

DECADES

written by

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(1504–1575)

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3-3. THE THIRD SERMON: BEARING AND ABIDING TRIALS.

OF THE PATIENT BEARING AND ABIDING OF SUNDRY CALAMITIES AND MISERIES:
AND ALSO OF THE HOPE AND MANIFOLD CONSOLATION OF THE FAITHFUL.

I will not do amiss, I think, my reverend brethren,² if to the treatise which I have already made about earthly riches, and of their use and abuse, I also add here a discourse about the diverse calamities with which man, so long as he lives in this frail flesh, is continually vexed and daily afflicted. For since many men either lose their temporal goods, or else cannot get them by any means, these are the causes why they are oppressed with penury and neediness. It can only be profitable and very necessary for every good man to know, from the word of God, the very reason and ground of his consolation in his miseries — lest, being swallowed up by too great a sorrow, and entangled in utter desperation, he gives himself over to be Satan's bond-slave.

iii.65

Now this treatise serves for the whole life of man. For I do not mean to speak of any one calamity alone, such as poverty or penury, but generally of all the miseries that happen to man. Truly, since man is born to grief and misery, as birds are born to flying³ and fishes to swimming; his life can never possibly be sweet or quiet, unless he knows the manner and reason of his calamity. And if he knows the reason of it, religiously taken and derived from the word of God, then his life cannot choose but to be sweet and quiet, however otherwise it seems to be most bitter and intolerable. The mind of man, truly, is sorely afflicted and grievously tormented with lamentable miseries. But, on the other side, it is sweetly eased and mightily upheld by the true knowledge of those miseries, and by holy consolations, derived and taken from the word of God.

First of all, it is requisite to lay before our eyes and reckon up the several kinds and special sorts of calamities of mortal men. The evils which daily fall upon our necks truly are innumerable. But those which most usually happen are the plague or pestilence, sundry and infinite diseases, death itself, and the fear of death, whose terror to some is far more grievous than death can be. To these may be added the death and destruction of most notable men, or those of whom we make most account; robberies, oppressions, endless ill chances, poverty, beggary, lack of friends, infamy, banishment, persecution, imprisonment, forced torments, and exquisite punishments of sundry sorts and terrible to think about, unseasonable and tempestuous weather, barrenness, dearth, frost, hail, deluges, earthquakes, the sinking of cities, the spoiling of fields, the burning of houses, the ruin of buildings, hatred, factions, secret grudges, treasons, rebellions, wars, slaughters, captivity, cruelty of enemies, and tyranny; also the lack of children; or troubles, cares, and hellish lives⁴ by unfit mates matched in wedlock, by children disposed to nothing, maliciously bent;

¹ This sermon is taken from Bullinger's *Third Decade*, translated by H.I., orig. pub., 1549-1552. This edition printed at Cambridge Univ. Press, 1849-1852, ed. Rev. Thomas Harding. Formatted and modernized by William H. Gross www.onthewing.org © Jan 2009, 2017. Original editor's notes are in black; additions are in blue.

² fratres honorandi, Lat. – honored brothers.

³ Job v. 7: homo nascitur ad laborem, et avis ad volatum. Vulgate. "Man is borne unto mysery, like as the byrde for to fle." Coverdale's Bible, 1535.

⁴ miseriae, Lat. without any epithet.

disobedient and unthankful to father and mother; and lastly, care and continual grief in sundry sorts for sundry things, which never cease to vex our minds.

iii.66

For no man, in however long a catalog, can reckon up all the evils to which miserable mankind is woefully endangered, and every moment tormented. New miseries rise up every day, of which our elders never heard; and they are appointed to be felt and suffered by us, who with our new and never heard of sins, daily deserve new and never seen punishments — when the miseries which our forefathers felt would otherwise have been enough, and sufficient to plague us all.

But now, the good and godly worshippers of God, as well as the wicked contemners of his name, are troubled and put to use with these evils. Indeed, the saints are afflicted and vexed throughout their lifetime, when contrarily, the wicked abound with all kinds of joy and delightful pleasures. Upon this, it happens that great temptations and complaints arise in the minds of the godly. The wicked gather by their happy state and pleasant life, that God likes their religion, and accepts their manner of dealing, by which they are confirmed and grounded in their errors. And on the other side, because of the miseries which they have long suffered, the godly revolt from godliness, and turn to the ungodly, because they think that the state of the wicked is far better than theirs. Now it is good to know and learn all this out of the scriptures. It is to be manifestly seen in the example of Abel and Cain, that since the beginning of the world, the godly as well as the wicked are and have been afflicted. For, as the one was pitifully slain by the other for his sincere worshipping of God, so the other was made a vagabond for the murder; out of fear, he dare not abide in any place to take his rest. Jacob, surnamed Israel, is read to have been vexed with many calamities. The same is also reported of the Egyptians while they persecuted the Israelites. Saul was vexed, and David was afflicted. The Lord our Saviour, with his disciples, bore the cross of grief and trouble. Again, on the other side, the Jews who cruelly persecuted Christ and his disciples, were horribly destroyed, and that was worthily too, for their villainous injury.

iii.67

The evils that the church of Christ suffered in those ten most bloody persecutions,⁵ before the reign of Constantine the great, are unspeakable. But Orosius, the notable, diligent, and faithful historiographer, mentions that due and deserved punishments were unstoppably laid upon the necks of those persecuting tyrants, about whom I will say something in a convenient place.⁶ And by the testimonies of both God and man, and also by manifold experience, we see it proved that the godly as well as the ungodly are touched with miseries. Yes truly, the best and holiest men, for the most part, are troubled and afflicted, when the wicked and worse sort are free from calamities, leading their lives in ease and pleasures. And while the good suffer persecution and injuries, the wicked rejoice at it. For the Lord in the gospel says to his disciples: "Truly, truly, I say to you, you shall weep and lament, the world shall be glad; but you shall be sorrowful." Joh 16.20

But now, what kind of temptations are those which arise in the hearts of the godly through their tribulations. The scripture, in many places, teaches us what those men, who are not altogether

⁵ The persecutions of the Christians by the Romans have, for many ages, been counted ten in number. But the ancient history of the Church does not support precisely this number. Some Christians of the fifth century were led into a belief by certain passages of scripture, especially by one in the Apocalypse, that the Christian body was fated to undergo ten calamities of the heavier kind; they then accommodated history to this opinion, though against her will; however, not all in the same way. Mosheim *Eccles. Hist.* cent I. Book 1. part i. chap. 5. 4. ed. Soames, and note in loc. [Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History \(4th c.\)](#), and [Foxes' Book of Martyrs \(1563\) standardized the ten persecutions.](#) – WHG

⁶ See p. iii.109, etc. Orosius frequently notices these punishments in the 7th book of his *Histor. adv. paganos*; and the title of the 27th chapter of the same book is, "Collatio populi Israelitici et Christiani, AEgyptiaci item et Romani, quomodo illi pro Deo in afflictionibus, hi a Deo in plagis, similia fere passi sunt."

godless nor the enemies of God, gather from the felicity of the wicked, especially in that wonderful discourse of Job and his friends. The prophet Habakkuk complains thus:

"O Lord, how long shall I cry, and you do not hear? How long shall I cry out to you for the violence that I suffer, and you do not help? Why am I compelled to see iniquity, spoiling, and unrighteousness against me?"

iii.68

Why do you regard those who despise you, and hold your tongue while the wicked treads down the man that is more righteous than himself? The wicked circumvents the righteous; and therefore wrong judgment proceeds." ^{Hab 1.2-4}

In Malachi, the hypocrites cry:

"It is but vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept his commandments, and that we have walked humbly before the face of the Lord? ⁷ Now, therefore, we call the proud and arrogant blessed and happy: for the workers of wickedness live happily and are set up; and they tempt God, and go on in their wickedness, and are delivered." ⁸

The holy prophet Asaph describes all this most fully and significantly in the Psalm, where he says:

"My feet were almost gone, my treadings had well-near slipped: for I was grieved at the wicked, when I saw the ungodly in such prosperity. For they are in no peril of death; they are, I say, troubled with no diseases whereby they are drawn, as it were, to death, but are lusty and strong. They come into no misfortune like other men; but are free from the evils with which other folks are plagued: and this is the cause that they are so held with pride, and wrapped in violence as in a garment. Their eyes swell with fatness, and they do whatever they lust. They stretch forth their mouth to heaven, and their tongue goes through the world. Yes, and they dare to say, Tush, how would God perceive it? Look, these are the ungodly, these prosper in the world, and these have riches in possession. Then I said, I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence; and I bear punishment every day. And while I thought thus to myself, I had almost departed from the generation of God's children." ^{Psa 73.2-15}

Now, since this is so, it consequently follows to beat out the causes of these calamities. For in so doing, we will be better able to judge rightly about the miseries of both the godly and wicked sort of people.

iii.69

The causes of calamities are many, and of many sorts; but the general and especial cause is known to be *sin*. For by disobedience, sin entered into the world, and death by sin. ^{Rom 5.12} And so, consequently, diseases and all the evils in the world entered in. Those who refer these causes to, I cannot tell what — blind constellations, and the movings of planets — are very light-headed and vain fellows. For, by our evil lusts and corrupt affections, we heap up day by day one evil upon another. And at our elbow stands the devil, who whispers ⁹ in our ear, and eggs us on; and as helps to spur us on, there is a crew of naughty packs,¹⁰ who never cease to train us in it; and daily there rise up diverse instruments of tribulation, with which the most wise and just God allows us to be exercised and tormented.

But the same causes of affliction are not always found in the holy worshippers of God, as in the wicked despisers of His name. The saints are often afflicted so that, by their trouble, the glory of

⁷ coram Deo exercituum, Lat.; God of hosts.

⁸ [Mal 3.14-15](#); qui Deum tentant, Lat.; "for they tempt God, and yet escape." Coverdale's Bible, 1535.

⁹ Originally, "round", Johnson; to roun, Toone: to whisper or speak in secrecy.

¹⁰ pack, a loose or lewd person. Johnson's Dict.

God may be known to the world. For when the disciples of Christ saw the blind man in the gospel, who was blind from his mother's womb, they said to the Lord: "Master, who sinned — this man, or his parents — that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither this man sinned, nor his parents; but that the works of God might be made manifest in him." ^{Joh 9.2-3} Likewise, when the Lord heard say that Lazarus was sick, "This disease is not unto death, but to the glory of God, that by it the Son of God may be glorified." ^{Joh 11.4} And yet, if we touch this matter at its heart, none in the world can be found who are without sin; so that, if the Lord were to mark our iniquities, he would always find something to be punished in us. This is declared at large in the book of Job.

Furthermore, the Lord allows his spouse, the church — which he loves full dearly — to be troubled and afflicted to this end and purpose: that he may openly declare that the elect are defended, preserved, and delivered by the power and aid of God, and not by the policy or help of man.

iii.70

For Paul says: "We have this treasure on earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be God's, and not of us. While we are troubled on every side, we are not made sorrowful; we are in poverty, but not in extreme poverty; we suffer persecution, but are not forsaken in it; we are cast down, but we do not perish; we always bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus might also be made manifest in our body. For we who live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that also the life of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh."

