

John Webster {1610 - 1682}

Baptism of the Spirit

You may talk of forms, and disciplines, and dippings, and of eating and drinking with Christ; and breaking of bread, and of baptism and all other external things. But this alone is the true Baptism, and the true eating of Christ his body, and the drinking his blood. This is the One way wrought by this One Deliverer; and whoever he be that lives in multiplicity of forms, and diversity of worships, or hold these things forth as Christ's way, without this baptism of the Spirit, he holds forth a lie, and a delusion, and misery and wrath and desolation of spirit will come in the end; for this is that one, and only way which Jesus Christ hath used in all the Saints from the beginning of the world, and will do to the end to bring man low in himself, that he alone may be exalted. As there is but One God and Father of all; but one Husband, who is rich unto all; so there is but one Church, but one Spouse, but one Body; and this one Spouse, Body, or Church are all joined, married, or brought home to Christ but in this One Way. And there is but one power, but one wisdom, but one strength, whereby all the people of God were and ever shall be delivered. - And these alone can give witness to the true communion of saints, and know the happiness and true pleasure thereof, and what heavenly sweetness is therein. All harmonizing and giving testimony to this One Alone Great Deliverer. No unity like this unity, nor love, nor peace like this peace, which they have in Jesus Christ their Only Deliverer. John Webster {Judgment Set, and the Books Opened, 1654}

Baptism of the Spirit

Now Satan appears in things that men call Ordinances, as outward washings, and calling these the true baptism, church order and fellowships, and say this is according to the rule of the Gospel, and partaking of bread and wine in the sacraments, as they call this the eating of the Body and drinking of the Blood of Christ. - So many boast of ordinances, and washings, and baptisms, and breaking bread, and Church Fellowship, and laying on of hands, and observing the rules of Christ, and following the pattern of the Apostles, when alas poor souls they quite mistake the matter. It is true, it is like baptism, but this it is not; and they are like the ordinances of Christ, but they are not such; they would seem to make and ordain ministers, and they speak of giving the Holy Ghost; but alas, I say all these are but resemblances and shadows, they are not the true ordinances of Christ; and notwithstanding men's using of these things with so much appearance of strictness and exactness, yet they have them not. For they are under bondage still, being never yet delivered, set free indeed, never baptized with the baptism of Christ, never yet fetched off their own bottoms, never taken into union with Christ; who will undertake to give the Spirit and the Holy Ghost, and yet never had the Spirit themselves; and therefore all those things that these men are nothing but shadows, shells and carcasses of the true Ordinances of Christ. - The true baptism, and the true ordinances, and the true worship are things of a far higher nature. There is a heavenly baptism, and a heavenly worship, and an heavenly Ordinance. I {saith John} "indeed baptize you with water," but there is One "that cometh after me," who is preferred before me, "he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire;" {Mt.3:11,12;} "He must increase, but I must decrease." {John 3:30} My baptism is nothing, for I must stand by when He comes; I baptize but unto repentance; but he gives repentance and the Holy Spirit. The heavenly things are of a higher nature; these are but the pictures and the shadows, the shells and the outsides; the other the Life and the Power, the Holy Ghost and the Fire itself. Now they that receive these things, are indeed the children of the free woman, and are the true seed of Abraham; all others are the children of the bondwoman, and are Hagar who is in bondage with her children to this very day. John Webster {Judgment Set, and the Books Opened, 1654}

Christ Alone Exalted

Man naturally feeds upon nothing but sin and misery, and hell and damnation; and these are sweet to him. Why? Because there is a veil upon them, the covering of all nations {Isa.25:7;} some things, more or less excellent; some goodness, some righteousness, some holiness, some duties, some reformation, some forms, some shadows, and these are the covering by reason of which he neither sees nor tastes death, nor hell, nor destruction. In Christ there is all life, all rest, all peace, all discovery of good things; but if man remain in himself and dwell in his own mountain, there is all darkness, and all deformity; nothing but death, trouble, briars, thorns; but it never appears so, until the veil be taken away; till then, man is never stripped of himself, never turned outward, but all is under this covering; and whilst so, he blesses himself and saith I am safe, all is well, there is no death nor hell can come

near me for I am a reformed man, and I walk exactly, I press after the strictest rules of the word, I am under the purest ordinances. Here now, man eats death and tastes of the forbidden tree, and the tree is sweet to him, and it is to be desired. But now when Christ appears to the soul really, all these thoughts are cursed, damned, thrown down to hell, and the man becomes vile, abominable in his own sight; and instead of seeing himself as an heir of glory, as before, his thoughts are clean altered, for the veil, the covering is removed. - As man is made nothing so Christ comes to be made everything; man becomes all in Christ, and nothing in himself - and all this the soul sees by faith, for faith is the souls eye. When faith goes up from itself, and looks upon Jesus Christ, there it sees all riches, all glory, all wisdom, all unchangeableness, all purity, all life, all rest, all in all; in a word, it sees Him to be unutterable, unspeakable, and in him things not to be able to be uttered. John Webster {Judgment Set, and the Books Opened, 1654}

Christ Alone Exalted

All the saints of God have but one Root, one Life, one Light, one language as growing up and out of that One Root. "In his temple doth every one speak of His Glory;" {Ps.29:9;} for they have nothing to say in praise of any other. When men cry out that, "thou must do, and thou must be holy, and thou must be watchful, and thou must grow, and thou must walk exactly, and thou must keep close to God;" O beloved; this sounds not like the language of saints; for this sounds harsh in their ears; for they cannot endure to have their Head dishonored. But when they hear that Jesus Christ is all light, all life, all power, all glory; and that man is nothing but sin, emptiness, death, darkness, misery, these are the songs, and these are the voices, and the melody in the Temple. This they know is the voice of Christ and of their Beloved, and to these songs their hearts can echo and answer. They see Christ to be the Master and Teacher; and that he is such a teacher as not only teaches the ear, but instructs the heart. That he not only commands, but he gives wisdom and understanding, and repentance, love, hope and joy, &c., thus he sees that he hath no sap, no nourishment, but only as he abides in the Root; the truth is, they have no confidence at all in the flesh, because it is weak, and crooked, and dark, and nothing at all of good in it; but he sees Christ alone is his root, his life, his sap, his bread, his fountain of living waters; {Jer.2:13;} and if men knew Christ aright, there would be no mention of any good in man; they would have none to praise, none to boast of, none to talk of, none to represent as good, or excellent but Christ alone. Thus ye shall find it was with David frequently expressed; and so it is with all the saints. He alone is their strong Rock, {II Sam.22:2,3,32, Ps.18:31,36,} and their Fortress, and their Deliverer; {Ps.31:2,3, &c,;} he is their song, their praise and their salvation. He is their King of kings, and Lord of lords. He is above all principalities and powers; their Head, their King, the Blessed and Only Potentate, and exalted alone as the Rock of their salvation; for do we ever read that the saints had any other hymns, or any other songs? John Webster {Judgment Set, and the Books Opened, 1654}

Christ Alone Exalted

"And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech." {Gen.11:1.} The whole earth; that is, that natural lost condition, in which all the sons of men are, all being gone down into the earth to seek a happiness there. Having forsaken their life and happiness in God, they have all digged unto themselves broken cisterns {Jer.2:13,} hoping to find a life and a happiness below among the creatures. A this is the condition of all the sons of men; this is the condition; that is, the language of the whole earth. In this all the sons of men are equal; darkness is come upon all, the image of God is defaced in all. All, the whole nature of man hath but one tongue, but one language. "They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." {Ps.14:3.} There is not one better than another among all the sons of men; but all are equally lost, all equally departed from God. All are under the same condemnation, they all speak one language; and with one mouth they all blaspheme. What one doth, all do; there is no difference. And in this condition men proceed and go on, they are journeying from the East. {Gen.11:2} What way soever any of the sons of men go, they are still journeying on, in and under this misery. The nature of man is laboring and traveling further from God, from the East, from the light of God, from the life of God, which they have lost, and are now walking on in darkness, misery and blasphemy. - From what hath been spoken we may conclude, that all the sons of men, the whole race and every particular person is equally in one and the same condition. They are all of one mass, of one lump; not one wise, and another foolish; one righteous, and another sinful; not one earthly and another heavenly; not one in light, and another in darkness; not one carnal, and another spiritual; but the whole earth is of one language. They all, even the best are nothing but sin, rebellion, death and enmity; they are all carnal, all departed from the Fountain of Living Waters, they are all gone astray and become abominable, and not one that doth good, no not one. Every one of the sons of men are under wrath, with all their works and righteousness. - There is no good that any of them can appropriate, or lay the least claim to; for there is no wisdom, but the wisdom of God, nor no righteousness, but the everlasting

