

AN INFORMATION FOR THEM WHICH TAKE OFFENCE
AT CERTAIN PLACES OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURE.

THE FIRST PART.^a

THE great utility and profit that Christian men and women may take, if they will, by hearing and reading the holy Scriptures, dearly beloved, no heart can sufficiently conceive, much less is any^b tongue able with words to express. Therefore Satan, our old^c enemy, seeing the Scriptures to be the very mean and right way to bring the people to the true knowledge of God, and that Christian religion is greatly furthered by diligent hearing and reading of them, he also perceiving what an hindrance and let they be to him and his kingdom, doeth what he can to drive the reading of them out of God's Church. And for that end he hath always stirred up, in one place or other, cruel tyrants, sharp persecutors, and extreme enemies unto God and his infallible truth, to pull with violence the holy Bibles out of the people's hands, and have^d most spitefully destroyed and consumed the same to ashes in the fire, pretending most untruly, that the much hearing and reading of God's word is an occasion of heresy, carnal^e liberty, and the overthrow of all good order in all well ordered commonweals.

If to know God a right be an occasion of evil, then must we^f needs grant, that the hearing and reading of the holy Scriptures *is the cause of heresy, carnal liberty, and the subversion of all* good orders. But the knowledge of God and of ourselves is so far off from^g being an occasion of evil, that it is the readiest, yea, the only mean to bridle carnal liberty, and to kill all our fleshly affections. And the ordinary way to attain this knowledge is with diligence to hear and read the holy Scriptures. For *the whole Scriptures*, saith St. Paul [2 Tim. 3:[16].], *were given by the inspiration of God:* and shall we Christian men think to learn the knowledge of God and of ourselves in any earthly man's work

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former line 25

^a The First Part.] *not in* 1563 A. ^b is any] is my *from* 1567. ^c old] *omitted after* 1567. ^d and have] and hath 1563 F.

^e heresy, carnal] heresy and carnal *from* 1563 B. *See below, line 25.* ^f must we] we must 1623. ^g far off from] far from *from* 1567.

or writing^h sooner or better than in the holy Scriptures written by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost? [2 Pet. 1:[21].] *The Scriptures were not brought unto us by the will of man; but holy men of God, as witnesseth St. Peter, spake as they were moved by the holy Spirit of God.* The Holy Ghost is the Schoolmaster of truth, which leadeth his scholars, as our Saviour Christ saith of him [John 16:[13].], *into all truth.* And whoso is not led and taught by thisⁱ Schoolmaster cannot but fall into deep error, how goodly^k soever his pretence is, what knowledge and learning soever he hath of all other works and writings, or how fair soever a shew or face of truth he hath in the estimation and judgment of the world.

If some man will say, I would have a true pattern and a perfect description of an upright life approved in the sight of God, can we find, think ye, any better, or any such again, as Christ Jesus is, and his doctrine? whose virtuous conversation and godly life the Scripture so lively painteth and setteth forth before our eyes, that we, beholding that pattern, might shape and frame our lives, as nigh as may be, agreeable to the perfection of the same. *Follow you me,* saith St. Paul [1 Cor. 11:[1].], *as I follow Christ.* And St. John in his Epistle saith [1 John 2:[6].], *Whoso abideth in Christ must walk even so as he walked^l before him.* And where shall we learn the order of Christ's life but in the Scripture?

Another would have a medicine to heal all diseases and maladies of the mind. Can this be found or gotten otherwheres^m than out of God's own book, his sacred Scriptures? Christ taught so much, when he said to the obstinate Jews [John 5:[39].], *Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think to have eternal life.* If the Scriptures contain in them everlasting life, it must needs follow, that they have also present remedy against all that is an hinderance and let unto eternal life.

If we desire¹ the knowledge of heavenly wisdom, why had we rather learn the same of man than of God himself, who, as St. James saith [James 1:[5].], is the Giver of wisdom? Yea, why will we not learn it at Christ's own mouth, who, promising [Matt. 28:[20].] to be present with his Church till the world's end, doth perform his promise, in that he is not only with us by his grace and tender pity, but also in this, that he speaketh presently unto us in the holy Scriptures, to the great and endless comfort of all them that

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^h work or writing] work of writing *from* 1582. ⁱ by this] by his *from* 1582. ^k goodly] godly *from* 1563 B. ^l he walked] he hath walked 1623. ^m otherwheres] otherwhere *from* 1563 B.

¹ This and the next two paragraphs are translated, with a little change of order, from the latter part of a short tract of *Erasmus*, "*Paraclesis, id est Adhortatio, ad Christianae Philosophiae Studium,*" *Opp.V*, 120, 121, *ed.* 1540.

have any feeling of God at all in them? Yea, he speaketh now in the Scriptures more profitably to us, than he did by wordⁿ of mouth to the carnal Jews, when he lived with them here upon earth. For they, I mean the Jews, could nother^o hear nor see those things which we may now both hear and see, if we will bring with us those ears and eyes that Christ is heard and seen with, that is, diligence to hear and read his holy Scriptures, and true faith to believe his most comfortable promises.