¹¹ The apostle also says: "Virtue is made perfect in infirmity." ¹²

Again, the afflictions of the holy martyrs and faithful saints of Christ are testimonies of the doctrine of faith, as our Saviour says in the gospel, "They shall deliver you up to councils, and they shall scourge you in their synagogues; indeed, you shall be brought before kings and rulers for my sake, that this might be for a witness to them and the people." ^{Mk 13.9} Even so, in like manner the saints, overladen with miseries, are made examples for us to learn how to overcome and despise ¹³ the world, and aspire to heavenly things.

Finally, the Lord tests those who are his, by laying the cross upon their necks, and he purges them like gold in the fire. He cuts from us many occasions of evil, that he may bring us to bearing greater and more plentiful fruit. The wisdom of the Lord in this follows the manner of goldsmiths, who put their gold into the fire to purge and not to mar it. And he also imitates good husbandmen who, when their corn is a bit too rank, mow it down; and prune their trees, not to destroy them, but to make them bear more abundant fruit. And this flesh of ours, truly, in peace and quietness is luskish,¹⁴ lazy, drowsy, and slow toward good and honest exercises; it is content, and seeks no further than earthly things; it is wholly given to pleasures; it utterly forgets God and godly things. Now, therefore, it is not only expedient, but very necessary, to have this dull and sluggish lump stirred up and exercised with troubles, afflictions, and sharp persecutions.

iii.71

The saints in this are like iron which is somewhat worn and diminished by use; but by lying still, unoccupied, it is even more eaten with rust and canker. Most truly, therefore, St. Peter said, "Dearly beloved, do not think it strange that you are tried with fire, which is to test you, as though some strange thing happened to you. But rather rejoice in that you are partakers of the afflictions

¹¹ 2Cor 4.7-11. Bullinger has adopted the translation of Erasmus.

¹² 2Cor 12.9. This is the Vulgate, and not Erasmus' version.

¹³ calcare, Lat.; to tread underfoot.

¹⁴ luskish, somewhat inclinable to laziness or indolence. Johnson.

of Christ; so that, when his glory is revealed, you may be merry and glad." ¹⁵ For Paul says to Timothy:

"Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel; for which I am afflicted as an evil doer, even unto bonds: and yet I suffer all things for the elect's sakes, that they might also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. It is a faithful saying: For if we are dead with him, we shall also live with him: if we are patient,¹⁶ we shall reign with him: if we deny him, he shall also deny us." ¹⁷

For in his epistle to the Romans he says: "Those whom he knew before, he also predestined, that they should be like-fashioned to the shape of ¹⁸ his Son, that he might be the first-begotten among many brethren. Moreover, whom he predestined, he also called; and whom he called, he also justified; and whom he justified, he shall also glorify." ¹⁹ Again, in the same epistle he says: "We rejoice also in tribulations; knowing that tribulation works patience; patience proof; proof hope: and hope does not make ashamed," etc. ²⁰ The private examples of the saints, and public examples of the whole church, very plainly declare this. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, would never have known that God's helping hand had been so faithful and always present with them — they would never have been grounded in so sure a hope, nor shown such especial fruit of their excellent patience — if they had not been exercised with many perils and, as it were, oppressed with infinite calamities. From this it comes that David cried: "It is good for me, Lord, that you have troubled me." ^{Psa 119.71} The church of Israel was oppressed in Egypt, but to the end that it might be delivered with more glory, and pass into the land of promise.

iii.72

The Jewish church was afflicted by those of Babylon and by the Assyrians, so that their temple was overthrown, and the saints carried captive with the worst of the people. But the godly sort in their very captivity feel the wonderful help of God. And by that means, they are made better by their afflictions, so that the name of the Lord was widely known among the Assyrians, the Chaldees, the Medes and Persians, to His great glory and renown, as declared at large in the histories of Daniel, Esther, and Ezra. ²¹

Here it is also to be noted that certain punishments are applied as appointed by the Lord, such as plagues for certain sins. So that, most commonly, a man is plagued by the very things in which he sinned against the Lord. David offended God with murder and adultery; and therefore he is punished with the shame of his own house, with whoredom, incest, and the detestable murder of his own children; and lastly, he is driven out and banished from his kingdom. It was pride and arrogance in which Nebuchadnezzar sinned; and therefore, being disordered ²² in his wits and turned into a beastly madness, he led his life for a certain time with beasts of the field. But just as Nebuchadnezzar was restored to his kingdom when God thought it good, so David, at a convenient time, felt the mercy of the Lord in settling him in his seat again. For this saying of the Lord is firmly ratified forever, not only to David, but to everyone that believes, which set down in the scriptures is in these words: "If his children forsake my law, and do not keep my commandments, I will visit their sins with rods, and their iniquities with scourges: yet will I not utterly take my

¹⁵ 1Pet 4.12, 13; Erasmus' translation.

¹⁶ So Tyndale's and Cranmer's translations.

¹⁷ Erasmus' translation chiefly.

¹⁸ So Tyndale's and Cranmer's translations.

¹⁹ glorificabit, Lat.; the Versions have glorificavit.

²⁰ Erasmus' translation.

²¹ Ezra and Nehemiah. See Sixth Art. of Religion; "First Book of Ezra, Second Book of Ezra." So also Vulgate.

²² Originally, "distracted".

goodness from him; I will not break my covenant, nor will I change the thing once it has gone out of my mouth." Therefore, it is to our profit that the Lord afflicts us, as He himself testifies in the revelation of Christ,²³ uttered ²⁴ by John the evangelist, saying: "Those whom I love I rebuke and chasten."²⁵

iii.73

And long before that, Solomon said: "My son, do not refuse the chastening of the Lord, neither faint when you are corrected of him. For whom the Lord loves, him he chastens; and yet he delights in him, as a father in his son."²⁶

I will now touch on the persecutions and terrible plagues laid upon the neck of the whole church of God, or several martyrs of them. They were, for the most part, breathed out by worldly tyrants against the saints for their open confession and testimonies of their faith, and of the truth of the gospel. Thus, the causes of those broils most commonly were the sins and offences of the saints, which the justice of God visited on his holy ones, no doubt to the good and salvation of the faithful. For from that bloody persecution under the emperors Diocletian and Maximinian, which caused many thousands, indeed, many millions of martyrs to come to their end, we read the following in the history of Eusebius of Caesarea. He learned it, not by hear-say, but was himself an eye-witness:

"When the manners of the church were utterly marred and its discipline corrupted by too much liberty and wantonness; while among ourselves we envy one another, and diminish one another's estimation; while among ourselves we snatch at and accuse ourselves, fomenting deadly war among ourselves; while dissimulation sits in the face, deceit lurks in the heart, and falsehood is uttered in words, so that one evil is heaped on another — the Lord begins little by little with the bridle, to check the mouth of his tripping church. And reserving the untouched congregations, he begins first to allow those who served as soldiers in the camps of the Gentiles to feel persecution. But the people could not be made to remember themselves by that means, insofar that they did not cease to persist in their wickedness. And the very guides of the people and chiefs of the church, unmindful of God's commandment, were set on fire among themselves with strife, envy, hatred, and pride — such that they might think to exercise tyranny rather than the office of ministers, because they had forgotten Christian sincerity and pureness of living. Then at length the houses of prayer and churches of the living God were thrown to the ground, and the holy scriptures were set on fire in the broad and open streets."²⁷

This much, word for word, out of the eighth book of his Ecclesiastical History.

iii.74

And yet here I make a difference between sin and sin. For the saints sin, and yet they commonly abstain from heinous crimes — though now and then they too fall into them, as evidenced by the example of David. Yet, for the most part, they flee from theft, murder, whoredom, and other grievous ²⁸ sins like these. And while the saints are afflicted by tyrants, it is not for neglecting justice and true religion, but for contemning superstition, and steadfastly sticking to Christ and his gospel. The Lord therefore forgives and washes away the sins of the holy martyrs in the blood of Christ, reputed them to suffer death, not for the sins which they have committed, but for their

²³ in theologia sua, Lat. See p. i.170. n. 6.

²⁴ edita, Lat.; put forth, published.

²⁵ Rev. 3.19.

²⁶ Pro 3.11, 12; et tanquam pater in filio delectatur, Lat.; "and yet delights in him even as a father in his owne sonne." Coverdale's translation, 1535.

²⁷ Bullinger has followed the Latin translation of Eusebius: Euseb. Eccles. Hist. Ruffino Aquil. interprete, lib. viii. cap. 1. p. 183. Basil. 1539.

²⁸ morte expianda, Lat. – [mortal sins \(atone for death\)](#).

zeal and love of true religion. He also punishes the tyrants for the death of his martyrs, because, in putting them to death, they follow their own tyrannous affection, and not the just judgment of the living God. The Lord's mind, truly, was to chasten his people Israel by tyrants. But the tyrants (as Isaiah witnesses in his tenth chapter) did not take it to be so; but rather, following their own affections, they passed all measure in afflicting them, and never sought after justice and equity. Therefore, they are punished by the Lord for killing his innocent and guiltless servants.

iii.75

For the thing which the Lord persecuted in his people (I mean, their sins and offences), the tyrants neither punished nor persecuted. But the thing that pleased God (I mean, the love of true religion, and the utter detesting of idolatry), that they are mad about, and persecute it with sword and fire and unspeakable torments. Therefore, to this belongs that saying of Peter: "See that none of you is punished as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer, or as a busy-body in other men's matters. But if any man suffers as a Christian, do not let him be ashamed, but rather glorify God on this behalf." ^{1Pet 4.15-16}

Yet, for all this, I would not have heinous offenders despair one whit. They have the example of the thief that was crucified with Christ; let them follow that: let them, I say, confess their faults, believe in Christ, commit themselves wholly to his grace and mercy, and lastly, suffer patiently the pain of their punishment; and in so doing, there is no doubt that they shall be received by Christ into Paradise, and live there forever, as the thief does with Christ.

And although the godly is slain among transgressors, yet he is no more defiled by suffering with them than Christ our Lord was, being hanged among thieves. For though the godly and ungodly are wrapped and coupled together in like punishment, yet they are severed by their unlike ending. After this bodily death, the wicked is carried to hell, there to burn without intermission; and the godly is taken immediately into heaven, to live with Christ his Lord, to whom he committed and commended ²⁹ himself. Touching this matter, and the causes of the afflictions of the holy men of God, I will not be aggrieved to recite to you, dearly beloved, a notable passage from St. Augustine out of his first book *De civitate Dei*.