righteousness of that only ONE and all sufficient Savior the Lord Jesus Christ. He that says that there is any good thing in man, any righteousness, wisdom, power, any endeavors after any good or the like, he is no other but a most abominable blasphemer. And this conceit and presumption the Lord hath cursed and will confound. For can an evil tree bring forth good fruit? Either make the tree evil and his fruit evil, or else make the tree good and his fruit good. {Mt.12:33} Can man be evil and holy evil, and yet bring forth anything that is good? Or is there any good or any holiness but what is from the Fountain of good? For any to dare to say otherwise is high blasphemy to God and Jesus Christ, to take that which is proper and peculiar to the ever blessed God, and to ascribe it to a sinful, nothing, empty creature; for any man to take the crown from the Head of Jesus Christ, and to set it upon his own head, and say this is his, what greater indignity! What higher blasphemy than to say that which is crooked is straight, and to call darkness light, and evil good? {Is.5:20} Who are these that darken counsel by words without knowledge? {Job38:2} From what principal think you, cometh all the religion of this nature; and from whence cometh this kind of teaching? That man must be something, and man must do, and he must act, and he must believe, and he must repent, and there is something required of him to do by way of condition, or else the grace of God is frustrated. Certainly these men are no other but Babel builders; for they never yet knew the confusion of languages in themselves; they were never yet undone, made nothing, nor stripped of their own power, wisdom or righteousness; not convinced of the vanity and nothingness of all their power and endeavors. They never yet saw that these things were all alone proper to Jesus Christ. And thus miserable man deludes himself and erects Babel! – For man will have something of his own to trust to, to come into the presence of God with, and he will frame to himself a religion and a righteousness that will avail before God, which he shall accept, and in which he himself may put confidence. And here now poor man hath deluded himself, and they have made themselves aprons, {Gen.3:7,} and {as they think} a secure covering. Here hath he made himself a shelter and a tabernacle, and built up to himself a tower reaching to heaven. – So they reason that if they could but attain to something to please God withal, if they could but worship God after this or that form, in observing strictly these and these duties, and get into this or that Fellowship, this or that gathered Church, which worship God after the purest and most primitive way, and nearest the rule of Christ, if they can but leave this sin and that evil, or if they could but leave all known sin, herein and the like, many men make this their peace and their rest; this is their Shinar, and place of sleepiness and slumbering. And having gotten thus far, they think that they can patch up a righteousness that will be pleasing to God himself; for they can hardly see a slip or a falling really in themselves, though they are ashamed to say so, yet let them but examine their inward parts and they shall find it so. They think they have in a Gospel way performed the conditions required on their part, and they are sincere in what they do; and if at any time they come short, than Christ by his righteousness will supply and make it up, and herein is their peace, and this is in their esteem a goodly and a glorious, and an excelling righteousness. None so high as they, none so holy as they, stand farther off, for I am holier than thou, and I am thus and thus qualified. And he looks upon other men with disdain because they come short of him, and because they are not so strict as he, nor have taken so much pains in religion, and done so many duties and walked up to such rules as he. As the Pharisee, I bless God &c. But I proclaim to all such, be they never so secure in themselves and applauded and cried up as happy and blessed men by others, yet all this is but Babel, which here the Lord speaks of, and it shall be no other place but the place of Confusion. – For it is not thy works, nor thy duties, nor thy forms, nor thy notions, nor thy Church gatherings, nor anything else of thine which is the accomplishment of the promises, but they are all Yea and Amen only and alone in Him, {II Cor.1:20,} in whom the promises are made. If these works be wrought by thy industry, by thy care, by thy watchfulness, by thy wisdom, by thy power, they are all odious and abominable. God will as soon accept the offering up of swines blood, and regard as soon the cutting off a dog's neck as any of these thy duties. {Is.66:3} For whatsoever is done by thee or in thee, except it be done by the wisdom, power and hand of Jesus Christ, who is the promise maker, and the promise worker and accomplisher, they cannot be in him Yea, and in him Amen; for he alone is the promise, that is the maker and fulfiller; he must work it by his power; but as long as thou thinkest thou canst do anything, or hast anything to offer, or anything to accomplish, and thou must do it on thy part as a condition, the Lord abhors all such sacrifices as abominable. When thou thinkest such and such rules are prescribed, and I must obey and submit to every rule, not the least but I must do it, and then the promise is mine, for now I am in the right way; and then sayest to thy soul, 'soul take thy ease, for this is the true place of rest, here thou mayest lie down in safety;' {Luke 12:19;} examine thy self, is not this thy end? Howbeit all this is nothing else but the building up of Babel. – These would say to themselves, Christ has promised if men believe and repent then they shall be saved. Well, I will go and perform these, and reform my life and the like {says religious man} and then these promises are mine. The Jews {especially the Pharisees} were very expert and nimble at this; who more strict according to God's own rule, who more searched after every iota of a Law, and as far as they were convinced strived after conformity? Herein lay the top of their religion; and here they had builded up Babel. – For alas, this is nothing but wearing a garment of linsey-woolsey, this is nothing but sewing a new piece into an old garment, and making the rent worse. {Lev.19:19, Mt.9:16} This is but putting new wine into old bottles, and the bottles are broken, and both bottles and wine {and so these men} utterly lost. They think that man must do, and

man must teach, and man must inform, and see not that Jesus Christ is the only Teacher, the only Master, the only Guide! "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up;" {Mt.15:13;} for if it be not wrought and acted by his Spirit it cannot stand! - For the Father, the Eternal Majesty of Heaven can be pleased with nothing but that One Eternal and all Sufficient Sacrifice, the blood of his own dear Son. For men to call themselves Christians and Saints, and for others to esteem them so, is a poor covering. Now in this day {the day of the Lamb's wrath, when men will be at their wits end to cover and hide themselves from Him that sits upon the throne - Rev.6:16,} it will not cover their nakedness. For the bed is too short to stretch themselves on, and the covering is too narrow, they cannot cover nor wrap themselves in it. {Is.28:20} 'Tis not all their fellowships and congregatings, nor washings, nor external eatings, and sitting down with Christ at his table, nor their persuasions that they do the mind of God, and conform exactly to the rule and letter of the Word. All things of this nature is but of man, and they glory in their own shame; {Phil.3:19;} for thou dishonorest thy Head Christ, to pray or prophesy if thy head be not bare; if thyself be not stripped naked, 'tis a dishonor to Christ, who is the Head of the Church; for all honor, all praise, all wisdom, all goodness, all righteousness is Christ's crown, and no creature is to wear that crown but Himself alone. If thou takest these, or any part of these which are due alone to Him, thou makest Christ ashamed, he is thus dishonored. For there is no goodness, no love, no beauty, no life but only in the Son of God; and whatever is in him, is his for the Church; not that they enjoy it in themselves, but in Him. All glory be to him, and all shame and confusion upon themselves; and hereby is their Head magnified. Christ alone is their covering, their righteousness, their wisdom, their redemption, their Savior, their beauty; they have no shelter, no hiding place but in Him. Those that are ashamed thus to acknowledge and confess him before men, he will be ashamed to confess them, or own them before his Father. {Mt.10:32} Those that are ashamed to bear their testimony of him, and to be witnesses and martyrs for him, he will be ashamed of them. He is not ashamed to own thee in thy blood and filthiness; and shall we be ashamed to own him and to ascribe that to him which alone is his due? But instead of giving testimony to the glory of his name, thou contrivest which way thou mayest be something, that thou mayest be esteemed, and that Christ may be nothing, and that he may be debased; but be assured in that day all these things shall be laid open. And God is a jealous God and will not suffer his honor to be polluted, nor will give his glory to any other. Is.42:8. - "So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth; and they left off to build the city." {Gen.11:8} When man is once convinced of his miserable condition, and sees himself and all the sons of men thus deluded and befooled, and begins to see that all their confidence is madness, and all their works sin, and all their duties as filthy rags, and all their forms and inventions no other but Babel and destruction; then and not before, they leave off to build this city; for then they see themselves {as it were} swallowed up in death and misery, and at their best actions are but dung and dross, and abominable things; and that there is no stability in any of the sons of men; and this is the Lord's work alone, this man hath no hand in, for it is the Lord that saith and doeth it, to confound this language, and scatter men from this building; so that they can now no more contribute their wisdom or counsel, their strength or endeavors to this City of Confusion. John Webster {Judgment Set, and the Books Opened, 1654}

Christ - King, Priest, and Prophet

It is in vain to seek for, or expect any light to guide any of the sons of men, anywhere else but from the Tabernacle. It is vain to follow any other Star but that which led the wise men to Jesus Christ. He that sets up any other Sun of Righteousness to guide him {Mal.4:2,} any other light, any other rule to walk by, that thinks he can teach himself or offer any sacrifices or prayers to be accepted with the Father, but His alone, or assumes any power to command himself in anything; this man is no other but a liar, a thief, and a robber, a blasphemous and a traitor; for he robs God of his honor and denies Jesus Christ to be the King, Priest, and Prophet, which is alone his right. John Webster {Judgment Set, and the Books Opened, 1654} Christ the One Foundation: This Rock is only and alone Jesus Christ, that blessed eternal Rock of Ages; upon whom all the saints from the foundation of the world to its consummation are founded and bottomed, as upon Mt. Zion, which shall never be removed. All the patriarchs and prophets give testimony to this Rock; to Him that is the Rock of Ages, and is that great Mountain that shall fill the whole earth. {Dan.2:35} He that shall only reign, and shall be all in all, whose kingdom alone shall be exalted. All the fathers drank of this Rock; as the apostle saith, they "were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ." {I Cor.10:2-4} He is that unspeakable glory, power, majesty, eternity &c., that can never be lifted up enough, never able to be unfolded nor set forth by men and Angels according to his greatness, his goodness, his unchangeableness, his glory, his wisdom and infiniteness. He is the wonder of ages, the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his Person. {Heb.1:3} He it is that is set forth by all types, metaphors, representations, and yet all come infinitely short of Him. John Webster {Judgment Set, and the Books Opened, 1654}

Christ – our Altar

This is the very same thing which Nadab and Abihu did, to offer strange fire of their own before the Lord; "And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not;" Lev.10:1; for when thou bringest all thy duties, all thy parts, all thy endeavors, and though thou offerest them {as pretended} on the true Altar Jesus Christ, yet if offered by thyself, thou art that Nadab and Abihu there described; and the fire of the Lord will break forth to thy utter ruin and destruction; for never anything ever pleased the Father, but that one alone and eternal sacrifice offered only by Himself; for he abhors that any of thy duties, any of thy menstous rags should be joined in with his most perfect and only righteousness. {Is.64:6, Deut.22:11} This Garment of linsey-woolsey his people may not wear. All things that are done in the world, proceed but from two principles; there is not one action of any of the sons of men, but proceeds either from the power or wisdom of man, or from Jesus Christ. If from man as man, it's loathsome, stinking, abominable, though never so refined; though they bestow never so much labor, industry, learning, all their wits and parts, to put upon it the neatest cut, and the finest dress, they are all but earthly, sensual and devilish, which must be cast to hell, and the earth with all the works thereof shall be burnt up forever. {James 3:15, Nah.1:5} Every sacrifice that is offered in the world must be kindled with fire from Heaven by the fire of the sanctuary and offered on this Altar, which alone is Jesus Christ, and that alone perfect High Priest; else it is kindled by this strange fire which is no other but devouring fire. Either it is of the earth, earthly; or else it is of the Lord from Heaven. {I Cor.15:47} If it be from Heaven, it shall be raised up to heaven. It is sown in weakness, but it is raised in power; if it be from man, it is from the bottomless pit, it is from sin and weakness, and thither it must return; and in this state and condition are all the actions of the world; even all the actions, inventions, forms, industry of men and they all tend to crucify the Lord of life and glory; that so man and his doings, his contrivances, his idols may stand and be adored. All the sons of man cry out for a Barabbas, that so the wisdom of the flesh and the power of man may be established, and that that everlasting, righteous Son of God may be crucified and utterly destroyed. {John 18:40} This they may do, and this they do do, and yet may talk much of an outward and external Christ, which once died at Jerusalem, and pretend much love to him. Never any of the sons of men ever received that true Christ we speak of, {though much cried up in the world,} for never any received him, but to them gave He power to become the sons of God. {John 1:12} Never any received him, nor followed him, but he denied himself and took up his cross; which never any man did that is not emptied of himself, made nothing in his own sight, that is not stripped of all his power, wisdom, righteousness and whatever man {as man} adores. All true Saints are brought to see this in experience; they see, all the world seeking themselves, following after the gods that they have made, and crying up their Diana; they all see the whole earth always and continually crying out, "not this man, but Barabbas;" and they know them to be all thieves and robbers. They come to see, as the truth is, that they have no power, wisdom, excellency; nothing at all but what is to be condemned; and that all their works if they are accepted are wrought in God; that Christ is their wisdom, righteousness, justification, sanctification and redemption. {I Cor.1:30} They come to this light, and they walk in this light; they continually see that Jesus Christ hath all power and wisdom in Himself; that he hath not given any part of his excellencies out of Himself, but whatever is wrought in them, is wrought by Him. {John 3:21} They dare not say, I must do and I must act, and I must pray that I may be accepted, nor think as others do; I must perform the conditions on my part to do, and then I shall be accepted. All doctrine of this nature is no other but crucifying the Son of God afresh, and putting him to an open shame, and walking in darkness. {Heb.6:6} Those that preach this are those grievous wolves which Paul speaks of; "I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock; also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." {Acts 20:31,31} Of your own selves; that is, men that hold forth the same doctrine and preach Jesus Christ too, and hold him forth for a Savior, yet under that pretense crucify Him, and make him as no Christ, and his cross ineffectual. But those that are in the light, they come to the light, and follow this light, live in this light, that their deeds may be made manifest, whether wrought in God or no. John Webster {Judgment Set, and the Books Opened, 1654}

