinion, a much better Sign of the Truth of Religion in the Heart, for one to be *jealous over himself with godly Jealousy*, especially in the Beginning of an intended Course of Piety, than *suddenly* to be carried into the highest Degrees of Confidence: Which, tho' you may call it *Assurance*, yet is really nothing but your own *confident Judgment* concerning your self: Which whether it be well founded or not, he is the best Judge, who is to decide your everlasting State. St. Paul's Sense of this Matter is fit to be entertained by us. 1 Cor. 4. 3, 4, 5. --- *I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by my self, i. e. am conscious of nothing to my self, (for so the Words should have been rendred) I have no particular Guilt to charge my self with, yet am I not hereby justified: But he that judgeth me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the Time, until the Lord come, who will bring to Light the hidden Things of Darkeness, and will make manifest the Counsels of the Hearts: And then shall every Man have Praise of God.*

It is true indeed, that what you have *felt* you know you have felt: And it is a Contradiction to suppose otherwise. But how know you that your *Feeling* has been the same that another has had; St. Paul, suppose, who was a Child of God. You have felt no other Feeling but your *own*: Nor can you certainly know, but by Revelation, that you have felt the very same Things that St. Paul felt. For Words cannot *infallibly* convey to another the same precise *Feeling* that I have in my own Heart. *No Man knows the Things of a Man, but the Spirit of Man that is in him.* 'Tis the Prerogative of God alone to search another's Heart. Nor can this Power perhaps be communicated to a Creature; at least it is to be presumed, that it is not: Since God so often challenges this as a Thing peculiar to himself.---Which by the Way *shews us how assuming a Piece of Arrogance it is to pass*
peremptory

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Confidence be groundless, as it is very possible it may be, 'tis *Presumption*, not Faith. To doubt therefore in this Case is not to *suspect the Veracity* of God, or the *Sufficiency* of Christ, but the *Truth* of your Judgment concerning your self. Nor is such Doubting any where that I know of in Scripture condemn'd as sinful; but rather in the General supposed as the prevailing Temper of good Men.

But you will say perhaps, if I wait for some *good Qualities* in my self before I believe Christ is the *LORD my Righteousness*, and that I am accepted in him, this is a *self-righteous* Spirit; and I trust *partly* to my own Works and not *wholly* to Christ; which is sinful and contrary to the Spirit of the Gospel. In answer to this, I ask, what do you mean by a *Self-righteous* Spirit? If by *Self-righteousness* you mean *personal Righteousness*, or Rectitude of Heart, and Regularity of Manners, or (which is the same Thing) Sanctification of your Nature; then such *Self-Righteousness* is a *necessary* Qualification in order to *evidence* your being in Christ; tho' not the *meritorious* Cause of your Acceptance with God. To *trust* in Christ to work this Qualification in you, in the Way and by the Means of his Appointment, is *undoubtedly* right: But to *trust* that you shall be accepted *without* such Sanctification of your Nature, is no doubt a *strong Delusion*. For it is to make *Christ the Minister of Sin*. To be *Self-righteous*, taken in an *ill* Sense, is not to be *personally* Righteous, or to depend upon *personal* Righteousness, as an *Evidence*, as far as it will go, of ones being in Christ; but 'tis according to our Saviour's own Definition, *vainly to trust in ourselves that we are righteous, and to despise others*. Or it is *superstitiously* to place a Righteousness in those Things, which God has not required, and to go about to establish a *Righteousness of our own*, in Opposition to those Tempers and Works, which God has *expressly* declared to be *right*. Or to depend upon our own Works as the *meritorious* Cause of Justification, in Opposition to the *Grace of God* dispensed thro' the Merits of Christ. To be *Self-Righteous* in any of these Respects is without Question contrary to the Spirit of the Gospel,

Again,

Again, Those who have had little or no Experience, like what has been described, are likewise liable to *strong Delusion*, if they receive not the Love of the Truth, but have Pleasure in Unrighteousness.

And the

First Mistake you are in Danger of, is to make your Religion consist altogether in *meer dull Formality*, without any Thing of the *Life and Power of Godliness*, having the *Form* only, and nothing of the Reality of the Thing, and so to rest contented in such a dead and lifeless Frame. For having never been much awakened and convicted of Sin, you do not consider *how exceeding broad the Law of the Lord is*; nor have felt the Efficacy of that *Word of God which is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged Sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of Soul and Spirit, and of the Joints and Marrow, and is a Discerner of the Thoughts and Intents of the Heart*. Having never been sufficiently humbled before God, you have little *Sense of your Guilt and Unworthiness*, and not having known your Danger, you have never *fled to lay hold of the Hope set before you, nor live by the Faith of the Son of God*. In this Case you are still *out of Christ*, notwithstanding your *formal Profession*; or at best are but *dead and unfruitful Branches in him the true Vine*. Being not so united to Christ, as to receive *vital Influence* from him, you are not reconciled to God; nor can perform any acceptable Worship to him. You are in the utmost Hazzard of perishing with Hypocrites. Nor ought you to be easy one Moment, till you have *Christ formed in you, the Hope of Glory*. For if any Man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

2. Another Thing you are in great Danger of, as a *strong Delusion*, especially in the present Posture of our religious Affairs, is first to grow *indifferent* towards all Religion, and at length to *contemn* it, and so to be *hardened* in Iniquity. For when you find, or *suppose* you find many of those who *talk* much of their *Experiences*, to be *meer Hypocrites*, and conceited *Enthusiasts*, running
into

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into Errors, and holding nonsensical Conclusions, (and it's a Wonder, if some such may not be found) and having never had much of any Thing of the like Experience in yourself, you will be apt *unreasonably* to conclude, all Religion is vain, and the meer Effect of a heated and deluded Imagination. And lest you should yourself become the *Enthusiast*, you so much *despise*; you will *resist* true Convictions, and *harden* your self against Fear. But alas! how dreadful a Delusion is this! And how *righteously* may God give you up to *believe a Lie*, if this be the Perverseness of your Disposition, and you have such Fondness for the Pleasures of Unrighteousness! Let me therefore most solemnly warn you; as you love your own Souls, not to suffer any *secret* Contempt to *creep* into your Hearts towards Things sacred, because of the *Imprudencies*, *Follies*, or even *Wickedness* of some *Pretenders* to Religion. And doubtless some such there are now, as there have been in all Ages past.

Do not be *afraid* to receive the *Impressions* of Truth, for fear you should run into Error. Do not *resist* the Strivings of the *Holy Ghost*, for fear of being led away with a *Spirit of Delusion*. Let the Awakenings of others *awaken* you. Let the Cry of others for the Grace of God in Christ, *stir you up* to accept the offer'd Mercy. Let even what you may suppose the false and groundless Joy of others, *excite* you to seek *Joy in GOD*. Let the Confidence of others put you upon a *stricter* Examination of your selves. Let their Boastings serve to *humble* you, and put you upon all Diligence to *work out your Salvation with Fear and Trembling*. Give Diligence to *make your Calling and Election sure*. Let this be the Business, the unwearied Care of the Elder, and the Younger, of the Parent, and the Child, of the Master, and the Servant. In a Word, Let us all *strive to enter in at the strait Gate: For strait is the Gate, and narrow the Way, that leadeth to Life; and few there be that find it.*

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