"Wherever good men suffer the same and like punishment that the evil sort do, it is not to be thought that there is no difference between them, just because there is no difference in the thing they suffer. For in one and the same fire, gold shines and chaff smokes; and under one flail, the husk is broken and the corn is purged; and note that the scummy froth is not mixed with the oil, even though the weight of the same press crushes both at once. Even so, one and the same misery, falling upon the good and the bad, tries, refines, and melts the good; and on the other side, it condemns, wastes, and consumes the evil sort.

iii.76

Thus it comes to pass that in one and the same affliction, the evil detest and blaspheme the Lord, while contrarily, the good pray to and praise His name for what he lays upon them. So there is much that happens in afflictions to mark not *what*, but with *what mind*, every man suffers. For if you stir up dirt and sweet ointments alike, one will stink filthily, and the other will give off a sweet-smelling aroma. Therefore, in that hurly-burly and irruption³⁰ made by the barbarous people, what did the Christians suffer that was not rather to their profit, while they faithfully considered those troubles? This is especially because, humbly considering the sins for which God (being angry) filled the world with so many and such great calamities — and even though Christians are far from committing heinous, grievous, and outrageous offences — they do not repute themselves to be so clear of all faults, that they do not judge themselves worthy to suffer

²⁹ obtulit, Lat.; offered. "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit." (Luk 23:46)

³⁰ *Hurly burly*: a disorderly outburst or tumult; *irruption*: a sudden violent entrance; a bursting in.

temporal calamity for the crimes they do commit every hour and moment. Over and above this, every man who perhaps lives laudably enough, yields a little to carnal concupiscence in some points, even if not to the outrageousness of horrible sins, or to the gulf of heinous offences and abominable iniquities. Yet, notwithstanding, he yields to some sins which either he haunts very seldomly, or else he commits those which are less, all the more often. Besides this, I ask you, what man is there, when he sees and knows very well the men for whose pride, lascivious lives, covetousness, and damnable iniquity God plagues the earth (as he has threatened), who so esteems these men as they should be thought of, and so lives with them as he should live with such people? For often many things are wickedly dissembled ³¹ if wicked-doers are not taught, corrected, chided, and admonished for their evil behaviours. This is either because we think the pain is too much to tell them their faults; or we are afraid to have the heavy looks of those with whom we live; or else we avoid their displeasure, lest they hinder or hurt us in temporal matters – when either our greediness desires to have something more, or our infirmity fears to lose the things which it already holds and possesses.

iii.77

So that, although the life of the wicked displeases the good (but for which they do not fall into the same damnation which is prepared for the evil after this life), yet since the good bear with and forbear their damnable sins, because they fear them in lighter and smaller trifles, they are justly scourged with them in this temporal life, even though they are not punished with them eternally. While they are punished by God with the wicked, they justly feel the bitterness of this life, for the love of whose sweetness they would not be bitter in telling the wicked of their offences. Therefore, this seems to me to be no small cause why the good are whipped along with the evil, when it pleases God to punish the naughty manners of men with the affliction of temporal pains. They are scourged together, not because they lead an evil life together, but because they love this temporal life together. I do not say *alike*, but *together*; when the better sort should despise it, so that the evil ones, being rebuked and corrected, might obtain eternal life. If they would not be our fellows and partners in getting eternal life, they should still be carried and lovingly drawn, even while they are our enemies – because, so long as they live, it is always uncertain whether their minds will be changed to be better or not. This is why they do not have a *like* cause, but a far *greater* cause to admonish men for their faults, to whom the Lord says by the mouth of the prophet: 'He truly shall die in his sin, but I will require his blood at the hand of the watchman.' ^{Eze 3.18} For to this end, the watchmen (that is, the guides of the people) are ordained in the churches: that they should not forbear rebuking sin and wickedness. And yet for all this, that man is not altogether excusable for this fault which, although he is no guide or overseer of the people, he nevertheless knows many things worthy of control, and yet he winks at them in those with whom he lives and converses, because he will give no offence to them, for fear he might lose those things in this world which he uses as he should not, or he is delighted in them as he should not be." ³²

And so forth. I have previously repeated all this out of St. Augustine.

iii.78 [an extensive Latin passage from the footnote on p. 77, is omitted here – WHG.]

iii.79

The last and hindmost cause of the calamities which oppress the holy saints of God is because, in afflicting his friends, the Lord thereby gives a most evident testimony of his just judgment which shall fall upon his enemies for contemning his name and majesty. For St. Peter says:

³¹ *Dissembled*: masked or covered over; i.e., not to openly identify and correct sin, enables it to flourish. – WHG

³² August. Opp. de Civit. Dei. Lib. I. capp. 8, 9. Tom. v. p. 4, col. 4. p. 5, col. 1, 2, 3. Par. 1531.

"The time has come that judgment ³³ must begin at the house of God. If it first begins with us, what shall the end be of those who do not believe the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely are saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?" ³⁴

This is like that notable sentence of the Lord's, which he spoke when he went to the place of execution, saying: "If they do this in a moist tree, what shall be done in the dry?" ^{Luk 23:31} If the saints (by whom are meant the fruitful trees that produce most precious fruits of good works) are so miserably tormented and wrongfully vexed in this world by the sufferance of God, then what shall we say, I ask, about the wicked, who are so far from virtue and good works? They shall, undoubtedly be plagued with unspeakable pains and punishments.

For touching the causes of those calamities with which the wicked are tormented, they can be none other than the heinous crimes which they commit from day to day. And they are therefore punished by God's just judgment, to the end that all men may perceive that God hates wicked men and wickedness alike. So we read that Pharaoh was afflicted. Saul fell upon his own sword, and was slain in the mount Gilboa, with many thousands of Israelites, because he had sinned against the Lord, who purposed to destroy him as an example of His judgment, and as a terror to those who would follow after. Antiochus Epiphanes, Herod the Great, Herod Agrippa, and Galerius Maximianus, the emperor, were taken horribly with grievous diseases, and died of them.³⁵

iii.80

The reason was, because they sinned against God and his servants. He determined to take vengeance on them, and to make them proofs of His just judgment — thus to be examples for tyrants to perceive what plagues remain for those who seek the blood of the godly and faithful. Our good God ordains all things to the best for his creatures;^{Rom 8.28} and in a way, He sends all calamities and miseries to draw us from wickedness. Yet, because hypocrites and wicked people despise the counsels and admonitions of God, and will neither acknowledge God when he strikes, nor turn to him when he calls them, all things turn to their destruction (even as all things work to the best, for those who love the Lord). Therefore they perish in their calamities. For in this world they feel ³⁶ the wrath of the almighty God in most horrible punishments; and in the world to come, once they have departed out of this life, they will forever bear far greater and more bitter pains than any tongue can tell.

But if it happens that the wicked and ungodly sort do not feel any plague or grievous affliction in this life, then they will be punished so much the sorer in the world to come. There is no man who does not know the evangelical parable of the rich unmerciful glutton who, while he lived in this life, lusted in passing delights. Notwithstanding, in hell he was tormented with unquenchable thirst, and parched with hellfire which never ceased burning. Therefore, the felicity of the wicked in this life is nothing but extreme misery. For St. James the Apostle says: "You have lived in pleasure on earth, and been wanton; you have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter." ³⁷ This, I say, will return to you, as to well-fed beasts that are fattened to be slain, to make meat of them. ³⁸

iii.81

³³ Lat.; omitted by the translator: I mean, affliction and tribulation.

³⁴ 1Pet 4.17, 18.

³⁵ See p. ii.318. For the miserable end of Maximian see Euseb. Hist. Eccles. Lib. viii. cap. 16, and Lactantius de Mor. Per-secut. cap. 33, and Gibbon, chap. xiv. p. 213. Vol. ii. ed. Lond. 1820.

³⁶ *persentiscere incipiunt*, Lat.; they begin to feel.

³⁷ James 5.5. Bullinger has adopted Erasmus' renderings.

³⁸ In his Commentary Bullinger prefers the other explanation of this comparison: *in deliciis lascive pascitis cuticulam vestram, quotidiana agitantur convivia, non minus splendida quam alii solent festo die mactata victima.*

For Jeremiah goes to work a little more plainly, and says:

"O Lord, you are more righteous than for me to dispute with you. Yet notwithstanding, I would talk with you. How does it happen that the way of the ungodly prospers so well, and that it goes so well with those who, without shame, offend in wickedness? You have planted them, they take root, they grow, and bring forth fruit." And immediately after: "But draw them out, O Lord, like a sheep to be slain, and ordain or appoint them ³⁹ for the day of slaughter." Jer 12.1-3

With this also does that agree, which the prophet Asaph, after he had roundly and largely reckoned up the felicity of the wicked, adds, saying:

"You, truly, have set them in slippery places; you shall cast them down headlong, and utterly destroy them; they are oppressed with such sudden calamities; they are perished and swallowed up by terrors! Even as a dream that vanishes as soon as one awakes, you Lord, shall make their image contemptible in the city." Psa 73.18-20

For David before him also cried out, saying:

"Yet a little, and the ungodly shall be nowhere; and when you look in his place, he shall not ⁴⁰ appear. I have seen the ungodly in great power, and flourishing like a green bay-tree; and I went by, and lo, he was gone; I sought him, but he could not be found." Psa 37.34-36

In like manner, Malachi the prophet also witnesses that there is a great difference, in the day of judgment, between the worshipper and despiser of God, and between the just and unjust dealer:

"For the day of the Lord shall come, in which the proud, and those who work wickedness, shall be burnt as stubble with fire from heaven, so that there shall remain for them neither root nor branch." Mal 3.18, 4.1

Those who are wise, therefore, will never be offended hereafter by the felicity of the wicked. They will never desire and long to be made partakers of their unhappy prosperity. They will not grudge at all, to bear the misery of the cross, which they daily hear is laid by God upon his saints, to the end that they may be tried and refined of the dross of the flesh and of this unclean world. Thus far I have sufficiently reasoned about the causes of calamities.

iii.82

Let us now see, my reverend brethren,⁴¹ how, and in what order, the godly and sincere worshipper of God behaves himself in all calamities and worldly afflictions. His courage does not quail,⁴² but rather kicks all desperation aside, because he understands that in faith he must manfully bear all sorts of evils. Therefore he arms himself with hope, patience, and prayer. Among men there are some, truly, who as soon as they feel any affliction, quickly cry (as commonly said) that it would be best if they had never been born, or else destroyed as soon as they were born.⁴³ This is a very wicked saying, and not worthy to be heard in a Christian's mouth. But far more wicked are those who do not hesitate to destroy themselves,⁴⁴ rather than be compelled by living, to suffer any longer some small calamity, or abide the taunts of the open world. And yet on the other side again, men must reject the unsavoury opinion of the Stoics, touching their *indolentia* or lack of grief.

³⁹ consecra sive destina, Lat.; sanctify or set apart; , Heb sanctifica, Vulg.

⁴⁰ nusquam, Lat. ; nowhere.

⁴¹ honorandi fratres, Lat.

⁴² *Quail*: to draw back, as with fear or pain.

⁴³ Job was not a little afflicted when he cried out, "Why did I not die at birth? Why did I not perish when I came from the womb?" (Job 3.11) Bullinger is only saying that some like to say this at every minor difficulty.

⁴⁴ sibi ipsis violentam et armatam manum inferunt, Lat. – to self-inflict violence with an armed hand (suicide).