Christ – the Infallible Teacher

When thou hast done all that is commanded thee, yet thou must not rest in thy doing, nor in thy using means, nor in thy praying, but still in all must count thyself but an unprofitable servant. {Lk.17:10} Thou must not sit down and say, I have done my part, I have prayed, and heard, and walked strictly, and joined myself to the best Reformed Church. Alas, if thou rest in these things, and think to yourself, now I have done well, and it shall be well with me. All this praying and doing Christ calls vain babblings, and vain repetitions, {Mt.6:7,} which is but to do like the heathen, who think to be heard for their many words and much babblings; all this thy doing, which thou

makest such a stir about, is no other than calling darkness light, and evil good. {Is.5:20} And when thou goest out to look for any minister or servant of Christ to heal thy wounds, take heed of the idol shepherds, {Jer.6:14,} which will prophesy peace when there is no peace, to speak deliverance when Christ hath not did them, for none can heal thee but He that hath wounded thee. And so for any other who prophesy lies and daub with untempered mortar; who say to thee, go thou and repent and believe on Jesus Christ, and thy sins shall be forgiven thee; know this is not the way; neither are they true prophets, for repentance and faith is alone God's gift, and his work; and if he be a true messenger of the Lord's sending, all he can say is, "I am but an instrument;" for whoever he be that undertakes to be any but a messenger, as John the Baptist was, crying, I am not he, but I am but the voice of one crying, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord," "I indeed have baptized you with water; but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost." {Mk.1:3-8} He cries, that there is no Teacher but Jesus Christ, no Prophet but he alone, for we have nothing to give; there are no riches but Himself. - He alone is "anointed to preach good tidings unto the meek;" he alone is sent to "bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified." {Is.61:1-3} John Webster {Judgment Set, and the Books Opened, 1654}

Christ – the Life of the Believer

If Christ be not thus enthroned in thee, doing over again all those things spoken of in Scripture {under several and divers allegories and metaphors} then is the Prince of Darkness still reigning and sitting in full power upon his throne in thy soul, and there he sits and there he reigns, the strong man keeping possession, {Lk.11:21,22,} Lucifer not yet thrown down, nor Satan fallen from heaven like lightning; {Lk.10:18;} Antichrist and the Great Whore are still sitting upon the seven hills and many waters, {Rev.17:1,} arrayed in purple and scarlet, and decked with gold and precious stones, yet full of filthiness and fornications, and thou art not yet come out of her. {Rev.18:4} That great word, "come out of her my people," is not yet spoken by Jesus Christ to thy heart; though thou hast been many years a worshiper of Christ, with pretended affection for him; yet if these things be not effectual to what avail is all such pretended worship? - For man hath nothing of good in him, but all his imaginations are evil, and only evil, and continually evil; and Jesus Christ is good, all good, and continually good, and nothing else but good; and he that gives other testimony, either in word or deed is a liar and the truth is not in him. And those two witnesses are in him slain, and lie dead in the streets of the great city; that is, in the whole nature of mankind; which two witnesses can never be raised and stand up upon their feet till Jesus Christ himself come and revive them and cause them to live. {Rev.11:8} Here is wisdom, and let him that readeth understand; and he that hath read these things in himself, he alone can understand these things. And when the Lord is thus doing this work, we may see the manner of his working and proceeding with the sons of men, and the following words, "it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD, that I will cut off thy horses out of the midst of thee, and I will destroy thy chariots;" {Micah 5:10;} that is, whatever it be that man rides upon, or trust in, or thinks to be delivered by, all his helps or refuges, all his hopes or confidences that are below or less than Jesus Christ himself, the Lord will cut off and destroy; though his confidence be ever so great, and that wherein he trusts be ever so strong, and his chariots ever so many. In that day when the Lord will arise, they shall be all cut off, all utterly overwhelmed like Pharaoh and his chariots in the Sea. Let it be what it will wherein thou trustest, and thinkest to sit safely in the midst of wrath and storms; if thou trustest anything that thou hast chosen, and thinkest thyself ever the better, or safer for them, all these shall be cut off from thine hand. Nay, though thou art in the very chariot of religion, and highest profession of the truth, and hast chosen to thyself the purest forms, ordinances and Church fellowships; washings, breaking of bread, or anything else in thine hand, which can be named except Jesus Christ himself whereby thou hast quieted thy spirit, and hast whereby gotten to thyself peace and rest, all is a delusion and an idol. As the Pharisees; for what think you drove them to the baptism of John? Certainly it was this fear, and this guilt upon their spirits; for saith he to them, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" {Mt.3:7} As if he should say, when ye were frightened and terrified, you thought coming to my baptism would secure you, but you are but vipers for all this; and this submitting to baptism, doth not declare true repentance. But know, "the axe is laid unto the root of the trees; therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." {Mt.3:10} And further, you boast of being the children of Abraham, and the seed of the faithful, and because you are members of the true Church; but, all this is to little purpose, for "God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." So that you see, for all your forms and fellowships wherein you trust, you shall be in that day of the Lord stripped naked of all your garments, and of all your refuges; all those horses and chariots which you thought should preserve you, and carry you out of all

danger, they shall be broken and cut off, and thy soul plunged into the bottomless pit, and thou shalt have no rest in thy bones, because of thy sin, {Ps.38:3,} and by reason of thy misery, for thou shalt not know which way to turn thee, for all thy idols, and all thy images shall not in that day be able to help or deliver thee; for, the wrath of the Lord shall burn as an oven, {Jer.4:4,} and then thou must stand naked before the presence of the Lord, who is a consuming fire, to burn up and consume everything but Himself. John Webster {Judgment Set, and the Books Opened, 1654}

Christ - the Only Way

Thou who hast chosen any other Savior, any other Deliverer, any other help but Jesus Christ, where wilt thou appear when the Lord shall come to judgment? Then all thy saviors will forsake thee, and not one stand by thee. When thou hast said of thy forms, and fellowships, and thy ordinances {as thou callest them} these be thy gods that will save thee, {Ex.32:4,} these shall give thee rest and peace; and though with your tongues you do not say thus, yet this is the very end of thy cleaving to them, to be rest for thy spirit here, and to save thee from the wrath to come. What is all this, but to rob Christ of his Glory, and to set the crown upon thy own inventions? And it is true we in words say Christ is all in all, yet in practice we must bring in something of man, he must act and he must do something, else he cannot expect that Christ should do his part; how then is Christ all in all? How is he the author and finisher of faith? {Heb.12:2} These are therefore those which Christ and the Prophet speaks of, that have eyes and see not, and ears and hear not, and hearts which cannot understand. - For there is but One Deliverer, so there is but one way of deliverance; though there may be in the world thousands of inventions of men, some worshiping this way, and some that, some after one form, and some after another; yet this is certain, there is but one Deliverer, and one way of Deliverance. As the Apostle saith, there is a unity in the spirit, which is the bond of peace; for "there is one body, and one Spirit," one Lord; that is, One Deliverer, "one faith, one baptism," that is, one way of deliverance; "One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." {Eph.4:4-6} One Savior, and One way of salvation; and there is no more, and this way is Christ alone! John Webster {Judgment Set, and the Books Opened, 1654}

Christ – the True Tabernacle

He is that true Tabernacle, which the Lord hath pitched, and not man. From this Tabernacle must the soul expect all its leadings, all its teachings, and not from the wisdom of man, or the ordinances of man; for here they are all taught of God, and they shall no more teach everyone his brother, saying know the Lord; "for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest." {Heb.8:10,11} And, whosoever is not led by this light, and by this Star only to behold the Lord Jesus Christ as his only and true Guide, if he look any other way, he does the same thing that the Prophet said of old to them that followed the Tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of their god Remphan; and followeth after lies, and the inventions of their own evil adulterous hearts, figures which they have made to worship, saith the Holy Ghost in Amos chapter 5. {Amos 5:25,26} - But what shall we say then of all those things wherein Moses was commanded to be so exact, and to make all things according to the pattern; {Ex.25:9;} and here he calls Christ the True Tabernacle; {Heb.8:2;} what was theirs a false one? It was in regard of Christ who is the Son himself; for not any of all those things the Jews themselves were to rest in, though done exactly according to the Pattern. But this MESSIAH was he that they should have a eyed through and beyond all those figures and shadows; for that Tabernacle was but pitched by man, {note that,} though commanded by God; but the true Tabernacle is pitched by the Lord himself. So that the Apostle there, we may clearly see, expounds this last chapter of Exodus, and reduceth all those shadows to the substance, proving that Christ Himself is the true Tabernacle, and the true Ministry, and the true Sanctuary, and that those things are but the patterns and emblems of the heavenly things. Now all things must be according to him; for he is the true pattern, and he is that one and alone Sacrifice, once offered; as in that ninth chapter of the Hebrews, and the 11th verse and so on, "but Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" &c. Though all these things were done by Moses, and all done according to the example and pattern; yet, saith he, the things we speak of are not things done by man, not of this building; that is, not done by the wisdom, power, or will of man; no, nor those done by them according to the direction of God himself, {and in that sense commanded ordinances,} yet these made not the comers thereunto perfect; therefore saith he, "it was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly

things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." {Heb.9:24,25} - From all this which hath been spoken, hence it is clear, that the Tabernacle here spoken of; is, the glory, wisdom, power, righteousness of Jesus Christ, and whatever is Himself, who is nothing else but majesty, purity, glory, wisdom, love, goodness, fullness, infiniteness, blessedness; and all sufficiency, and all good; he alone is the Lord, he alone is King, his is the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory forever, and no creature can without blasphemy in the highest degree appropriate or assume any one, or any part of this to himself. John Webster {Judgment Set, and the Books Opened, 1654}