If one could shew but the print of Christ's foot, a great number, I think, would fall down and worship it: but to the holy Scriptures, where we may see daily, if we will, I will not say the print of his feet only, but the whole shape and lively image of him, alas, we give little reverence, or none at all. If any could let us see Christ's coat, a sort of us would make hard shift, except we mought^p come nigh to gaze upon it, yea, and kiss it too: and yet all the clothes that ever he did wear can nothing so truly nor so lively express him unto us, as do the Scriptures. Christ's image,^q made in wood, stone, or metal, some men, for the love they bear to Christ, do garnish and beautify the same with pearl, gold, and precious stone: and should we not, good brethren, much rather embrace and reverence God's holy books, the sacred Bible, which do represent Christ unto us more truly than can any image? The image can but express the form or shape of his body, if it can do so much: but the Scripture^r doth in such sort set forth Christ, that we may see him both^s God and man; we may see him, I say, speaking unto us, healing our infirmities, dying for our sins, rising from death for our justification. And, to be short, we may in the Scriptures so perfectly see whole Christ with the eye of faith, as we, lacking faith, could not with these bodily eyes see him, though he stood now present here before us.

Let every man, woman, and child therefore with all their heart thirst and desire God's holy Scriptures, love them, embrace them, have their delight and pleasure in hearing and reading them; so as at length we may be transformed and changed into them. For the Holy Scriptures are God's treasure house, wherein are found all things needful for us to see, to hear, to learn, and to believe, necessary for the attaining of eternal life.

Thus much is spoken, only to give you a taste of some of the

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ⁿ by word] by the word *from* 1582. ^o nother] neither *from* 1563 G. ^p mought] might *from* 1582. ^q Christ's image] Christ's images *from* 1563 G. ^r Scripture] Scriptures *from* 1574. ^s see him both] see both *from* 1571.

commodities which ye may take by hearing and reading the holy Scriptures; for, as I said in the beginning, no tongue is able to declare and utter all. And, although it is more clear than the noon day that to be ignorant of the Scriptures is the cause of error, as Christ saith to the Sadducees [Matt. 22:[29].], *Ye err, not knowing the Scriptures*; and that error doth^t hold back and pluck men away from the knowledge of God; and, as St. Hierome saith, “not to know the Scriptures is to be ignorant of Christ;”² yet, this notwithstanding, some there be that think it not meet for all sorts of men to read the Scriptures, because they are, as they think, in sundry places stumblingblocks to the unlearned; first, for that the phrase of the Scripture^u is sometime so homely,^x gross, and plain, that it offendeth the fine and delicate wits of some courtiers; furthermore, for that the Scripture also reporteth, even of them that have their commendation to be the children of God, that they did divers acts, whereof some are contrary to the law of nature, some repugnant to the law written, and other some seem to fight manifestly against public honesty; all which things, say they are unto the simple an occasion of great offence, and cause many to think evil of the Scriptures, and to discredit their authority. Some are offended at the hearing and reading of the diversity of the rites and ceremonies of the sacrifices and oblations of the Law. And some worldly witted men think it a great decay to the quiet and prudent governing of their commonwealths^y to give ear to the simple and plain rules and precepts of our Saviour Christ in his Gospel; as being offended that a man should be ready to turn his right ear [Matt. 5:39–40] to him that strake him on the left, and to him which would take away his coat, to offer him also his cloak, with such other sayings of perfection in Christ’s meaning;: for carnal reason, being alway an enemy^y to God, and not perceiving the things of God’s Spirit, doth abhor such precepts; which yet, rightly understood,^z infringeth no judicial policies nor Christian men’s governments. And some there be which, hearing the Scriptures to bid^a us to live without carefulness [Matt. 6:25–34], without study or forecasting, do deride the simplicity^b of them. Therefore, to remove and put away occasions of

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Margin Note: γ [Rom. 8:7; 1 Cor. 2:14.]

^t error doth] error do 1563 A. ^u of the Scripture] of the Scriptures 1563 B–1574. ^x homely] simple 1623.

^y commonwealths] commonweals *from* 1563 G. ^z understood] understood 1623. ^a to bid] do bid 1563 C–1570.

^b simplicity] simplicities *from* 1563 C.

² Ignoratio Scripturarum ignoratio Christi est. *Hieron. Prolog. ad Isaiam, Opp.* IV, 1.

offence so much as may be, I will answer orderly to these objections.

First, I shall rehearse some of those places that men are offended at for the homeliness^c and grossness of speech, and will shew the meaning of them.