Touching this, I will recite to you, dearly beloved, a most excellent discourse from a notable doctor in the church of Christ, [John Calvin], set down in the following words:

"We are too unthankful towards our God, unless we willingly and cheerfully suffer calamities from his hand. And yet such a cheerfulness is not required of us, that it would take away all sense and feeling of grief and bitterness. Otherwise there would be no patience in the saints' suffering of the cross of Christ, unless they were both pinched by the heart with grief, and vexed in body with outward troubles. If there were no sharpness in poverty, if no pain in diseases, if no sting in infamy, and no horror in death, what fortitude or temperance would it be, to take small account of and set little by them? But since every one of them naturally nips the minds of us all with a certain bitterness engrafted in them, the valiant stomach of a faithful man shows itself in these: if being pricked with the feeling of this bitterness, however grievously pained with it, notwithstanding this, he worthily vanquishes and quite overcomes it by valiant resisting and continual struggling.

iii.83

Patience proves itself in this: if when a man is sharply pricked, notwithstanding, he so bridles himself with the fear of God, that he never breaks out to immoderate unruliness. Cheerfulness clearly appears in this: if a man, once wounded with sorrow and sadness, quietly rests himself upon the spiritual consolation of his God and creator. The apostle Paul has finely described this conflict which the faithful sustain against the natural feeling of sorrow and grief, while studiously exercising patience and temperance, in the following words: 'We are troubled on every side, but not made sorrowful: we are in poverty, but not in extreme poverty: we suffer persecution, but are not forsaken in it: we are cast down, but we do not perish.'⁴⁵ You see here, that to bear the cross patiently, is not to be altogether senseless and utterly bereft of any kind of feeling.

The Stoics of old foolishly described the valiant man as one who, laying aside the nature of man, should be affected alike in adversity and prosperity, in sorrowful matters and joyful things — indeed, as one who should be moved by nothing whatsoever.⁴⁶ And what had they done, I ask you, with this exceeding great patience?⁴⁷ In truth, they painted the image of patience, as it has never been found among men, nor possibly could be. Indeed, while they went about having patience that is overly exquisite and too precise, they took the force of it out of the life of man. Also among Christians in our day, there are certain new upstart Stoics, who think it is a fault not only to sigh and weep, but also to be sad and sorrowful for any matter. And these paradoxes for the most part, truly, proceed from idle fellows who exercise themselves in contemplation⁴⁸ rather than in working; they can do nothing else but daily breed such novelties and paradoxes. But we Christians have nothing to do with this iron-like philosophy, since our Lord and master has not only in words, but also with his own example, utterly condemned it. For he groaned at and wept over both his own and other men's calamities, and taught his disciples to do likewise.

iii.84

'The world (He says) shall rejoice, but you shall be sorrowful, you shall weep.'^{Joh 16.20} And lest any man make that weeping to be their fault, he pronounces openly that happy are those who mourn.^{Mat 5.4} And this is no marvel: for if all tears are disapproved, what should we judge about the Lord himself, out of whose body bloody tears trilled?⁴⁹ If all fear is noted to proceed from

⁴⁵ 2Cor 4.8, 9.

⁴⁶ *instar lapidis*, Lat.; like a stone.

⁴⁷ Calvin's word is *sapientia* [wisdom]; but Bullinger reads *patientia* [patience].

⁴⁸ *speculando*, Lat. — speculation.

⁴⁹ *trill*: trickle, fall in drops. Johnson.

unbelief, what shall we think of the horror with which we read that the Lord himself was struck?
⁵⁰ If we disapprove all sorrow and sadness, what shall we think of that place where the Lord confesses that his soul is heavy unto death? ^{Mat 26.38}

I was minded to say this much, to the intent that I might keep godly minds from desperation — lest perhaps, out of hand, they forsake seeking patience because they cannot utterly shake off the natural motions of grief and heaviness. That cannot help but happen to those who make patience to be a kind of senselessness, and turn a valiant and constant man into a senseless block, or a stone without passions.⁵¹ For the scripture praises the saints for their patience while they are so afflicted with the sharpness of calamities, that their stomachs are not broken by it, nor their courage utterly quailed; while they are so stung with the prick of bitterness, that they are filled with spiritual joy; while they are so oppressed with heaviness of mind, that they are yet cheerful ⁵² in God's consolation. And yet that repugnancy is still in their hearts, because the natural sense flees from and abhors the thing it feels contrary to itself. On the other side, the motions of godliness even through these difficulties, by striving, seeks a way to the obedience of God. The Lord expressed this repugnance when he said to Peter: 'When you were younger, you girded yourself, and went where you would: but when you are old, another will gird you, and lead you where you would not go.' It is unlikely, indeed, that Peter, when it was needed that he glorify God by his death, was drawn to it with much ado, against his will.

iii.85

For if it had not been so, his martyrdom would have deserved little or no praise. However, with great cheerfulness of heart, he obeyed the ordinance of God; and yet, because he had not laid aside the affections of his flesh,⁵³ his mind was drawn in two different ways. For while he saw before his eyes the bloody death which he had to suffer, he was undoubtedly struck through with the fear of it, and with all his heart he would have escaped it. And on the other side, when he remembered that he was called to it by God's commandment, overcoming and treading down all fear, he willingly and cheerfully yielded himself to it.

If therefore we mean to be Christ's disciples, our chief and especial study must be to have our minds endued with so great an obedience and love ⁵⁴ of God, as to be able to tame and bring under control, all the contrary motions of our minds to the ordinance of His holy will. And thus it will come to pass that, with whatever kind of cross we are vexed, we may constantly retain quiet sufferance and patience, even in the greatest troubles of our minds. For adversity will have a sharpness to nip us with; likewise, being afflicted with sickness and diseases, we will groan and be disquieted and wish for health; being oppressed with poverty, we will be pricked with the sting of care and heaviness. In like manner, we shall be struck with the grief of infamy, contempt, and injury done to us; also, at the death of our friends, nature will move us to shed tears for their sakes. But this must still be the end of our thoughts: 'Why, the Lord would have it so.' ⁵⁵ Let us therefore follow his will." ⁵⁶

Thus much has Calvin on this.

⁵⁰ non leviter consternatum, Lat. — no slight consternation (shock); perhaps referring to Jesus weeping at Lazarus' death (Joh 11.33-38); or in contemplation of Jerusalem's imminent destruction (Mat 23.33-39). — WHG

⁵¹ or a stone, etc. not in Lat. — the translator inserted it here from above (see prior note: *instar lapidus*).

⁵² exhilarati respirent, Lat. — breathless exhilaration.

⁵³ humanitatem non exuerat, Lat. — human frailties.

⁵⁴ observantia, Lat.

⁵⁵ Atqui Dominus ita voluit; Well, but so is the will of the Lord!

⁵⁶ Calvini Instit. Lib. iii. cap. 8. 8, 9, 10. ed. Amstel. Tom. ix. p. 185.

This is why the faithful, once over-taken and entangled with calamities, chiefly remedy their miseries with patience, which (as Lactantius says) "is the quiet bearing, with an indifferent mind, of those evils which are either laid or done upon our pates." ⁵⁷

iii.86

For the faithful man, by patience, having his eyes thoroughly fastened upon the word of God in faith and hope, sticks fast to God and clings to his word. He suffers whatever adversities may happen to him, always moderating the grief of his mind and the pains of his body with wonderful ⁵⁸ wisdom. So that at no time, being overcome with the greatness of grief or sorrow, does he revolt from God and his word, to do the things that the Lord has forbidden. By patience, therefore, he vanquishes himself and his affections; he overcomes all calamities; and he stands still steadfastly, with a quiet mind and a heart well-disposed toward God. Though the faithful Christian suffers all things with patience, he still finds fault with those things that are wicked, and will hardly bear with anything that is against the truth. For our Saviour, Christ Jesus, the only perfect example of patience, most patiently yielded his hands and his whole body to be bound by the wicked; yet nevertheless, he reproveth their iniquity, saying: "You have come out as a thief with swords and clubs, although I was with you daily in the temple: but this is your hour and power of darkness." ⁵⁹

To this now belongs that excellent description or lively image ⁶⁰ of patience, laid down by Tertullian in the following words:

"Go to now, let us see the image and habit of patience. Her countenance is calm and quiet; her forehead smooth, without furrowed wrinkles, which are the signs of sorrow or anger; her brows are never knit, but slack in cheerful wise, with her eyes cast attractively down to the ground, not for the sorrow of any calamities, but only for humility's sake. Upon her mouth she bears the mark of honour, which silence brings to those who use it. Her colour is like those who are near no danger, and are guiltless of evil. Her head is often shaken at the devil, and she has a threatening laughter with it. Moreover, the clothes about her breasts are white, and close to her body, as that which does not wag with every wind, nor toss with every blast. For she sits in the throne of that most meek and quiet spirit, which is not troubled with any tempest, nor overcast with any clouds; but is plain, open, and of a goodly clearness, as Elijah saw it the third time. ^{1Kng 17.21} For where God is, there also is Patience, ⁶¹ his darling, which he nourishes." ⁶²

iii.87

Moreover, the blessed martyr Cyprian, in his sermon *De bono patientiae*, reckons up the force or works of patience, and says:

"Patience is that which commends us to God, and preserves us. Patience is that which mitigates anger, which bridles the tongue, governs the mind, keeps peace, rules discipline, breaks the assaults of lust, keeps under ⁶³ the force of pride, quenches the fire of hatred, restrains the power of the rich, relieves the need of the poor, maintains unspotted virginity in maidens, chastity in widows, inseparable charity in married people; which makes humble in prosperity, constant in

⁵⁷ Patientia est malorum, quae aut inferuntur, aut accidunt, cum aequanimitate perlatio. – Lactant. Divin. Instit. Lib. v. cap. 22, p. 530. Lugd. Bat. 1660.

⁵⁸ coelesti, Lat. – [heavenly](#).

⁵⁹ Luke 22.52, 53. Bullinger has adopted Erasmus translation. The Vulgate reads the former sentence interrogatively, as our English authorised version.

⁶⁰ prosopopoeia, Lat. – [figure of speech in which an absent or imaginary person is represented as speaking](#).

⁶¹ 1Kng 19.12.

⁶² Tertull. de Patientia. ed. Semler. Tom. iv. p. 87. Hal. Mag. 1824.