Church of Christ

It is true, the sons of men may do and have done, and do compass sea and land; {Mt.23:15;} and what is it to do; but to make a proselyte, and then but a twofold more the child of perdition than before. They may indeed gather men into fellowships and churches {as they call them;} but to gather men into the spirit of the Lord Jesus, this was never the work of man; no strength, nor power, nor wisdom of man could ever do it; and without question every plant that the Heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up. It is true; and I grant, there was some mention made of the Church and Churches in the times of the Apostles; but what Churches were they? They were no other but what were called by God himself, in the power of his Spirit, and not of or by man. Where do we read of this man's church, or the other man's members; but they were called the Church of God, and not divided by those distinctions of vain glorious, self-seeking, ambitious and covetous men, as they are in these days. Nor did they own one another, or had any relation one unto another in their love or esteem upon that account. But they looked upon one another in what place soever, as but one body, and having all but one spirit, merely because they were all baptized into One Body by that one Spirit. {I Cor.12:13} They did not know one another as they were of Paul and of Apollos, of Cephas, {I Cor.1:12-14,} and this man's Church; {as they now call it;} but as they were all baptized by One Spirit, and into one Body, and as they were of one mind and of one spirit, and so of one heart, and so brought "to the general assembly and church of the firstborn." {Heb.12:23} Therefore we must conclude that there is nothing that gathers or draws in the soul of man unto Jesus Christ, but the everlasting power of God. We know also that men may worship at Jerusalem this way and that way, and pretend to honor that Christ who died there, and yet they do but draw nigh to him with their lips, but not with the spirit and in truth; {Is.29:13;} but no man can do these things in the power of God, nor so much as say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost, and by the power of Jesus Christ. And be sure that "every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up." {Mt.15:13} John Webster {Judgment Set, and the Books Opened, 1654}

Conditionalism

What a do is there in the world everywhere about man's doing and man's working, that he must strive and he must improve grace; that he must cherish this plant, and do something that he may be accepted, and he must watch, and he must water, and he must lop and prune this branch and the other branch, and by his power and wisdom and watchfulness he must cut off this sin and the other evil; and this is the great religion of the world in all ages. And alas, what does he all this while, by doing of these things in his own name and by his own wisdom and power, he does but undo himself; for what else can he do but bring misery, sin, and darkness upon himself, and plunge himself deeper in the pit? For, when men are bid to do anything, repent, or believe, or watch, or pray, or work out his salvation with fear or trembling, and make his calling and election sure; what do you think it was ever meant that he should do these of himself, or do them out of Christ? No, there was never any such thing intended by the Holy Ghost. But say they, man hath received a power and a talent from Jesus Christ; and of this he must take care and use it, and employ it to his masters use. I answer this false, for there is no such thing, for a true Christian enjoys nothing out of Christ, nor done apart from him, but all in him, and his works if right, tis Christ doeth them in him and not he; yet how ordinary is it with men to put man to do it, and why is he not so-and-so? And men are so senseless, that they are not sensible that man dead in trespasses and sins; though they acknowledge it in words, yet in truth they deny it, and declare that they know not what they say. For, can any other thing raise the dead but only the voice of the Son of God? {Eph.2:1} I tell you, and know it for an undeniable truth that when a Christian is spoken so to do or act, it is not to him as being in the old man, but as in the new; and when anything is required of any other, it is only to show him his weakness and inability, and how infinitely short he comes of that he should do. But therefore know, if anyone shall call upon a dead man to live, and a blind man to see, or express anything to this purpose, this language is no other but a strange language which the house of Jacob must be brought out from. {Ps.114:1} This is the language of the beast and the false prophet, {Rev.19:20,} and to speak in the work and root of darkness, and in which these men are, who would make more roots of good than One; and make man to be

something, and to have a power and a wisdom to himself apart from Christ, &c., yet this is frequent doctrine even of those you call your Orthodox men, nothing more common with them. Many of these men would not be thought to side with or own Arminius or Socinus by no means; but the truth is, though in word they may renounce them, yet in their practice they receive and embrace them, and they run hand-in-hand together, and establish in all their practices which they themselves deny in words. Therefore all their sayings and exhortations, and councils, and pressing of natural men to grow and bear fruit, and walk holily and the like, they all proceed from ignorance of themselves and of the work of Christ; and indeed it is no less than blasphemy against the power, wisdom, honor, omnipotency and all sufficiency of Jesus Christ. It is no other but denying the Tree of Life, and living on the tree of knowledge of good and evil. John Webster {Judgment Set, and the Books Opened, 1654}

Divine Teaching

Objection - Indeed if we consider men naturally in their sinful condition, they are ignorant in the things of God, and are even as the heathens; but we have the Scriptures given to us, and they contain the mind of God; and having this help, we by our wits and learning, and industry are able to know the mind of God; for we know and understand the Hebrew and Greek languages. Assertion - Truly, if it were so, that they did so, it were well; but that very word to which they appeal, in the very letter of it witnesses against them; for the word witnesses that it is a sealed book, whether delivered to the learned, or unlearned; {Is.29:11,12;} and none is found worthy to open it but the Lamb, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah; {Rev.5:3;} and that none can so much as say, Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost; {I Cor.12:3;} and again, that the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life; {II Cor.3:6;} and to you it must be given to know the mysteries of the kingdom, or you cannot know them; {Lk.8:10;} and when Christ spake with a lively and audible voice, and spake and preached so as never man did, yet said he very often, "he that hath ears to hear let him hear;" {Mt.11:15; Mk.4:9; Lk.8:8;} and so it is said of the disciples, that Christ opened their understandings when he was risen again, {Lk.24:45;} although he himself had taught them the same things before his death; yet it is said, "Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures;" {Lk.24:45;} that it behooved him {according as it was written in the Prophets and Psalms} to suffer and rise again the third day. So that hence it is clear, that there is not any wisdom, learning, or knowledge in the world that can open this sealed book; for though it be the declaration of the mind of God through those Saints and Apostles by whom it was written; yet never can any man read the mind of God in it, but by the same Spirit that taught it, and unless the same Spirit that raised up Jesus Christ from the dead do quicken us. We say that none can truly teach the spirits of men, but God himself, and none can come to the Father but by the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. {Mt.11:27} They say, the way to understand the Scriptures is to get learning and the tongues, and to reform their lives, to get into this or that fellowship. I say, this sharply reproves them that say they can open it with the wooden and fleshly key of carnal wisdom and human learning; for we have showed how there is a cloud upon the Tabernacle to this day, that none can remove it but God Himself. John Webster {Judgment Set, and the Books Opened, 1654}

Exaltation of Christ

This is one characteristic of a true saint, when he speaks of himself, of any grace, of any goodness, meekness, charity, love, of any good in him, he is very tender not to reflect upon himself as holy, or as if men should think him holy or wise, or meek; no, says he, this is none of mine, 'tis the grace of God that is with me; so that this man he hath no sap, no life, and no goodness in himself; but he lives by receiving, and when thus received he dares not think it his own; for he hath all his sap in Christ, and receives it every minute from Him. He does not look on himself as having a stock or gifts or a talent in his own hands, given out from Christ as most men take it, but he lives upon the Fountain, as the stream upon the Spring, and as the branch on the Root; if the spring stop, or the root give not forth, the one ceases and the other withers and dies. Thus does a Christian suck virtue from Christ every moment, and of this he hath such real experience, that all the world shall never persuade him otherwise, and he cannot endure to hear how the world will talk of their wisdom, their carefulness, their endeavors, their holiness, and the like, for nothing is more harsh to him. This is no other to him, but the noise of hell, and the noise of strangers, {Is.25:5,} and the noise of the bottomless pit; but he is well pleased to be amongst them that throw down their crowns before the Lamb, {Rev.4:10,} that are always singing and saying, He alone is worthy to receive honor, and glory, and power, and dominion. He is our rock, our fortress and our deliverer. {Ps.18:2} He alone is become our salvation! These are his joy, these are his songs in the night; no melody but this divine melody. When we exalt anything in man, or give anything to man, we at the same time pull down something in Jesus Christ, and take away something which is due to him alone; and there is always a magnifying thereof, and a resting in it and

trusting to it, whatever men say to the contrary. But, blessed is that soul that puts his trust only in the Lord. John Webster {Judgment Set, and the Books Opened, 1654}

Exclusiveness of Christ in the Salvation of His People

Dost thou not say that thou art a Christian? If so then thou wouldst believe that he is God All Sufficient. "I am the Almighty God; {God All Sufficient;} walk before me, and be thou perfect." {Gen.17:1} Is he all sufficiently wise, strong, holy, good and merciful &c., then is not this the manifestation of thy absolute infidelity when thou thinkest he will not take care of his own Church? Or else thou concludest thus, if he be wise enough, yet he hath not power enough, and therefore thou must help him. And is he not All Sufficiently Good, and will he not take care of his own cause? Never fear, but he will. "I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." {Mt.16:18} Is it not said that, "it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell?" And that "in all things he might have the preeminence." {Col.1:18-19} And; saith he plainly, "the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." {John 5:22} And that all power in heaven and earth is given unto Him. {Mt.28:18} And again, "unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder;" and that "of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever." And that "the zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this." {Is.9:6-7} And again; that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Him. {Col.2:3} Now, is all the power of the Father given into the Hand of Christ? And have not we all said that the pope is not the viceroy nor vicar of Christ? And does not every man throw dirt upon him, and yet we can get into the pope's place, and sit in his seat and say, we are the substitutes of Christ. That which we deny him, we take to ourselves; certainly all this is nothing else but hellish arrogancy, and the pride of the man of sin, and Antichrist within us that exalts himself {in us} above all that is called God, {II Thes.2:4,} and puts us into these ways; and to think that we can draw, or that we can drive men to Jesus Christ, when there is none that can do this, but merely and solely that only and eternal power and spirit of the Father. John Webster {Judgment Set, and the Books Opened, 1654}