In the book of Deuteronomy [Deut. 25:[5–10].] it is written, that Almighty God made a law, if a man died without issue, his brother or next kinsman should marry his widow, and the child that were^d first born between them should be called his child that was dead, that the dead man's name mought^e not be put out in Israel; and, if the brother or next kinsman would not marry the widow, then she before the magistrates of the city should pull off his shoe and spit in his face, saying, *So be it done to that man that will not build his brother's house*. Here, dearly beloved, the pulling off his shoe and spitting in his face were ceremonies, to signify unto all the people of that city, that the woman was not now in fault that God's law in that point was broken, but the whole shame and blame thereof did now redound to that man which openly before the magistrates refused to marry her: and it was not a reproach to him alone, but to all his posterity also; for they were called ever after, *The house of him whose shoe is pulled off*.

Another place out of the Psalms [Ps. 75:[10].] *I will break*, saith David, *the horns of the ungodly, and the horns of the righteous shall be exalted*. By an horn in the Scripture is understand^f power, might, strength, and sometime rule of government. The Prophet then saying, *I will break the horns of the ungodly*, meaneth, that all the power, strength, and might of God's enemies^g shall not only be weakened and made feeble, but shall at length also be clean broken and destroyed; though for a time, for the better trial of his people, God suffereth the enemies to prevail and have the upper hand. In the hundred and thirty second Psalm [Ps, 132:[17].] it is said, *I will make David's horn to flourish*. Here *David's horn* signifieth his kingdom. Almighty God therefore by this manner of speaking promiseth to give David victory over all his enemies, and to stablish him in his kingdom spite of all his enemies.

And in the threescore^h Psalm [Ps. 60:8] it is written, *Moab is my washpot, and over Edom will I cast out myⁱ shoe, &c.* In that place the Prophet sheweth how graciously God hath dealt with his

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^c homeliness] simplicity 1623. ^d that were] that was *from* 1582. ^e mought] might *from* 1563 G. ^f understand] understood 1587, 1595, 1623. ^g God's enemies] God's enemy *from* 1570. ^h threescore] lx. *till* 1563 G. ⁱ cast out my] cast my 1582, 1623.

people, the children of Israel, giving them great victories upon their enemies on every side. For, the Moabites and Idumeans being two great nations, proud people, stout and mighty, God brought them under and made them servants to the Israelites; servants, I say, to stoop down to pull off their shoes and wash their feet. Then, *Moab is my washpot, and over Edom will I cast out my shoe*, is as if he had said, The Moabites and the Idumeans, for all their stoutness against us in the wilderness, are now made our subjects, our servants, yea, underlings to pull off our shoes and wash our feet. Now, I pray you, what uncomely manner of speech is this, so used in common phrase among the Hebrews? It is a shame that Christian men should be so light headed, to toy as ruffians do of^k such manner speeches, uttered in good grave signification by the Holy Ghost. More reasonable it were for vain man^l to learn and reverence^m the form of God's words, than to gaudⁿ at them to his^o damnation.

Some again are offended to hear that the godly fathers had many wives and concubines, although after the phase of the Scripture a concubine is an honest name; for every concubine is a lawful wife, but every wife is not a concubine. And, that ye may the better understand this to be true, ye shall note that it was permitted to the fathers of the Old Testament to have at one time mo wives than one: for what purpose ye shall afterward hear. Of which wives, some were free women born, some were bond women and servants. She that was free born had a prerogative above those that were servants and bond women. The free born woman was by marriage made the ruler of the house under her husband, and is called the mother of the household, the mistress^p or the dame of the house after our manner of speaking, and had by her marriage an interest, a right, and an ownership in his^q goods unto whom she was married. Other servants and bond women were given by the owners of them, as the manner was then, I will not say always, but for the most part, unto their daughters at the^r day of their marriage, to be handmaidens unto them. After such a sort did Pharao king of Egypt give unto Sara, Abraham's wife, Agar the Egyptian to be her maid. So did Laban give [Gen. 29:[24, 29].] unto his daughter Lia, at the day of her marriage, Zilpha to be her handmaid;

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^k do of] do with 1623. ^l man] men *from* 1563 C. ^m learn and reverence] learn reverence 1570, learn to reverence *from* 1571.
ⁿ gaud] sport 1623. ^o to his] to their *from* 1582. ^p mistress] mastress 1563 A; maistres, maistresse, *or* maystresse 1563 B–1582; mistris 1587, mistres 1595; masters 1623. ^q in his] of his *from* 1563 EF. ^r daughters at the] daughters at that *from* 1571.