⁶³ [That is, suppresses](#).

adversity, meek in taking injury; which teaches you to forgive quickly those who offend you, and never ceases to crave pardon when you offend others; which vanquishes temptations, which suffers persecutions, and finishes with martyrdom.⁶⁴ This is what surely grounds the foundations of our faith; this is what augments the increase of our hope; this is what guides us, so that we may keep the way to Christ, while we go by the suffering of it; this is what makes us continue as the sons of God — while we imitate the patience of our Father." ⁶⁵

Thus much from Cyprian.

iii.88

To this, if it pleases you, you may add for a conclusion, that short but very evident sentence of the Lord in the gospel, "Through your patience, possess your souls;" ⁶⁶ and also these words of the apostle, "Do not throw away your confidence, which has great recompence of reward. For you need patience, so that after you have done the will of God, you might receive the promises. For yet a very little while, and he that shall come *will* come, and will not tarry. And the just shall live by faith: and if he withdraws himself, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. We are not of those who withdraw ourselves unto perdition: but we turn in faith unto the winning of the soul." ⁶⁷

But since patience is not born in and together with us, but is bestowed by God from above, we must beseech our heavenly Father that he will grant to bestow it upon us, according to the doctrine of James the apostle, who says: "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men indifferently, and casts no man in the teeth:⁶⁸ and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, not wavering." ⁶⁹

Now the sound hope of the faithful upholds Christian patience. Hope, as it is used now-a-days, is an opinion about things to come, commonly referred to good as well as evil things. But indeed, hope is an assured expectation of, or looking for, those things which are truly and expressly promised by God, and believed by us, by faith. So then, there is a certain relation of hope to faith, and a mutual knot between them both.

iii.89

Faith believes that God said nothing but truth, and lifts up our eyes to God; and *hope* looks for those things which faith has believed. But how should you look for anything, unless you know that the thing that you look for is promised by God, and that you will have it in convenient time? Faith believes that our sins are forgiven us, and that eternal life is prepared for us through Christ our Redeemer. Now, hope looks and patiently waits to receive in due time the things that God has promised us, however it may be tossed with adversities in the meantime. For hope does not languish or vanish away, even though it does not see what it hopes for. Indeed, it does not quail, even if things fall out clean cross and contrary to it, as if the things which it hopes for, were not so. And therefore Paul said: "We are saved by hope: but hope that is seen, is no hope. For how can a man hope for what he sees? But and if we hope for that we do not see, then we abide with patience." ⁷⁰ Abraham hoped that he would receive the promised land, when as yet he did not possess one foot of ground in it, but saw it inhabited by most puissant nations. Moses hoped that he would deliver the people of Israel out of Egypt, and place them in the land of promise, when as

⁶⁴ Bullinger has, *persecutiones et martyria*.

⁶⁵ Cypr. Opp. p. 219. Oxon. 1682.

⁶⁶ Luk. 21.19.

⁶⁷ Heb 10.35-39. Erasmus' version. So also Tyndale's and Cranmer's translations. NKJ: "[but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.](#)"

⁶⁸ "[Casts no man in the teeth](#)" – [God doesn't throw it in our face; i.e., He doesn't criticize us for needing to ask.](#)

⁶⁹ [Jas 1.5](#); *Patentia perficit*, Lat.; omitted by the translator: *Patience makes perfect; opus perfectum habet*. Vulg.

⁷⁰ Rom 8.24, 25.

yet he did not see the manner and means of how he would do it. David hoped that he would reign over Israel, and yet he felt the peril of Saul and his servants hanging over his head,⁷¹ so that more than once he was in danger of his life. The apostles and holy martyrs of Christ hoped that they should have eternal life, and that God would never forsake them; yet nevertheless, they felt the hatred of all sorts of people; they were banished their countries; and lastly, they were slain by various torments. So (I say) hope is the hope, and looking for, of things not present, and things not seen. Indeed, it is a sure and most assured looking for, of things to come. And that is not of whatever things, but of those things which we believe in faith, and of those which are promised to us by the very true, living, and eternal God. For St. Peter says: "Hope perfectly in the grace which is brought to you."⁷² Now, they hope perfectly who, without doubting, commit themselves wholly to the grace of God, and assuredly look to inherit everlasting life.

iii.90

Furthermore, the apostle Paul calls hope, as it were, the safe and sure anchor of the soul.⁷³ And by however much the promise of God is made surer, by so much is hope made firmer and more secure. For hope is not looking for anything whatsoever, but hope is *of faith*; that is, hope is for the thing that faith has believed, and which we know to be promised to us in the word of God. And therefore Paul expounds faith by hope, where he says: "Faith is the ground of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."^{Heb 11.1} Faith therefore is, as it were, the foundation upon which hope rests; and so God himself, and his infallible word, is the object to our hope.⁷⁴ And for that reason, Paul calls God our hope, and so also do the prophets. To this belongs the ninety-first Psalm, where the faithful cries: "You are my hope, Lord; you have set your house very high."⁷⁵ You will find innumerable places like this in the book of the Psalms. But hope cannot be sure where there is no sound faith and an express promise of God. Now, since God's promises are about temporal things as well as eternal things, hope is also about transitory things as well as everlasting things.

And as faith is the gift of God's grace, and not the power or effect of our own nature, so too hope is given to us from above, and it is confirmed in us by the Spirit of God. For in our looking for things, there are both groanings and longings for them. Temptations assail and urge us sorely, as though the thing which is deferred for a season, were utterly denied; or as though God did not know our state and condition, because he seems sometimes, as if it were forever, to neglect and not consider our earnest expectation. This is why our hope needs great consolation and confirmation by the Spirit of God. If it is sound, hope sustains and upholds the mind of man⁷⁶ however overladen it is with very weak infirmities.

iii.91

And when the Lord defers his promises, and seems somewhat too long either in neglecting our calamities, or in laying more troubles on our backs which are otherwise sufficiently afflicted — *then* comes hope, which doing her duty, bids us to encourage our hearts, and await the Lord's leisure. Just as He cannot possibly hate those who worship him, so he can never fail nor in the least point deceive them; for he himself is the eternal truth and everlasting goodness.

⁷¹ Saulinos potentissimos, Lat.; the partisans of Saul, who were most powerful.

⁷² 1Pet i. 13, our Translation, hope "to the end:" in the margin, perfectly: the original is *telios*. Tyndale's, Cranmer's, and the Geneva Versions all render it, "trust perfectly on the grace that is brought to you." Bullinger has adopted Erasmus' translation.

⁷³ Heb 6.19.

⁷⁴ 1Tim 1.1.

⁷⁵ Psa 91.9, Prayer-book Version.

⁷⁶ Lat.; the mind of man, eagerly longing after good, however in the mean time, etc.

Here now, the passages of scripture touching on the certainty of hope are very profitable to teach that the people who hoped in God were never confounded, even though He long delayed aiding them with his helping hand. The Lord promises the land of Canaan to the seed of Abraham, but four hundred and thirty years first come about, before he settles them in possession of it. Indeed, before he brought them to it, he led them about in the wilderness a whole forty years. He delivers the Israelites from the captivity of Babylon, but not till seventy years were spent. What may be thought about this also: that having promised his only Son immediately after the beginning, notwithstanding, God did not send him till and toward the latter end of the world? The saints must therefore still endure, and always await the Lord's good leisure,⁷⁷ because truth cannot possibly fail them, and all who hope in it are surely saved. David cries: "Our fathers hoped in you; they hoped in you, and you delivered them. They called upon you, and were saved: they hoped in you, and were not confounded."⁷⁸ And again: "The Lord is good; happy is the man that hopes in him."^{Psa 34.8} And again: "Those who hope in the Lord shall be like mount Zion; they shall not be moved, but shall stand fast forever."^{Psa 125.1} And Paul, in his temptations, cries out in his Epistle to the Philippians, saying: "I know that my affliction shall turn to my salvation, according to my earnest expectation and my hope, that I shall be ashamed in nothing."^{Phi 1.19-20}

iii.92

I have said this much up to here, to teach you how the faithful behave themselves in sundry calamities. For they do not despair, but confirm their hearts with assured hope, and suffer all evils with a patient mind, quietly waiting for the Lord in their troubles, who is the only hope of all the faithful. Now, I mean to add to the end of this a few general consolations which may further confirm the hope of the faithful, induce them to patience in suffering calamities, and cheer up their heavy spirits under all manner of afflictions.

First of all, let the afflicted weigh with himself where affliction comes from. Evil men, the devil, sickness, and the world, are what afflict us — but not without God, who suffers them to do it. Satan could not trouble Job, either in goods or body, except by God's sufferance. And the prophet David cries: "You are He that took me out of my mother's womb; you were my hope when I still hung upon my mother's breasts. I was left to you as soon as I was born. You are my God; my time is in your hand."⁷⁹ And the Lord says in the gospel: "Are not two sparrows sold for one farthing? and not one of them lights upon the ground without your Father. Yes, even all the hairs of your head are numbered."^{Mat 10.29} Now God, by whose government all things are ruled, is not a God and a Lord only, but also a Father to mortal men. And his will is good and wholesome toward us; beside this, whatever he does, he does it all in order and justly. But if the will of God is good toward us, the thing cannot help but be good to us, which happens by the sufferance and will of Him who loves us so dearly. And in this, the children of the world differ much from the sons of God. For these (I mean the sons of God),⁸⁰ in comforting one another in their calamities, say this: Do not suffer and grudge at the thing that you cannot alter; it is God's will that it shall be so, and no man can resist it; suffer, therefore, the power of the Lord, unless you would rather double the evil that you cannot escape. But the worldlings, on the other side,⁸¹ are asked if they will suffer the hand of the Lord; and submit themselves to God or not? They give this answer: "I must do so, whether I will or not,⁸² since I cannot withstand it."

⁷⁷ hoc potissimum nomine, Lat.; on this consideration above all.

⁷⁸ Psa 22.4, 5. (DRA)

⁷⁹ Psa 22.9, 10 (Prayer-book version), and 31.15.

⁸⁰ The translator has made a great mistake here; for Bullinger now proceeds to describe the conduct and language of the children of this world, not of the sons of God, under afflictions.

⁸¹ For all this read, These (children of this world). *On the other side*, is not in Lat.

⁸² Bullinger here also gives the German phrase, Ich musz wohl.

iii.93

We may gather from this, therefore, that if they could withstand it, they assuredly would.⁸³ But the children of God patiently bear the hand of God, not because they cannot withstand it, nor because they must suffer it by compulsion; but because they believe that God is a just and merciful Father.⁸⁴ For thereby they acknowledge and confess that God, of his just judgment, persecutes the sins of those who have deserved far more grievous and sharp punishment than he lays upon them. They also acknowledge that God, as a merciful father, chastens them to amend their lives and safeguard their souls. And therefore, for chastening them, they yield hearty thanks to him; and utterly forsaking themselves and their opinions, they wholly commit themselves into the Lord's hands, whether they live or die. The Apostle, going about settling this in the hearts of the faithful, says:

"God speaks to you as to his sons; My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when you are rebuked by him. For the Lord loves those he chastens, and scourges every son that he receives. If you endure chastening, God tenders you as his sons; for what son is it that a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastisement, of which all are partakers, then you are bastards and not sons. Since, therefore, when we had fathers of our flesh, they corrected us, and we revered them, should we not much more rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live?" ^{Heb 12.5-9}

Secondly, let the faithful believer who is oppressed with calamities, consider and weigh the causes for which he is afflicted. For either he is troubled and persecuted by worldlings for the desire that he has for righteousness and true religion: or else he suffers due punishment for his sins and offences. Let those who suffer persecution for righteousness' sake rejoice and give God thanks, as the apostles did,⁸⁵ for He thinks them worthy to suffer for the name of Christ.

iii.94

For the Lord said in the gospel: "Blessed are those who suffer persecution for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when men revile and persecute you, and say all manner evil against you ⁸⁶ for my sake: rejoice, and be glad; for great is your reward in heaven: for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you." ^{Mat 5.10-12}

But if any man feels the scourge of God for his *sins*, let him acknowledge that God's just judgment has fallen upon him; let him humble himself under the mighty hand of the Lord; let him confess his sins to God; let him meekly require pardon for them, and patiently suffer the plague which he has worthily deserved with his sins. Let him follow the examples of Daniel and David. Daniel confesses his sins to the Lord, and says: "We have sinned, we have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly; we have not obeyed your servants the prophets, who spoke to us in your name. Lord, righteousness belongs to you, and open shame to us. You have visited and afflicted us, as you foretold by Moses your servant." ^{Dan 9.5-11} And David, when he was compelled to forsake Jerusalem and go in exile through Absalom's treason, said to the priests who bore the ark after him: "Carry the ark of God back into the city again. If I find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me back again, and He will show me both himself and his tabernacle. But if he says thus, 'I am not delighted in you,' ⁸⁷ then here I am, let him do with me what seems good in his eyes." ^{2Sam 15.25-26}

⁸³ The Latin is more lively: Si ergo possis, audio quid facturum sis. Had you then but the power, your words tell me what you would do.