Exclusiveness of Christ in the Salvation of His People

We may conclude, that whatever spirit goes out any other way, or to any other thing to find rest, or liberty, or redemption by and only in Jesus Christ, he is deceived, for it is only in Immanuel, God with us; there is no Redeemer, no Deliverer, no Savior but only He. All the Saints who have all experience thereof in themselves, know this to be true and give out their witness, that in vain did they run out to anything else. Oh that men knew in experience, as they pretend in words and notions, that all judgment is committed to the Son; {John 5:22;} and that in Him alone is the power of life and death, and that he alone has the keys to unlock the Mysteries of Salvation; then whether {if they were persuaded of this} could the heart of man go for relief? If it saw its own utter emptiness, nothingness, and that all creatures and all ordinances, and forms were broken cisterns, {Jer.2:13,} how could they depend and wait on them? If then Jesus Christ be the only fullness, the only power, the only riches, the only joy, the only treasure, then would they sell all to buy this One Pearl. {Mt.13:46} Mens running out to this thing and to that is because they are unsatisfied, and are in want of peace and rest, and this makes them go out and walk through dry places to find rest, but can find none; {Lk.11:24;} this want makes them heap to themselves so many varieties of things to give them peace; their souls fly to and again from flower to flower, but cannot rest anywhere; they fly to this duty, and to that form, but they are all empty, they are no other but dry places. Oh how Satan hath deluded the sons of men; because men are not able to stand in the sight of their own nothingness, how doth Satan continually carry them out, for they cannot endure to stay within to see themselves; but either they are carried out to lust, or luxury, or wantonness, or drinking, or company and the like, and if that will not hide and cover them, so that the mouth of conscience will be stopped, then it runs out to duties, and forms, and ways of worship, and things that will do it, when alas they are mere delusions, and things which the soul hath invented to play withal, to get peace and liberty by, to make it forget its misery, poverty, and emptiness; but the end of this peace is death and misery, and the end of this liberty is confusion. "What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?" {Rom.6:21} But oh, happy is that soul that can say from heart experience and not only in words, that these are all miserable comforters, {Job.16:2,} and that all below and besides Christ gender to death and bondage; and that he hath found the bed too broad, and covering too narrow, so that he could not wrap himself therein; {Is.28:20;} and that he is resolved never to run out to anything to relieve or stay his spirit, but only to the riches, power, and fullness of Christ. Not to the gross lusts of men, nor to the riches of the world, to honor, or praise, or the like; nor to the religion of the world, nor of the Nation, as ye know many usually do, and if that will not do, then they fly higher, and they will be of the strictest sort of the

Pharisees, and join themselves with men of learning, gravity, and religion, and men esteemed Orthodox and sound in the Faith, and he will follow their ways, in hearing and reading, and praying, and walking without offense, and the like; but all these do but sow to the flesh, and of the flesh can reap nothing but corruption. {Gal.6:8} Do but examine thyself, although thou hast joined thyself here and there, and gone from one Church society to another, and put thy neck under the yoke of such a form or such a religion, what was the cause? Was it not thy fears, thy terrors within? Or was it not, that you may cover thy filthy and corrupt heart from the sight of others? Hast thou not for all this conformity, the same heart, the same nature still, though thou hast hid and covered it by these inventions; and when the fire hath still broke out, and thy misery and undone condition could not be concealed, hast not thou said within thyself, is there not some other way, some better remedy; is there no better physicians than these? I have joined myself to the Presbyterians, and I have found their way too short, that would not do; I have come over to the Independents and thought that way seemed before, a better, and more refined way, yet it is too narrow, for I cannot wrap myself in that covering. Well, says thy heart, is there no other, nor no better physicians? So I could but secure myself and prevent this fire and this burning, I would be content to do anything, and take up every yoke, and submit to the strictest forms. Then say the Anabaptists, come over to us and we shall give thee satisfaction; we have the true Baptism, according to the Word, none so near the Word of God as we. But when thou hast done all these things to find rest, and to quench the fire which began to burn, and to hide thy deformities from men; do you think there is anything of Christ in all this? Is not this rather to run away, and turn thy back upon Christ, and to live by thy own wits and inventions, and by thy own power, merely to prevent death and destruction, and the losing of thy own wisdom and righteousness, and that thou mayest not come into the light of God, lest it should discover thy darkness and blackness. And now, seeing these things are so, how dare any of the sons of men boast of these things, when they cannot free nor deliver the soul, but rather increase their misery, and lengthen out their bondage. I say, dare any man stand forth and call these the Ordinances of Christ, as they use them? What greater, what higher blasphemy! An Ordinance of God is a thing of another nature, wherein the wisdom and power of God is effectual to bring in the heart, to cause man to renounce his own wisdom, power, &c., to empty him of all his resources and goodness, and to cause the soul to submit to the Righteousness of Faith; else it is but an ordinance of man, and the word is but a dead letter, and it is nothing else but the word of man, except it come with authority and power upon the heart, bringing every high thought, and every imagination into the obedience of Christ. {II Cor.10:5} "But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?" {Ps.50:16} There are many pretenders to Christ, and the world makes a great noise of serving, and worshiping him; and there is a great talk everywhere of fearing God, in notion, and opinion, and delusion. Therefore Beloved, these things that men so much cleave to and magnify cannot be the rest of a Christian, nor the Ordinances of Christ {as used by them} but of Antichrist, because they may be used, and lived in, and admired, and prized, and yet they are without any power; they let those that use them and live in them to be carried away with them; {II Tim.3:6;} pretending liberty, but themselves being the servants of corruption, {II Pet.2:19;} and enemies to the power of Christ, and the life of Christianity; and are acted by Antichrist, who as God sitteth in the Temple of God, showing himself that he is God; {II Thes.2:4;} though he be a devil and Antichrist, yet he would not be known, for all his policy is to conceal himself, and be thought to be righteous, pure, and to be the very Christ, the Son of the living God. John Webster {Judgment Set, and the Books Opened, 1654}

Faith and Believing

The whole Scripture is given that man might be brought to the full and absolute renunciation of all his will, desires, strength, wisdom, righteousness, and all human glory and excellencies whatsoever; and that self-hood might be totally annihilated, that he might live, yet not he, but that Christ might live in him; and that the life which he now liveth in the flesh might be by the faith of the Son of God, who loved him, and gave himself for him. {Gal.2:20} But if man gave his assent unto, or believed the things of Christ, either because, and as they are taught of and by men, or because they appear probable and consentaneous to his reason, then would his faith be constructed upon the rotten basis of human authority, or else he might be said to assent unto and believe the things because of their appearing probable, and because of the verisimilitude of them; but not solely and only to believe in and upon the Author and Promiser of them, for his faithfulness and truth's sake, and nothing else; and so his faith should stand in the wisdom of men, but not in the power of God, {I Cor.1:17;} and so the cross of Christ should become of none effect. {I Cor.2:5} But Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness, {Gen.15:6;} though the things promised seemed neither probable nor possible; and therefore Sarah, who is the type of carnal reason, laughed at the promise, conceiving it impossible in reason that she should have a child; {Gen.18:13;} and therefore it is not that assent nor consent that reason gives you unto the things of God, as they appear apparent and like, that is the faith of Abraham; but a simple and naked believing and relying upon the bare and sole Word of

the Lord, though reason and man's wisdom can see no way how possibly it can come to pass; but with Mary and Nicodemus question how can these things be; for carnal reason is a monster, and the very root and ground of all infidelity; for the carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be; but faith is that pure and divine gift and work of God that leads the heart of man in the light and power of the spirit of Christ, with faithful Abraham even against hope to believe in hope, and not to stagger at the promise of God through unbelief; {Rom.4:18-20;} but to be strong in faith, and to give glory to God. Therefore we conclude that Sacred Theology ought to be drawn from the Word and Oracles of God, not from the light of nature, or the dictates of reason. John Webster {Examination of Academies, 1653}

Gospel Liberty in Christ

"Nevertheless what saith the Scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son; for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman." {Gal.4:30,31} And then he concludes in the last verse, "so then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free." We; that is, those who believe are not now tied unto ceremonies, nor live in the form and shadow of the Heavenly things, or in bondage to external and worldly rudiments, resting in them as the outward Jew did; "for he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." {Rom.2:28,29} This kind of doctrine, the Jew and he that idolizes his outward forms could not endure, but as then, so now, this divine teaching and the teachers thereof could never be endured, but have been persecuted in all ages, and most of all by these who have pretended most strictly to worship God according to the rule of his Word. These ever had and ever will have a contrariety thereunto; the children of the bondwoman are always at enmity, and have a continual hatred against the children of the freewoman. And these are Hagar, as the Apostle there saith in verse 25, "For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children;" {Gal.4:25;} if men go no farther, but here stick in shadows and forms and the outward worship of that at Jerusalem, {though it be never so glittering and glorious,} yet but all this is but Mount Sinai and gendereth to bondage. But saith our Savior, "the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father," but "the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth." {John 4:21-24} These two mountains always stand in opposition one to another, because the one is to bring men into bondage, and the other is still laboring to set men free. The one kind of worshipers are always busied, exercised and are very zealous for worldly ordinances and external worships, duties, and forms; and conclude that those who submit and take them up zealously and constantly are the true worshipers, and exclude all others. Now the other worshipers, who worship the Father in Spirit and Truth, they see and bear witness against these outward forms {as rested in,} and as generally all the other worshipers do, whatever they say to the contrary; for their great zeal for them is, because they derive, suck and draw life from the exercise of them. True worshipers know that there is no power, no life, no excellency in them, neither could they any longer live or depend upon them, but they see that their life, power, righteousness, freedom is in those things which are from heaven; heavenly in the spirit, not in the letter. {I Cor.15:48} They receive their nourishment and influence from the Heavenly Jerusalem, not from the outward and external, not from carnal ordinances; {as the Apostle calls them;} but they suck the breast of the true mother, whose milk is spirit and life; and here they live, and here they feast, and here they dwell; and have not their life, nor their abode with the bondwoman which in them is cast out with her children; for she can never inherit the blessing, nor the life, nor the power, nor the liberty, but is with all her children always in bondage. And the Apostle appeals to all believers, to their own experience, "did ye receive the Spirit by the works of the Law;" {Gal.3:2;} that is, by whatever man {as man} could do, with all his learning, power, strivings, acquiring, &c., but only by the hearing of Faith? So that you may see from these and many other arguments that the Apostle draws this exhortation by way of conclusion in the verse now read: "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." {Gal.5:1} Some of the Galatians had seen and felt this true liberty, which he had cleared out to them, and they had lived in it and enjoyed it. But some false apostles crept in after his departure, and told them that they must still hold the forms of the Law, and they must be circumcised and observe outward and carnal ordinances. {Heb.9:10} Now the Apostle very earnestly presseth them to stand fast in their liberty received, and not to suffer themselves to be entangled with those yokes of bondage; for Christ is their liberty, and Christ alone is their life, and their freedom, their peace, their joy, their salvation; and herein to stand against all those who would set up anything with him; and upon that account the Apostle calls them carnal Ordinances though appointed by the Lord Himself. And is it a wonder the men of the Letter which stand so much for outward forms, do not cry out blasphemy and heresy. All those other things being included in naming Circumcision, because that was the most high, absolute and unquestionable Ordinance ordained by God Himself to Abraham, and which none could remove or abolish but the Son Himself, the Heir Himself; who