⁸⁴ justum et patrem benignissimum, Lat.; is just, and a most merciful Father.

⁸⁵ Act 5. 41.

⁸⁶ mentientes, Lat.; speaking falsely.

⁸⁷ neque mihi gratus es, Lat, omitted; neither are you pleasing to me.

And truly, it is much better and more expedient to be punished in this world, and then, after this life, to live for ever, than it is to live here without afflictions, and to suffer everlasting pains in another world. Paul, truly, plainly says: "When we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, so that we may not be damned with the world." ^{1Cor 11.32} And the very end of all chastenings and calamities with which the saints are exercised, tends toward nothing but this: that by despising and treading down the world, they may amend their lives, return to the Lord, and so be saved. But we have spoken about the end of afflictions, before.

iii.95

Furthermore, the men who bear the yoke of afflictions, lay before themselves the plain and ample promises of God. They never turn their eyes from these, and from the examples of the saints. There are innumerable examples of those who have felt God's helping hand, ready to aid and deliver them in all their needs. Now our good God promises to help and deliver not only those who are afflicted for righteousness' sake, but also those whom he visits for their faults and offences. For David says: "The Lord heals the contrite of heart: The Lord looses those who are bound in chains: The Lord gives sight to the blind: The Lord sets up again those who fall. He is not angry forever; nor does he always chide. He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor reward us according to our iniquities. And how wide the east is from the west, so far has he set our sins from us." ⁸⁸ To this belongs the whole thirtieth chapter of Jeremiah's prophecy. And Paul bears witness to this, saying: "Just as the afflictions of Christ are many in us, so our comfort is great through Christ." ^{2Cor 1.5}

Nor are we without examples enough by which to prove this, and to lay before our eyes the present delivery of the saints, and the repentance of sinners in extreme calamities. Our ancestors, the patriarchs, Noah and Lot, along with their families, were delivered by the mighty hand of God from the deluge that drowned all creatures under the heavens, and the horrible fire that fell upon Sodom. Jacob and Joseph, being wrapped in sundry tribulations, were unwound and rid from all, by their merciful God; even as the children of Israel were also brought out and delivered from the servile bondage of Pharaoh in Egypt. The people of Israel in the wilderness, under their guides and judges, often sinned grievously against the Lord, for which they were punished roundly, and sharply scourged; but they were quickly delivered again by the Lord, as often as they acknowledged their sins, and turned to Him again. There are also notable examples of God's deliverance of his people in David, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, Manasseh, and many others.

iii.96

There are innumerable places in the gospel, where Christ delivered his professors ⁸⁹ from sin, from diseases, from perils, and from the devil. In the Acts of the apostles, may be found most excellent patterns of quick delivery by the mighty hand of God. The apostles are imprisoned, and fast bound in fetters; but they are loosed and brought out by the angel of God, and placed in the temple to preach the gospel openly. Peter likewise is delivered out of prison,⁹⁰ when Agrippa had determined to make an end of and dispatch him the next day. The apostle Paul, being oppressed with an infinite sort of calamities, always felt the present hand of God at all times ready to rid him out of misery.⁹¹ And setting this tribulation and delivery of his as an example to all the faithful, he says to Timothy: "You know my persecution and afflictions ⁹² which came to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; I suffered these persecutions patiently. But the Lord delivered me from them all. Yes, and all who would live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution." ^{2Tim 3.10-12} The

⁸⁸ Psa 147.3, and 146.7, 8; and 103.9, 10, 12.

⁸⁹ his professors, not in the Latin.

⁹⁰ Act 5.18-20.

⁹¹ Act 12.6-10.

⁹² patientiam afflictionesque, Lat.; my patience and afflictions.

apostle reckons up many more examples in the eleventh chapter to the Hebrews. All this, I say, the saints consider; and in times of temptation and affliction, they comfort and strengthen themselves with it. For so Paul teaches us, where he says: "Whatever is written, is written for our learning, that through patience and the comfort of the scriptures, we might have hope." ^{Rom 15.4}

Beside this also, the faithful call to their minds the commandments of Christ our Lord, with which, commending patience to us, he has laid the cross upon us all. For he says in the gospel: "If any man would go after me, let him forsake himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever would save his life shall lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. For what advantage is it to a man, to win the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what will a man give for a ransom of his soul? For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels: and then he shall reward every man according to his work." ^{Mat 16.24-27} And again, in another place he says: "If any man comes to me, and does not hate his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, indeed, his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross, and come after me, he cannot be my disciple." ^{Luk 11.26-27}

iii.97

After these words, the Lord brings in certain parables, by which he teaches us to test our ability before we receive the profession of the gospel. The faithful apostles Peter and Paul, had an especial eye to the precepts of their master Christ, exhorting us to patiently bear the cross of Christ. "For Christ," Peter says, "was afflicted for us, leaving to us an example, that we should follow his steps." ^{1Pet 2.21} And Paul said, "Through many tribulations, we must enter into the kingdom of God." ^{Act 14.22}

Another comfort that the faithful have in their afflictions is this: that the time of affliction is short; that the joy and reward in the world to come is unspeakably larger and more excellent than the tribulation of this life is troublesome — so that, there can be no comparison between the joy of the one and the grief of the other. And lastly, our good God does not lay burdens on us that we are not possibly able to bear.

Touching all these points, I think it convenient here to repeat proofs out of the scriptures, to prove them true. St. Peter calls the time of affliction short, or momentary.⁹³ And the prophet Isaiah, or rather, the Lord in Isaiah's prophecy, long before Peter's time, said: "Go, my people, enter into your chambers, and shut the doors after you; hide yourself a little while, until my indignation is past." ^{Isa 26.20} Paul also says: "The fathers of your flesh for a few days chastened you according to their own pleasure; but the Father of Spirits (for a short time) corrects you to your profit, that you might be partakers of his holiness. But no chastising for the present seems to be joyous, but rather grievous. Nevertheless, afterward it brings the quiet fruit of righteousness to those who are exercised by it." ^{Heb 12.9-11} Again he says: "We suffer with Christ, that we may be glorified with him. For I am certainly persuaded that the afflictions of this time are not comparable to the glory that will be shown upon us. For the momentary lightness of our affliction wonderfully, above all measure, produces for us an everlasting weight of glory while we look, not for the things that are seen, but the things that are not seen: for the things that are seen are temporal; but the things that are not seen are eternal." ⁹⁴

iii.98

Again, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, the same Apostle says: "God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted above what you are able; but with the temptation, He will make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it." ^{1Cor 10.13} But if it so happens that the Lord seems to us to extend our tribulation longer than justice would seem to require, then we must later remember that we may not prescribe to God any end of his will, but must permit him freely to afflict us

⁹³ 1Pet 1.6. ad breve tempus, Erasmus' translation, which Bullinger adopts.

⁹⁴ Rom 8.17, 18. 2Cor 4.17, 18. Erasmus' translation.

without any control — for so much, so long, and by such means, as seem best to His godly wisdom. He who is himself the eternal wisdom, and loves us men entirely well, knows well enough his time and season, when to make an end of our miseries, and rid us from afflictions. In the scriptures are sundry examples to comfort the men whose afflictions endure for any length of time. The woman in the gospel was troubled with an issue of blood for the span of twelve years, which had almost driven her to utter desperation of her health's recovery.⁹⁵ Another lay bedridden ⁹⁶ a whole eighteen years. By the pool Bethesda ⁹⁷ lay the weak creature who had been diseased thirty-eight years.⁹⁸ This space, surely, was very troublesome. Yet at last they were all restored to health again by God, who knows best at what time and season his help is most expedient and profitable for mankind. Let us therefore wholly submit ourselves to his good, just, and most wise will, to be delivered when and how he thinks best.

But the chiefest comfort and greatest hope in tribulation is that no force or misery can possibly separate the faithful and elect servants of God from God himself. For the Lord in the gospel cries out, and says: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, nor shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, who gave them to me, is greater than all; and no man is able to take them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one." ⁹⁹

iii.99

To this belongs that outcry ¹⁰⁰ of St. Paul, which he uses to encourage us Christians, where he says:

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? ¹⁰¹ Shall tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or hunger, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For your sake we are killed all day long, and are counted as sheep for the slaughter. Nevertheless, we overcome in all these things through him that loved us. For I am sure, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rule, nor power, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." ¹⁰²

I confess, the saints feel grief and many discommodities in their calamities; yet it is such that even in their discommodities, they have far more commodities. They are therefore diminished in one way, but augmented in another way, so that the cross of theirs is not their destruction, but an exercise for them, and a wholesome medicine. And therefore I think that that same worthy and golden sentence of St. Paul can never be too often beaten into our minds, where he says: "We are troubled on every side, yet are we not without shift; we are in poverty, but not in extreme poverty; we suffer persecution, but are not forsaken in it; we are cast down, but we do not perish." ¹⁰³ Therefore, the faithful in this world may lose their earthly riches; but do they thereby lose their faith? Do they lose their upright and holy life? Or do they lose their riches ¹⁰⁴ of the inner man, which are true riches in the sight of God? The apostle cries: "Godliness is a great lucre with a mind

⁹⁵ Mark 5.25, 26.

⁹⁶ Luke 13.11. Decubuit contracta, Lat.

⁹⁷ Ad probaticam piscinam, Lat.; so the Vulgate, est autem Jerosolymis probatica piscina: and the Douay Version; Now there is at Jerusalem a pond, called Probatia. Bethesda is not in Bullinger's original.

⁹⁸ John 5.2-9.

⁹⁹ Joh 10.27-30.

¹⁰⁰ tripudium ac celeusma, Lat.; triumph and encouragement.

¹⁰¹ a dilectione Dei, Lat. and Erasmus, from the love of God: but the Vulgate has, a charitate Christi.

¹⁰² Rom 8.35-39.

¹⁰³ 1Cor 4.8, 9.

¹⁰⁴ bona, Lat.; good things.

that is content with what it has. For we brought nothing into the world, and it is certain that we may carry nothing away: but having food and raiment, we must be content with that."¹⁰⁵

iii.100

And the Lord, truly, who out of his goodness has created heaven and earth and all that is in them for the use of men, who even feeds the ravens' young ones, will not cause the just man to die with hunger and penury. Moreover, that man who gathers treasure as the Lord has commanded him, does not lose his treasure in this world. The faithful know that a most wealthy treasure is laid up in heaven for them, those who for their Lord and master's sake, are spoiled of their terrestrial goods in this world. Job, that worthy and notable servant of God, cries, "Naked I came out of my mother's womb, and naked I will return to the earth again:¹⁰⁶ the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; as the Lord pleased, so has it happened.¹⁰⁷ Blessed be the name of the Lord." *Job 1.21*

Last of all, it is manifest that to deny the truth in order to thereby escape persecution, is not the way to keep our wealth and quiet estate; rather, it is the means to lose them; indeed, by so doing we are made infamous to all good men of every age and nation. For we see that those who would not hazard their riches for Christ and the cause of his truth, but rather choose to keep their worldly wealth by dissimulation and renouncing of the truth,¹⁰⁸ retained infamous reproach forever, and they daily augment the most terrible torments. This horribly vexed their guilty conscience. They nevertheless lost, in the devil's name, the wealth which they would not risk even once in the cause of their Saviour. But on the other side, those who jeopardized themselves and all their substance in the quarrel of Christ, manfully despising all dangers that could happen, always found a sweet and pleasant comfort, which strengthened the minds of their afflicted bodies. For they cry with the apostle: "We have learned, in whatever state we are, to be content with it. We know how to be low, we know also how to exceed: everywhere and in all things we are instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to have plenty and to suffer need. We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us." *Phi 4.11-13*

iii.101

They know that the same apostle has said: "You have suffered with joy the spoiling of your goods, knowing that you have in heaven a far more excellent substance, which will endure." *Heb 10.34* For the Lord in the gospel also said: "Truly I say to you, There is no man that has forsaken house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now, at present, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life." *Mk 10.29-30* So then the saints and faithful servants of God are oppressed with servitude in this present world: but with this, they know and consider that the Lord himself became a servant for us; by this, those who are servants in this world are made free through Christ; and by terrestrial servitude, a way is made to celestial liberty.

The faithful are exiled, or banished from their country. But the heathen poet says, "A valiant-hearted man takes every country for his own."¹⁰⁹ Truly, in whatever place of the world we are, we are in exile as banished men. Our Father is in heaven, and therefore heaven is our country. Therefore, when we die, we are delivered from exile, and placed in the heavenly country and in true felicity. In like manner, those whom the tyrant kills with hunger and famine, those he rids of innumerable evils. And again, whomever famine does not utterly kill but only torments, it teaches to live more sparingly, and afterward to fast longer and more devoutly. Now, in this case the

¹⁰⁵ 1Tim 6.6-8.

¹⁰⁶ Heb. hither, Auth. Vcr. Cyprian quotes it, naked also shall I go under the earth. Adv. Jud. Lib. iii. cap. 6.

¹⁰⁷ So the Vulgate and Coverdale, The Lord has done his pleasure: and Cyprian.

¹⁰⁸ vel retinere vel augere, Lat.; either to keep, or to increase.

¹⁰⁹ Ovid. Fast. Lib. i. 493.

faithful who suffer famine, call to remembrance the examples of the ancient saints, whom Paul speaks of when he says: "They wandered about in sheep skins and goat skins; being destitute, afflicted, and tormented; of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in wilderness and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth." ^{Heb 13.7-8} Christians also consider that the state of famished Lazarus — who died among the dogs that licked his sores ^{Luk 16.21} — was far better than the surfeiting of the strut-bellied glutton who, being dead, was buried in hell.¹¹⁰

iii.102

Moreover, it is to be abhorred, detested, and (yet) lamented by all men, to see a crew of barbarous villains and unruly soldiers violently abuse not only honest matrons, but tender virgins also, who are not fit yet or ripe for a man. But the greatest comfort that we have in so great a mischief and intolerable ignominy is that chastity is a virtue of the mind. For if it is a treasure of the mind, then it is not lost even though the body is abused. In the same way, the faith of a man is not thought to be overcome, even though the whole body is consumed with fire. And chastity is not lost, truly, where the body is deflowered; because the will of the abused body perseveres to still use that chastity, and does what it may to keep it undefiled. For the body is not holy because the members of it are undefiled, or because the secret parts of it are not indecently touched. Consider that the body, being wounded by many casualties, may suffer filthy violence; and that for health's sake, physicians may do things to its members that otherwise are unseemly to the eyes. Therefore, so long as the purpose of the mind remains (by which the body must be sanctified), the violent deed of another's filthy lust does not take from the body that chastity which the persevering continence of the deflowered body seeks to preserve. And meanwhile, there is no doubt that the most just Lord will sharply punish those shameless beasts and monsters of nature, who dare undertake to commit such wickedness.

The saints are confirmed in their tribulation by the innumerable examples of their forefathers, by which they gather that it is no new thing that happens to them. From the beginning, God has exercised his servants and the church — his spouse, whom he loves so dearly — with many afflictions and tribulations. Here I think it is very expedient, and comforting for afflicted minds, to reckon up the best and choicest examples that are in the scriptures, many of which are both private and public. The chances and pilgrimages of the latter patriarchs (because I do not mean to speak of those before the deluge) are those which I call *private* examples.

iii.103

For our father Abraham is called by the mouth of God out of Ur of the Chaldeans to go into Palestine, from where he is driven by a famine into Egypt. There he is again put to his shifts, and feels many pinches. After that, when he came into Palestine again, even till the last hour of his life, he was never without one mishap or another to trouble and vex his mind. His son Isaac felt famine also, and had one misfortune upon another to plague him with. It is not sin to call Jacob the most wretched man who lived in that age, considering the infinite miseries with which he was vexed. While he was still in his mother's womb and saw no light, he began to strive with his brother Esau. Afterwards, as a stripling, he had much ado to escape Esau's murdering hands by exiling himself from his father's house into the land of Syria; there again he was kept and exercised sharply in the school of afflictions. On his return to his country, he was wrapped in and beset with perils enough, and endless evils. The detestable wickedness of his untoward children would have been enough to kill him at his age. In his latter days, for lack of food, he goes down as a stranger into the land of Egypt, where in true faith and patience he gave up the ghost. The scripture testifies of Moses, the great and faithful servant of God, that in his youth he was brought up in the Egyptian court; but when he came of age, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing to be

¹¹⁰ sepulti et demersi in inferos, Lat.; who was buried, and plunged into hell.

afflicted with the people of God, rather than enjoy the temporal commodities of this sinful world.¹¹¹ He counted the rebuke of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of the Egyptians.¹¹² This same Moses was grievously afflicted, first by Pharaoh and his princes, and after that afflicted again by those of his own household, and by his own countrymen whom he had brought out of the land of Egypt. David also, the anointed of the Lord, was troubled a great while with his master Saul, who was a madman and would have brought him to his end.

iii.104

But having obtained the kingdom at last (despite all that Saul could do), afflictions did not cease to follow David; for after many troublesome broils, he was thrust from his kingdom by Absalom, and very straitly dealt with. Yet in the end, God out of his goodness set him up again.

In the new Testament, Christ himself, our Lord and Saviour, and also that elect vessel of his, the apostle Paul, are excellent examples for us to take comfort by. The Lord in his infancy was compelled to flee the treason and murdering hands of cruel tyrants. He was not free from calamities his whole life; and at his death he was hanged among thieves. And Paul, speaking of himself, says:

"If any others are the ministers of Christ, I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in imprisonments more plenteous, in death more often. From the Jews, five times received I forty stripes less one; thrice was I beaten with rods, once stoned; thrice I suffered shipwreck; a day and a night I have been in the depth; in journeying often; in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own nation, in perils among the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in labour and travail, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that outwardly come to me, the trouble which daily lies upon me, is the care of all the churches."¹¹³

These, I say, are private examples.

We have a public example in the church of Israel afflicted in Egypt, many times troubled under their kings and judges, and lastly led captive by the Assyrians and men of Babylon. Afterward, being brought home again by the goodness of God, they pass many brunts, and are sharply afflicted under the monarchies of the Persians, Greeks, and Romans. What shall I say of the apostolic church of Christ? Even when it first began, like an infant creeping on the ground,¹¹⁴ it shortly felt the cross, and yet it still flourished in those afflictions which even to this day it patiently suffers. Histories mention ten persecutions with which the church of Christ was terribly shaken and sharply afflicted (from the eighth year of Nero, till the reign of Constantine the great, a span of three hundred and eighteen years).¹¹⁵ This was without intermission or a time of respite in which to breathe, and to rest itself from troublesome broils and merciless slaughters.¹¹⁶

iii.105

¹¹¹ peccati, Lat.; of sin.

¹¹² Heb 11.24-26.

¹¹³ 2Cor 11.23-28.

¹¹⁴ ab ipsius incunabulis, is Bullinger's phrase – [from the cradle](#).

¹¹⁵ The persecution in Nero's reign began A.D. 64, (he became emperor A.D. 54), and Constantine succeeded Maxentius, A.D. 312; so that the interval is 248 years. See Burton's Hist. of Christ. Church, Chap. v. p. 128, and Chap. xvii. p. 392. Lond. 1845.

¹¹⁶ Bullinger's words are: Concessis tamen nonnunquam intervallis quibusdam, satis quidem accisis, quibus respiraret ecclesia: although indeed occasionally some intervals were granted, short enough in good sooth, wherein the church might take breath.