being come to age, must inherit and take possession of his own, of his inheritance, kingdom and glory. And shall any servant resist and keep out the Lord, the heir of all things, and all these things saying, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord," {Mt.3:3,} for whom all things were made and created; and all other excellencies and glories whatsoever are but to usher in this Great and Mighty King; and shall any harbinger or servant say that he will not, or he must not remove, or be so impotent to say that the inheritance is his? No, says the Apostle, "I testify to every man, and I Paul say unto you, if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing; and ye are under the Law, and under bondage, and he is a debtor to do the whole Law, and Christ is become of none effect, and ye are fallen from grace." {Gal.5:3,4} This is that which so much moved the Apostle, that they being once set free and had tasted of the liberty which came by Jesus Christ, that they should be again entangled with the yoke of bondage. That they who had received Gospel teaching, and Christ to be the Teacher, should now hearken to false teachers; and having begun in the spirit should once think to be made perfect by the flesh, as if Christ were not enough, but they must join with Him the corruption, and rudiments of men, their rules, and their forms, and their precepts; these and these things they must do if they will be perfect, and so join man with Christ, and so make Christ and his cross of none effect. Nay the Apostle, he did so magnify, and set up, and adore Jesus Christ, and esteemed him so full, so rich, so large, so all in all; that he not only abhorred the rudiments and the inventions of men, but the Ordinances and the very Law of God as by man, to come in competition with Jesus Christ. For never any man observed the Law, in the least tittle. It was only Jesus Christ, and them whom he embodied, and in whom he works. For verily the Law was not given to tell man what he should do to get peace and life, but to condemn him, to disable him, to slay him, to convince him that he is miserable, and weak, and cursed. And therefore in vain did those false apostles, or any other in any generation put men upon doing this or that by way of condition, to enable man to act or do anything on his part by his own power so to please God. But every true believer is a man lost and destroyed in himself; and he is born anew of this Divine Seed, and he is settled not on himself by his own doings, but on the Rock of Ages. {I Sam.2:2} John Webster {Judgment Set, and the Books Opened, 1654}

Gospel Ordinances

I bear witness to One Ordinance, and One Administrator, Mediator, Redeemer and Intercessor, which is the Lord Jesus Christ blessed forever; who is the way, the truth, and the life, and no man comes to the Father but by Him, and it is HE that is ordained to be Judge of the quick and the dead by the Father {Acts 10:42,} and there is no other Name given under heaven, by which men can be saved, but the name of Jesus; neither is there salvation in any other {Acts 4:12;} for "there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are differences of Administrations, but the same Lord; and there are diversities of Operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all." {I Cor.12:4-6} And I witness that it is Jesus Christ only. John Webster {Judgment Set, and the Books Opened, 1654}

Gospel Ordinances

Christ Jesus alone is the only Ordinance appointed of the Father to bring many sons unto glory, and that there is nothing in an ordinance but Christ alone; and in vain do men talk, and keep such a stir about ordinances, except Christ be the power of every ordinance. He is ordained of the Father to be Judge of the quick and the dead; he is also ordained to give repentance, and forgiveness of sins. What can an ordinance do if He be not the Ordinance, if he be not the power and virtue of all ordinances? It is he alone that is ordained to be the only Teacher, Master and Father; and therefore call no man Father, nor master; nor no external ordinance a guide, but only as He is in it; and therefore, that it is in itself empty and dead, and whatever acts not in this One Ordinance Jesus Christ the Son of the Father without whom you can do nothing at all, whatever it be, it is no other but a deceit, a covering and a lie. John Webster {Judgment Set, and the Books Opened, 1654}

Gospel Ordinances

It is the Lord that draws away the veil, and man with all his wisdom, learning, industry, &c., cannot pull it off himself. It is the Lord alone that opens the eyes of the blind, and not the holiest man can do anything in this work of himself. It is the Lord that circumciseth the heart; it is the Lord who baptizeth the spirits of men with the true baptism; and all by one spirit, into one body, whether they be Jews or Gentiles; {I Cor.12:13;} and I have showed that one man cannot truly baptize another, as they undertake to do in an apeliike imitation of the thing; for it is the Lord's work only, he alone can remove the cloud from off the tabernacle, and give the true baptism; otherwise it abides and must remain thereupon, and the soul is not washed, nor baptized; for some have one pattern, some another; one thinks he hath the true baptism because he hath the similitude, and pattern of spiritual baptism,

which was then by some used by way of dipping in water. Another hath the pattern and similitude of eating Christ's body, and drinking his blood in their breaking of bread, which was but the type of the heavenly bread that was the body of Christ. But Christ saith, except a man eat his flesh and drink his blood he hath no life in him. {John 6:53} How many churches partake of the patterns and shadows, and whatever they say, they conclude from thence that they are the true Church of God; because say they, we have the right use of the sacraments, which is a sign of a true Church, because they have the patterns, types and shadows; observing only outward rules, forms, and carnal ordinances, which all perish with the using; "Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances." {Col.2:20} Yet impudently, and blasphemously will they dare to say they are not the Church of men, but of God; when they know not the mystery, nor live according to the power of the heavenly things themselves; and therefore herein that Scripture comes to be fulfilled, that men shall have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof, {II Tim.3:5,} for the one may be where the other is not; and the Apostle tells us, "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." {Rom.2:28,29} So from hence it is clear, many churches, and many hundred thousands of souls may have an exact pattern, and yet want the heavenly things themselves; they may have the pattern, as the Jews had and were sanctified and washed only with the blood of bulls and goats; but to have the heavenly things themselves; namely, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of life and glory, and to have the purifications and sanctifications that are only by his blood, this they are strangers to. This is the spiritual and living fire; and wherever it is in the soul of man, it cannot but break forth to the destroying of all things of a man and flesh, and magnifying and exalting all things of Christ by the Spirit of God. John Webster {Judgment Set, and the Books Opened, 1654}

Heavenly Christ

And by the way, let me mind you of one thing; that when the Scripture speaks of Christ ascending and entering into the third heaven, and far above all heavens, and sitting down on the right hand of his Father; {Eph.4:10, Heb.12:2;} I would not have you so childish as to be diluted by those tricks and devices of the men of the Letter, who not being able to see through the mystery, do take those things as spoken literally, as though Christ now had a material body, flesh and bones, the same which he had in the flesh, when he was upon the earth. These are very fond inventions of men, that Christ is in a local place and sits upon a throne above in heaven, next to his Father as upon his right hand or the like; and when he comes to judgment he will set himself in the material clouds, and call all nations before him, just as judges do in the court room; and there to sit in a chair of State above all, or as Solomon upon a glorious throne. Truly the world hath been a long time deluded with these fancies. But we are when we speak of Him to separate all our thoughts far from all carnal things, and all creaturely beings. For there is no tincture of the creature concernments in those heavenly and divine things; but all those things are done spiritually and in a way far above the thought or comprehension of all creaturely conceptions. John Webster {Judgment Set, and the Books Opened, 1654}

Holy Scripture

The Scriptures which are as the seamless coat of Christ may not be rent and torn with the carnal instruments of man's wit and reason, nor modeled, or methodized as a human art or science, but laid aside in scholastic exercises as a sacred and sealed book, lest they offering strange fire upon God's Altar perish as others have done; {Lev.10:1,2;} for in the day of man's light the Tabernacle of the Lord will be covered with the cloud, and in the night of his darkness there will be fire; therefore let not man journey until the cloud be taken up or the fire appear, otherwise they must know the Lord doth not lead them nor go before them. {Ex.40:36-38} And indeed, whatsoever the proud and deceitful heart of man may imagine, the Scriptures are a sealed book, for so the prophet saith, "And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee; and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed; And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee; and he saith, I am not learned." {Is.29:11,12} What can be more plain than this, that it is a sealed book both to the learned and unlearned! This is it that is sealed with seven seals, and no man in heaven, nor earth, nor in the sea, that is found worthy to open this book and to loose the seven seals thereof, but only the strong Lion of the tribe of Judah, {Rev.5:1-5,} and therefore let schools not touch it, lest it be to their destruction. John Webster {Examination of Academies, 1653}

Law & Gospel Distinctions

The Gospel therefore being that true and pure light that convinceth men that not believing in the Lord Jesus is sinful and damnable, which no light proceeding did or could effect, must needs be more glorious than all other lights that went before it. "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil;" {John 3:18-21;} and therefore, "the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son; {John 5:22;} and he comes "in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." {II Thes.1:8} So that men are condemned under the Gospel for not believing, as well as under the Law for not doing; and herein appeareth the Ministry of the Gospel more glorious than that of Moses. So that to a true believer, the Spirit of Christ is his Ruler and Conductor, and the Gospel is interpreted by that Spirit his Rule and Guide, and no Law besides whatsoever; which is evident; because, if he be Christ's, he is led by the Spirit of Christ; and if a man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his; {Rom.8:9,14;} and it is this anointing that teacheth a believer all things, and leads him into all truth, and he needeth not that any man should teach him, for he is taught of God. {I John 2:27, John 16:13, John 6:45} And this is that Spirit that searcheth all things, yea even the deep things of God; {I Cor.2:10;} which every believer receiveth in some measure {and not the spirit of the world} that he may know the things that are freely given to him of God. So that this Spirit both searcheth out, and teacheth those deep things that no Law could ever discover or find out. And it is as clear that the Gospel is his rule, wherein his way is perfectly painted out; for the just shall live by faith, {Gal.3:11,} and without faith it is impossible to please God; {Heb.11:6;} and whatsoever is not of faith is sin; {Rom.14:23;} and the life that a believer now lives, is by the faith of the Son of God, who loved him, and gave himself for him. {Gal.2:20} Therefore faith being the way he should walk in, and the rule he should go by, it is manifest the Law is not his rule, because not of faith. John Webster {Saint's Guide or Christ the Rule, and Ruler of Saints, 1653}

Law & Gospel Distinctions

Herein lies a broad difference between the children of the bondwoman and the children of the free woman. When the sons of the bondwoman hear of anything that man is required to do, presently they think to work themselves to it by their care, watchfulness, resolutions, &c.; but now it is quite contrary with the sons of the free woman; they having a principle of freedom, act and work from this; the one worships God from an internal principle, in the power of the Spirit, the other from an outward compulsory cause, and not from the power of love. John Webster {Judgment Set, and the Books Opened, 1654}

Law & Gospel Distinctions

Therefore to preach the Law of Moses to any other end than to condemn, manifest wrath, reveal sin, and that all may become guilty before God is to urge it for that end it was never given of God; for it is and was always a ministry of condemnation, not of life. And though the end of it be love out of a pure conscience, as it was by the Spirit of love in Christ Jesus fulfilled in his Saints, yet was it not given for the righteous, but for the unrighteous; from which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling, desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm; {I Tim.1:5-7;} as most do, making it a rule of observation from the principles of fear and reward. Then to preach the Law Moral by exhorting and deporting to the legal and literal performance of the things it requires, and the leaving the things it prohibits for fear of punishment or hope of reward, is nothing else but to make clean the outside of the cup and platter, and to leave it within full of bribery and excess; {Mt.23:25;} for the Law makes nothing perfect, neither could it, or ever did give power to perform what it required; so that to bring one by the forsaking of outward and gross evils, and conforming to the things it requireth, to the observation thereof, is but to make a proselyte twofold more the child of perdition than before. {Mt.23:15} Then why do those that call themselves ministers of the New Testament, not of the Letter but of the Spirit, teach the Law to believers as a Rule of observation, which is found of all to be unto death, not unto life, and tie heavy burdens upon men's shoulders {as did the Pharisees} which they do not, nor can ease with the least of their fingers; {Mt.23:4;} Nay, why do they labor to lay a yoke upon the believers neck, which neither they nor their forefathers were able to bear? {Acts 15:10} Whether ought the Gospel to be preached, as the highest and chiefest light for discovering the sinfulness of infidelity or not, seeing we now live under a Gospel dispensation? Whether faith, repentance, and all other graces mentioned in the Gospel {though in form of speaking laid down as requisite duties} be not free gifts and gracious mercies? And if they be free gifts and graces, why do men press them legally, and not hold them out freely and evangelically? Whether do men that press faith and repentance as

conditions or qualifications, build upon the principles of Calvin or Arminius? John Webster {Saint's Guide or Christ the Rule, and Ruler of Saints, 1653}

Religious Tradesmen

Then is their tongue touched with a coal from the Altar {Is.6:6,} and they must declare Jesus Christ to make him alone glorious, powerful, wise, mighty, eternal, &c.; and then, it is no longer they that speak, but the spirit of their Father that is within them. {Mk.13:11} My beloved brethren, if men were but come to the sight of this light, and were able to stand in it, and walk in it, they would not go forth {as they do} in their own name, and in their own wisdom and power, having furnished themselves by their study, and by their books, and by their borrowed matter; but all this is because they have no light in them. How many speakers be there now in the world, and with what confidence do they come unto you? When this spirit from on high never came upon them, for they never yet waited at Wisdom's gates {PV.8:34,} never yet stayed at Jerusalem for the promise of the Father {Lk.24:49,} but running before they are sent, having of themselves found a way to be furnished; for they can go to the University and there lay the foundation, and there they have the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery, and then they can study Authors, and then they have wisdom, and eloquence of their own; and thus they come furnished, and are {as they think} able ministers of the Gospel. {II Cor.3:6} Alas poor souls, Christ calls them no other but thieves and robbers which come not in at the door {John 10:1,} they come not in by Him, but climb up some other way. These have not made Christ the door and the way, for did they but live in the true light, they durst not do thus; they durst not speak until He had opened the door, they durst not walk till the fire of the sanctuary guided them, till this cloud of ignorance, not knowing themselves, nor the work of Christ, were taken up, else they sit still. And I say, there would not be so many speakers as there be, they would not covet so much to be somebody that they may be taken notice of, to be wise, to be learned, to be holy, to be sober, to be endowed with the gifts of Christ, as they would be thought to be. All this, is but putting new wine into old bottles and both are lost; {Lk.5:37;} but if this light of God, this, spirit from on high, this fire of the Sanctuary were upon them, then this new wine would be put into new bottles and both preserved. Brethren, it woos my very heart to see how confident and bold men are in their own light, and he that will say to the contrary, but that this is the light of God, he be branded a deceiver, a schismatic; yea, the most odious of all men. Oh, that these men did but know from whence they speak. Oh, that they did but know whether they were a Moses or a Magician, whether sent from God or the devil, whether from Christ or Antichrist, who indeed sit in the Temple of God, as if sent from Christ. Nay, let me tell you, they come with such deceivableness of unrighteousness, with such signs and lying wonders, {II Thes.2:9,10,} that they are able to deceive the very elect of God, if it were possible; but the truth is, it is only they that can discover them; it is only the spirit of Christ that can lay them open; only he that hath the true light can discover these hidden deeds of darkness. He that hath this true light, and this true spirit, he sees he is nothing, nor cannot step one step in this work except the Lord go with them; not only in words to say this, for that's nothing; but really from the light of God to know this. Then he durst not go forth to speak of the things of God, but in trembling and fear; for they know there is no other Master, no other Father, no other Teacher, but Christ alone. They cannot think it enough that they have University learning, that they have the most Orthodox authors, {as they call them,} and sometimes most excellent Divines, but most blasphemously to rob Christ of his honor; for there can be no Divine, but Christ; no Teacher, but Christ; no Doctor but Christ. {Mt.23:7-10} John Webster {Judgment Set, and the Books Opened, 1654}

Religious Tradesmen

Objection - Schools teach the knowledge of tongues without which the Scriptures {being originally written in the Hebrew and Greek} cannot be truly and rightly translated, expounded, nor interpreted; and therefore it is necessary that schools, academies and seminaries should teach these as properly and mainly conducive to this end. Assertion - Knowledge of tongues can but teach the grammatical construction, signification and interpretation of words, propriety of phrases, deduction of etymologies, and such like; all which tend no further than the instamping of a bare literal understanding, and all this may be, the mystery of the Gospel being unknown, for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life. {II Cor.3:6} And Saul before his conversion and the rest of the Jewish rabbis, understood the Hebrew and Greek tongues, and yet by them understood nothing of the saving mystery of Grace, for they stumbled at the stone of offense, and though they were princes in human learning and wisdom, yet did they not know God in his divine wisdom, for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Life. {I Cor.2:8} And therefore is not tongues the right key to unlock the Scriptures, but the Spirit of Christ, that opens and no man shuts, and shuts and no man opens. {Rev.3:7} - Men usually pretending skill in the Original tongues, do draw and fit the Word to that sense and meaning that is best suited with their opinions and tenets, which is

clear in Arius and those others that men have branded with the name of heretics {how justly God knows} and in those that many do call Fathers, as Origen, Ambrose, and many such; and in these times the Papists, Socinians, Arminians {as men have given them names} and those that have appropriated unto themselves the name of being Orthodox. These all pretending exact skill in the original tongues, do all wrest the Scriptures to make good their several tenets, and traditional forms, which plainly demonstrates the uncertainty, if not the vanity in boasting of, and trusting in this fleshly weapon, of the knowledge of tongues. While men trust to their skill in the understanding of the original tongues, they become utterly ignorant of the true original tongue, the language of the heavenly Canaan, which no man can understand or speak, but he that is brought into that good land that flows with milk and honey, and there to be taught the language of the Holy Ghost; for he that is from heaven is heavenly, and speaketh heavenly things, and all that are from the earth, do but speak earthly things. {John 3:31,32} So that he that is most expert, and exquisite in the Greek and original tongues, to him notwithstanding the language of the Holy Ghost, hid in the letter of the Scriptures is but as hieroglyphics and cryptography, which he can never uncipher, unless God bring his own key, and teach him how to use it, and otherwise the voice of Saints will be but unto him as the voice of barbarians, even as a sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal, as not giving any perfect or distinct sound. John Webster {Examination of Academies, 1653}

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I do not deny nor envy men of the titles of being called Doctors and Masters for their knowledge in natural and civil things, and for to have a civil reverence and honor, but to have these titles given them as able, or taken upon them to teach spiritual things is vanity and pride, if not blasphemy! From this putrid and muddy fountain of Scholastic divinity doth arise all those hellish and dark fogs and vapors that like locusts crawling from this bottomless pit have overspread the face of the whole earth, filling men with pride, insolency, and self-confidence, to affirm and maintain that none are fit to speak, and preach the spiritual and deep things of God, but such as are furnished with this Scholastic and man's idol-made-learning, and so become fighters against God and his truth, and persecutors of all those that speak from the principal of that wisdom, that is from above, and is pure and peaceable; {James 3:15-17;} not confessing the nothingness of creaturely wisdom, but magnifying and boasting in that which is earthly, sensual and devilish. And therefore these thinking themselves wise, they become fools, and proudly taking upon themselves to teach others the things of God in the way of worldly wisdom, are not only untaught of God, but are enemies to his heavenly wisdom. From this ariseth the dividing and renting of the seamless coat of Christ, which is indivisible, and admits no schism, but must pass all one way, according to the lot of the Father. But how have they atomized the unity and simplicity of that truth; that there is but "one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." {Eph.4:4-6} John Webster {Examination of Academies, 1653}

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They have laid down positive definitions of God, who cannot be defined but by his own Logic, for with him is the fountain of life, and it is only in his light that we see light; {Ps.36:9;} for he doth pre-eminently transcend all their whole predicamental scale. Nay, the heaven of heavens cannot contain him, {I Kings 8:27,} how much less the narrow vessel of man's intellect, or the weak and shallow rules of logical skill? Therefore if they had but humbly and modestly attempted no more but what is attainable by the poor scintilla glimpse of natural light, and have confessed the same constantly and freely, and that all their best descriptions of the immense and incomprehensible One were but infinitely weak and short to make out his inestimable wisdom, power, and glory; and so have used it but to convince atheists, or to make manifest the Cause of causes, and Being of beings, and not thereby to have reared up an high towering Babel of confused, notional, fruitless and vain religion, it might have passed without reproof, and the schoolmen without condemnation. For if we could handle these high and deep mysteries of God, and his Spirit, then ought we to have not the spirit of the world {which is carnal wisdom and reason} but that spirit which is of God {I Cor.2:10-12} which searcheth all things; yea, the deep things of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God; and so to go out of ourselves, and out of the weak and rotten vessel of human reason, into that ark of Noah, which guided by the Divine magnetic needle of God's Spirit, can only direct us to rest upon the mountains of Ararat, {Gen.8:4,} even upon Himself in Christ Jesus, who is the Rock of Ages, and the stone cut out without hands, that crusheth and breaketh in pieces all the strong images of man's wisdom, power, strength and righteousness. {Dan.2:34} John Webster {Examination of Academies, 1653}

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They have drawn theology into a close and strict logical method, and thereby hedged in the free workings and manifestations of the Holy One of Israel, who by his Spirit bloweth where he listeth, like the wind, and men may hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell from whence it cometh, nor wither it goeth; {John 3:8;} as though the Holy Ghost had not had an higher and more heavenly method and way to teach divine things in and by, than the art of logic {which is merely human, and man's invention} feeling the foolishness of God is wiser than the wisdom of men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men, {I Cor.1:25,} when indeed the Spirit of God hath a secret, divine and heavenly method of his own, and only proper to himself, which none can know but those that are taught it of God, and therefore they only understand it, and speak out the things of God, but not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. {I Cor.2:13} But these men accumulating a farraginous heap of divisions, subdivisions, distinctions, limitations, axioms, positions and rules do channel and bottle up the water of life {as they think} in and by these; and again pour it forth as they please, and this is spiritual sorcery or enchantment; like Saul, when God had left him to seek for Baal {I Sam.28:7,} and not to look for his truth as a fountain of life, or as a well springing up to eternal life; {John 4:14;} and so forsook the Lord the Fountain of living waters {Jer.2:13,} to draw water out of their own broken cisterns that will hold no water. These think "Abana and Pharpar rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel," and that they may wash in them and be clean; {II Kings 5:12;} and are not willing to draw water with joy out of the wells of salvation, {Is.12:3,} and know not that there is but one River the streams whereof make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High; {Ps.46:4;} when he that drinketh at any other fountain shall thirst again, but this shall be and ever is a wellspring unto eternal life. John Webster {Examination of Academies, 1653}