That beast and lecherous monster, Nero, raised against the Christians the first persecution of those ten,¹¹⁷ in which it is said that Peter and Paul, the Apostles of Christ, were brought to their ends. The second was moved by Flavius Domitianus, which banished the Apostle John to the Isle of Patmos. The third persecutor after Nero was Trajan the emperor, who published most terrible edicts against the Christians. Under him, the notable martyr and preacher Ignatius, with many other excellent servants of Christ, was thrown to wild beasts, and cruelly torn in pieces. The Emperor Verus most bloodily stirred up the fourth persecution through all France and Asia; in this, the blessed Polycarpus was burnt alive in fire, and Irenaeus, the bishop of Lyons, was beheaded with the sword.¹¹⁸ In the fifth persecution of the church of Christ, Septimius Severus, throughout many provinces, bloodily crowned many a saint with the garland of martyrdom; among whom is reckoned Leonidas, the father of Origen. Julius Maximinus was the sixth after Nero to play the tyrant against the church. In that persecution, especially the preachers and ministers of the churches were murdered. Among them, beside countless other excellent men, were slaughtered Pamphilus and Maximus, two especially notable lights.

iii.106

The seventh blood-sucker after beastly Nero, was Decius the Emperor, who proclaimed most horrible edicts against the faithful. In his time, St. Laurence, a deacon of the church, was broiled on a grate-iron; and the renowned Virgin Apollonia, for her profession, leaped into the fire alive. Licinius Valerianus was as cruel as the rest in executing the eighth persecution against the faithful professors of Christ and his gospel. In that broil were slain many millions of Christians, and especially St. Cornelius and Cyprian, the most excellent doctors in all the world. Valerius Aurelianus purposed, rather than put into execution, the ninth persecution: for a thunder rushed before him to the great terror of those who were around him; and shortly after, he was slain as he journeyed; and so his tyranny was ended by his death. But Caius Aurelius Valerius Diocletianus, Maximianus Maxentius, and Marcus Julius Licinius, not being terrified by this horrible example, raised the tenth persecution against the church of Christ. Enduring for the span of ten whole years, this brought to destruction an infinite number of Christians in every province and quarter of the world. Eusebius of Caesarea passingly ¹¹⁹ paints this broil for the eyes of the reader: for he himself was an eye-witness and on-looker of many a bloody pageant and triumphant victory of the martyrs, which he repeats in the eighth book of his Ecclesiastical History. In that slaughter ¹²⁰ were killed the first apostles of our Tigrine church, both martyrs of Christ and professors of his gospel, S. Felix and his sister Regula.¹²¹

After those ten persecutions followed many more and more terrible butcheries, stirred up by many kings and barbarous men, in sundry quarters of the earth; on the heels of these, followed the merciless blood-sheddings committed by the Saracens, Turks, and Tartars.¹²²

iii.107

¹¹⁷ Aug. de Civ. Dei, Lib. xviii. cap. 52. Par. 1531. Tom. v. fol. 251. See Euseb. Eccl. Hist. iii. 18, 36; iv. 15; vi. 1, 41; vii. 11, 30, etc.

¹¹⁸ We have no account of the death of Irenaeus upon which we can absolutely depend; and there is a doubt whether he was martyred or not.

¹¹⁹ graphice, Lat. – graphically.

¹²⁰ A.D. 306.

¹²¹ These martyrs (*ex Thebea legione*) are thus mentioned in the Ephemeris, Bed. Opp. Tom. i. p. 206. Col. Agrip. 1612. Septemb. 3 Id. — They suffered September 11, A.D. 281. See Hospinian. de festis Christian. p. 143. Genev. 1674.

¹²² Tartarorum, Turcarum denique, Lat.; and lastly of the Turks.

Moreover, the butcherly bishops ¹²³ of Rome extremely annoyed ¹²⁴ the church of God, by shedding more Christian blood in civil and foreign wars, than any tongue can possibly tell. Nothing new therefore happens to us today, who in the church of Christ suffer diverse persecutions and afflictions; for we have examples of great efficacy, both new and old, to confirm our hearts, so that they do not faint in calamities.

And therefore the prophets and apostles, and their Lord and master, Jesus Christ, foretell these perils, calamities, and all persecutions. This is because they would have us fortify our minds against these miseries at all times and seasons, lest, by being shaken with them unawares, we would revolt from our faith, and forsake our profession. The Lord says to his disciples:

"Because I have chosen you out of the world, the world therefore hates you. Remember the words which I spoke to you, saying, The servant is not greater than his master. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my words, they will also keep yours. But they will do all these things to you for my name's sake, because they do not know the one that sent me. I have said this to you, so that you will not be offended. They will drive you from their synagogues: and the time is coming when whoever kills you, will think he is doing God good service." ¹²⁵

At this time, I do not mean to recite out of the prophets and apostles, the rest that is like this, because it cannot be briefly repeated.¹²⁶ Let everyone pick out, and apply to his own comfort, the plainest and most evident testimonies that he lights upon by reading.

And although the saints do not rejoice at the destruction of their persecuting enemies, whom they could wish to be converted, and so saved, rather than be punished in this present world, and be damned forever in the world to come to. Yet they are glad when they see the Lord punish their afflictors, because thereby they perceive that God has a care for those who are his servants.

iii.108

They also gather, by the present vengeance of God upon the wicked, that as afflictions are for the health and amendment of the faithful, so they are to the hurt and destruction of unbelievers. For while they persecute others, they themselves are destroyed; and while they trouble the church of the living God, they kindle a fire of the wrath of God against themselves, that will never be quenched. For in the prophecy of Zechariah, we thus read what the Lord speaks touching his church:

"Behold, I make Jerusalem a cup of poison ¹²⁷ to all the people that are round about her: yes, Judah himself shall be in the siege against Jerusalem.¹²⁸ And in that day I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all people; so that all those who lift it up shall be torn and rent, and all the people of the earth shall be gathered together against it."

The Lord has a like saying in Jeremiah, where he speaks against the persecutors of his church:

"Take this wine-cup of indignation from my hand, and make all the people to whom I send you, drink of it; so that when they have drunk from it, they may be mad, and out of their wits, for fear

¹²³ pseudo-pontifices, Lat.; the false bishops: *butcherly* is not in the original.

¹²⁴ *Annoyed*: here it means *worried*, like a dog tearing at the flesh.

¹²⁵ Joh 15.19-21; 16.1, 2.

¹²⁶ The following texts are put in the margin of the Latin original of Bullinger; Psa 22, 69. Isa 49, 51. Dan 7, 8, 11. Zech 13.

¹²⁷ Zec 12.2, 3. calix soporis, Lat.; a cup of trembling, Auth. Ver.; slumber, marg. reading.

¹²⁸ So also Coverdale, 1535.

of the sword which I will send among them. For I begin to plague the city called by my name; and do you think then that you shall escape unpunished? You shall not go unpunished."¹²⁹

And this is what St. Peter alludes to saying:

"The time is that the judgment of God begins at the house of God: if it first begins with us, what shall the end of them be, who do not believe the gospel?"^{1Pet 4.17}

I have briefly repeated above the ten persecutions in order, which the Roman emperors stirred up against the church of Christ. Now, histories mention that there was not one of them that was not requited with some notable calamity. And beside the particular revenges that followed every persecution, it is to be noted that the most just Lord began to more abundantly requite the death of his saints upon the necks of blood-thirsty Rome after the space of three hundred and forty-two years (for that many years are reckoned from the last of Nero to the second year of the emperors Honorius and Theodosius¹³⁰).

iii.109

For within the space of one hundred and thirty-nine years, Rome was six times taken and brought into subjection to the barbarous nations.¹³¹ For in the four hundredth¹³² year of grace, which was the second year of Honorius' and Theodosius' reign, the Visigoths, under their captain Alaric, both took and sacked the city, nonetheless using great mercy in their victory. After that, the Vandals under their guide Genserichus, again broke into the city cruelly, and spoiled it very greedily.¹³³ After them came the Herules, and the remnant of Attila's army, with their captain Odacer, who took the city, and got the kingdom for themselves, utterly extinguishing the rule of the Romans in the western part of the world.¹³⁴ Then again, when about fourteen years had come and gone, in comes Theodorius Veronensis with his Ostrogothes, who slew the Herules, and obtained the city.¹³⁵ But being recovered by the faith and industry of the valiant captain Belisarius, and restored to Justinian the emperor of the east, it was immediately taken again by Totylas,¹³⁶ a prince of the Goths. With fire and sword he sacked it, pulled down houses, and overthrew a great part of its walls. Rome was so defaced by this, that for a certain span of days, no man dwelt there. That spoil of the city happened about five hundred and forty-eight years after Christ's incarnation.¹³⁷ And thus Christ, in revenging his church, lay deserved plagues upon the necks of bloody Rome, beside other miseries which it suffered by the Huns and Lombards (I pass over that).¹³⁸

iii.110

For this is enough to show how miserably Rome was plagued for afflicting the church of Christ which nevertheless remained safe despite the tyrants' heads, and overcame those blows; and it shall reign with Christ forevermore. In like manner, the Saracens were extinguished and utterly destroyed when they had suffered many a great overthrow, and had been plagued throughout the world with sundry mishaps and adverse calamities. The Turks also daily feel their woes and

¹²⁹ Jer 25.15, 16, 29.

¹³⁰ Nero destroyed himself A.D. 68, and the second year of Honorius and Theodosius was A.D. 410. Usher's Annals, Vol. ii. p. 694. Lond. 1654. Gibbon's Dec. and Fall, ch. 32, Vol. v. p. 411. Lond. 1820.

¹³¹ Bullinger details more fully these invasions of Rome in his treatise on the Revelation. Sermons lvii. & lxxvi

¹³² 412th, Lat. and ed. 1577. The date in Gibbon is Aug. 24, 410. Vol. v. p. 310, ch. 31.

¹³³ A.D. 455, June 1529. Gibbon, ch. 36, Vol. vi. p. 151.

¹³⁴ A.D. 476, or 479. Gibbon, Vol. vi. p. 226, etc.

¹³⁵ A.D. 493. Gibbon, ch. 39, Vol. vii. p. 15.

¹³⁶ A.D. 536. Gibbon, ch. 41, Vol. vii. p. 224.

¹³⁷ A.D. 546. Gibbon, chap. 43, Vol. viz. p. 366; and again, after a repulse, finally taken A.D. 549. *ibid.* p. 375.

¹³⁸ A.D. 568-570. Gibbon, chap. 45, Vol. viii. p. 126, etc.

miseries, and are likely hereafter to feel sharper punishments. Moreover, the popes ¹³⁹ are slain with poison by one another, and are strangely vexed with awful terrors. They are nowhere sure of their lives, but even in the midst of all their friends, they are beset with miseries; they live in fear continually, the whole pack of them. Furthermore, even those among them who live most happily, rot away with the disease that follows filthy pleasures; there is no kind of death either sharper to the patient, or more detested among all men, than this. And their adherents, who by setting on to persecute the church of Christ, either dropped away with a similar disease that waits upon filthy lust, or they were consumed little by little, as Herod and Antiochus were;¹⁴⁰ their death came long before it dispatched them, and tormented them beyond all measure. Yes, and besides these bitter plagues, they destroy one another with endless civil wars. The Lord therefore is righteous, and his judgments are just and equal; he never forgets to revenge his friends by finding out his own and his servants' enemies, to punish them for their deserts.

Since then, my brethren, the case so stands, I beseech you: let us patiently suffer the hand of the Lord our God, as often as we are touched with any calamity, or tempted by the Lord our God, knowing this: that the Lord strikes us that he may heal us, and troubles us that he may comfort us and receive us to himself, into joys everlasting. And that we may so do, since we are otherwise too weak by ourselves, let us pray to our Father which is in heaven, through Jesus Christ our Lord, that he will grant to be present with us in our temptations, and guide us in the way of constancy, peace, and righteousness.

iii.111

And for an example, let everyone set before his eyes the order that Christ our Saviour and master used — who, a little before the cross of his passion, took himself to prayer. For going up into the mount of Olives, he beseeches his Father humbly, and prays to him ardently. He is instant in prayer, and presses Him earnestly; and yet, he submits all to his Father's will and pleasure. Let us also do the same, that we may have a trial of our Father's present aid with the effectual comfort of our minds, and that we may give him praise forevermore for his goodness. Amen.

¹³⁹ pseudo-pontifices, Lat.

¹⁴⁰ See above, p. iii.79.