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Of the calling and enabling of ministers: That Christ by his Spirit manifesteth the mystery of the Gospel unto such as in his own purpose and decree he hath separated for the Ministry, and sends them forth in the power and evidence of the same Spirit; and all that men have done in appointing and setting up of a ministry, is of man and not of God; only those that have had experience of the same truth, have sometimes used to give their evidence, or witness to the truth in others, which was not their calling, but a testimony from others that such were already called. And no human power hath any legal right to forbid or hinder that such may not speak what God hath revealed in them and unto them. For it is plain that God chooseth Instruments, and they not him. "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit." {John 15:16} And it is he that sets them apart for the ministry, and not man, as the Apostle witnesseth; "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood; Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me." {Gal.1:15-17} No, he was an Apostle, not of man, nor by man, but by Jesus Christ. Neither was he taught it but by the revelation of his Spirit; and so are all those that are truly called of God; for there is nothing but Christ by his Spirit only that maketh men able ministers of the New Testament, not of the Letter, but by the Spirit; {II Cor.3:5,6;} for men as men, are not sufficient to think anything of themselves, but their sufficiency is of God. For though there be diversities of gifts, yet it is the same Spirit that gives them; and though there be differences of administrations, yet it is but the same Lord that doth administer in them all; and though there be diversities of operations, yet it is the same God that worketh all in all, and one Spirit that giveth out all these as he pleases. {I Cor.12:4-6,11} And as he calleth them, enableth them, and sets them apart, so he only sendeth them forth, and the authority they have is only from him, not from man. For in the same manner that he was sent {which was in the power of the Father, and not in nor from the power of man} so sent he them; and therefore saith, "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest." {Mt.9:38} It was not to pray princes nor magistrates, bishops, nor presbyters, itinerants, nor congregated churches to send forth laborers, but the Lord of the harvest only. Unless we should falsely imagine, that the Lord of the harvest {that hath ordained the wheat to be gathered into his own barn, {Mt.13:30,} and is that dear loving and provident Father that taketh care for all his; {I Pet.5:7;} nay, though a mother may forget her child, {Is.49:15,} yet will he not forget his own children} should take no care of the sowing, planting, watering, nor increase of his Spiritual and Immortal seed, nor of the reaping of that harvest which was not purchased with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of his dear Son; {I Pet.1:18,19;} but leave it to ignorant, careless or malicious husbandman. It is he that is the Begetter and Sower of this spiritual seed, the Planter, Waterer, and Increaser of it. "So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." {I Cor.3:7} And as they are sent forth by Him and his Spirit only, so their authority

and weapons are spiritual, not carnal or human, for they speak in the power, evidence and demonstration of the Spirit, and with authority, not like Scribes and Pharisees; {Mt.7:29;} for the weapons of their warfare are not carnal, but mighty in God. Their power ariseth not from commissions and licenses given or granted from Magistrates, Parliaments, or numbers of persons proudly and Lucifer-like styled Divines, from Committees or Colleges, Presbyteries or Academies, nor from any such, but from the Lord of Hosts, the God of Heaven and Earth, from Jesus Christ the Judge of the quick and dead, and from that Spirit of his that searcheth all things, yea even the deep things of God. The strength and might of their weapons is not academic or scholastical learning {the rotten rubbish of Ethnical and Babylonianish ruins} nor fathers, modern writers, expositors, commentators, {the airy bubbles that ignorance, corrupt custom and human tradition hath blown up, and covered over with the unsuitable and heterogeneous title of Orthodox Authors} not their wit, reason, nor collected notes {the rotten crutches to support lameness} no nor any of these, or whatsoever can arise from the flesh, but only that Spirit of truth, that leads into all truth. John Webster {Saint's Guide or Christ the Rule, and Ruler of Saints, 1653}

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If it were in the power of Magistrates, Academies, Presbyteries or Churches to send forth Ministers, then this would be a continual and standing power to propagateth this Tribe by way of carnal generation, as that of the Levites, who were born priests, or to the right of the priesthood; and so no age or generation needs be without, as hath been, and is practiced in the kingdom of Babylon to this day, who all claim it by succession, and a carnal way of propagation. Bishops from the Pope, Presbyters from them, and the Independent, and Baptized Churches from the Presbyters; so that here would be a perpetual ministry set up by man, whether ever God sent any or not. When the mystery of his truth hath been hidden from ages and generations, {Col.1:26,} and is only manifest to the saints according to the times and seasons that the Father hath put in his own power. {Acts 1:7} And so all along the times of the apostates these locusts have swarmed out of the bottomless pit and covered the face of the earth {Rev.9:3,10} to devour the fruits thereof {and would continue so still} though the Father of light never sent them, but the Prince of darkness. – Then are all licenses and commissions from men to authorize others to preach and teach only vain, corrupt, and abominable, and men that pretend to derive their power from these, are no less than ministers of Satan, and firebrands from Hell, and by their fruits you may know them. These preach war and blood, strife and debate, carnal things, not spiritual; earthly, not heavenly; and love the wages of unrighteousness, and perish in the gainsaying of Core. {Jude 11} Therefore as man can give no power in the things of Christ, he ought not to hinder any; let men take heed lest they be found fighters against God, {Acts 5:38,39,} and leave his cause to himself, for what He sets up must stand; and if anything be not of him, it will fall of itself; for that which is crooked cannot be made straight. Are they not thieves and robbers that steal and rob Christ of this honor? And do not these so, when they hold out that being bred in an Academy, and furnished with such arts and learning as are taught there, and to be ordained by Bishops, Presbyters, or Churches, is the true calling and ordination of ministers? If this be not to rob God of his honor, what is it then? Why do these men if they be ordained of God, and sent out in the power of his Spirit, persecute, condemn, and scandalize others for witnessing that there is no other calling but what is in the power of that Spirit; when it is certain, "that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed; and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." {I Cor.12:3} John Webster {Saint's Guide or Christ the Rule, and Ruler of Saints, 1653}

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Therefore for theology which is a speaking of God, or a speaking forth the things of God, it is expedient that men should lay aside the suffering of themselves to be styled by that blasphemous title of Divines, which is such an impropriety of language as all their learning will never be able to justify, it being an attribute that doth only predicate essentially of the being of God, and is indeed incommunicable to the creature, who hath nothing that is divine or spiritual but by participation; for though the text saith that saints are partakers of the divine nature, yet will it not follow that because they are said to be partakers of divine things that therefore they are divine, because participations do not truly predicate of those essences to which they are communicated, but of that being from whence they flow; for men participate of the light and heat of the sun, but it cannot be truly predicated of men that either they are the Sun, nor truly and univocally that they are of a solary nature, but only that participating of its influences and operations, they may be truly said to be heated and enlightened; for though it be in the English translated John the Divine, whereby those that understand not the Greek are misled, and thereby drawn to give that title to their priests, who blasphemously assume it to themselves, yet I hope there is much difference between one that speaks of God or divine things, and one that is divine. The Scots therefore have a more appropriate and warrantable epithet, who seldom or never call their ministers Divines but Theologians, and we have many could cry

out against the bishops for having the title of Lord, or Grace given them, and yet they themselves can swallow this title of being Divines, which is more unseemly, unfit and unwarrantable. John Webster {Examination of Academies, 1653}

Salvation

As the Apostle saith; so say I, "such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." {I Cor.6:11} There is not one natural man in the whole world that can desire salvation, but under a false notion, as he thinks it will bring peace, rest, honor, glory, and happiness; but salvation indeed, all men who are not possessed of it, oppose it, fight against it; and should it be revealed to them in the true nature thereof, they would persecute it, and breathe out slaughters against the possessors of it. Then certainly no man loves Salvation, nor no man seeks after it, nor can any use any means to attain it, as men ignorantly affirm and believe. For can a man love his own death? Can any man love crucifying and hating his own life? I tell you nay; but he must be changed, new molded and be leavened with a new leaven, that he may be a new lump. {I Cor.5:7} And therefore when men talk of such things, they know not what they say, that man must do, and man must act, and man must use the means and the like; it declares to me that they were never yet met in the way going to Damascus; they were never yet un-horsed and laid flat to the earth. O beloved; this work of salvation is a marvelous work! Religion is now made an easy and common thing; almost everyone is religious, for religion is the fashion of the age, and it's a shame to be otherwise, and they think this is enough. John Webster {Judgment Set, and the Books Opened, 1654}

Sovereign & Effectual Grace

But to answer more particularly; I do not, nor ever did deny the use of means in the hand of the Father; for the means do nothing, but the Father's hand only; and God never intended that carnal means should effect a spiritual work; for, "God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." {John 4:24} "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal," but spiritual; and they are mighty in the hand of God, not in the hand of man, not in ourselves but in Him. {II Cor.10:4} "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." {John 3:6} And what is it that men make out about this objection but this, that men must do, and men must strive, and men must watch? It's true, what means soever God pleaseth to use shall prevail; but if used by man, it does nothing at all; for can a spiritual thing come out of a carnal? Can a clean thing come out of an unclean? And therefore it is clear to me and to all the people of God, and to their experience, that the Lord makes no use of man's power, or strength, or wisdom, or watchfulness, or industry; but what is done in man is purely the hand and power of the Lord. If He say the word, let there be light, {Gen.1:3,} in such a soul, there is light. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. {II Cor.4:6} But men not knowing the work and power of God, they are always harping on this string of man's power, acting, working, striving, and the like. John Webster {Judgment Set, and the Books Opened, 1654}

Sovereignty of God

God hath not only determined a thing, but determined also by what power, and instruments, and means he will bring it to pass; but in this it is otherwise with God than with man. Man may propose a means to an end, that is weak and may fail; but God never intends and purposes an end, but the means are as infinite as Himself, and as eternal and omnipotent as Himself, so that his means cannot fail. He speaks and it shall and must come to pass. It is true God hath ordained the means by which he brings men to Jesus Christ; but this means is his own power, and spirit, and strength. "For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." {Ps.33:9} John Webster {Judgment Set, and the Books Opened, 1654}