and to his other daughter Rahel he gave another bondmaid, named Bilha.^s And the wives, that were the owners of their handmaids,^t gave them in marriage to their husbands upon divers occasions. Sara gave⁶ her maid Agar in marriage to Abraham. Lia gaveⁿ in like manner her maid Zilpha to her husband Jacob. So did Rahel, his other wife, give him Bilha^s her maid, saying unto him, *Go in unto her, and she shall bear upon my knees*: which is as if she had said, Take her to wife, and the children that she shall bear will I take upon my lap, and make of them as if they were mine own. These handmaidens or bond women, although by marriage they were made wives, yet they had not this prerogative, to rule in the house, but were still underlings, and in subjection^u to their mistress,^x and were never called mothers of the household, mistresses or dames of the house, but are called sometime wives,^y sometime concubines. The plurality of wives was by a special prerogative suffered to the fathers of the Old Testament, not for satisfying their carnal and fleshly lusts, but to have many children; because every one of them hoped, and begged oftentimes of God in their prayers, that that blessed seed which God promised should come into the world to break the serpent's head might^z come and be born of his stock and kinred.

Now of those which take occasion of carnality and evil life by hearing and reading in God's book what God hath suffered,^a even in those men whose commendation is praised in the Scripture. As that Noe, whom St. Peter [2 Pet. 2:[5].] calleth the eighth *preacher of righteousness*,³ was so drunk with wine,^θ that in his sleep he uncovered his own privities. The just man Lot was in like manner drunken,^ι and in his drunkenness lay with his own daughters, contrary to the law of nature. Abraham, whose faith was so great, that for the same he deserved to be called of God's own mouth^κ *a father of many nations, the father of all believers*, besides with Sara his wife, had also^λ carnal company with Agar, Sara's handmaid. The Patriarch Jacob^μ had to his wives two sisters at one time. The Prophet David,^ν and King Salomon his son, had many wives and concubines, &c. Which things we

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Margin Notes: ζ Gen. 16:[3]. η Gen. 30:[9, and 3–4]. θ Gen. 9:[21]. ι Gen. 19:[30–36]. κ Gen. 17:[4–5]: Rom. 4:[11–18]. λ Gen. 16:[4]. μ Gen. 29:[23–30]. ν [2 Sam. 3:2–5, 5:13; 1 Kings 11:1–3].

^s Bilha] Billham or Bylham till 1574. ^t handmaids] handmaidens 1623. ^u in subjection] in such subjection 1623.

^x mistress] mastres 1623 A and B; masters or maisters from 1563 C; but mistrisses 1587, mistresses 1595. See note p above. See also the note of Stevens, citing Waldron, on the passage, For affection, Mistress of passion, sways it to the mood Of what it likes or loathes, in *Merchant of Venice*, IV, 1; *Shakespeare's Plays*, VII, 346, 347, ed. 1803. ^y sometime wives] sometimes wives from 1563 C. ^z mought] might from 1563 G. ^a hath suffered] had suffered from 1574.

³ 'Αλλ' ὄγδοον Νῶε δικαιοσύνης κήρυκα ἐφύλαξε. In Tyndale's Bible, and in Cranmer's, the rendering is the same as in the Homily.

see plainly to be forboden^b us by the law of God, and are now repugnant to all public honesty. These and such like in God's book, good people, are not written that we should or may do the like, following their examples, or that we ought to think that God did allow every of these things in those men: but we ought rather to believe and to judge, that Noe in his drunkenness offended God highly, Lot lying with his daughters committed horrible incest. We ought then to learn by them this profitable lesson, that, if so godly men as they were, which otherwise felt inwardly God's Holy Spirit inflaming their^c hearts with the fear and love of God, could not by their own strength keep themselves from committing horrible sin, but did so grievously fall that without God's great mercy they had perished everlastingly, how much more ought we then, miserable wretches, which have no feeling of God within us at all, continually to fear, not only that we may fall as they did, but also be overcome and drowned in sin, which they were not; and so, by considering their fall, take the better occasion to acknowledge our own infirmity and weakness, and therefore more earnestly to call unto Almighty God with hearty prayer incessantly for his grace, to strengthen us, and to defend us from all evil. And, though through infirmity we chance at any time to fall, yet we may, by hearty repentance and true faith, speedily rise again, and not sleep and continue in sin, as the wicked doth.

Thus, good people, should we understand such matters expressed in the divine Scriptures, that this holy *table* [Ps. 69:22] of God's word be not turned to us to be *a snare, a trap, and a stumblingstone*,⁴ to take hurt by the abuse of our understanding: but let us esteem them in such a^d reverent humility, that we may find our necessary food therein, to strengthen us, to comfort us, to instruct us, as God of his great mercy hath appointed them, in all necessary works; so that we may be perfect before him in the whole course of our life. Which he grant us who hath redeemed us, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost be all honour and glory for evermore. Amen.

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^b forboden] forbidden *from* 1563 EF. ^c inflaming their] inflaming in their *from* 1571. ^d in such a] in a 1623.

⁴ Fiat mensa eorum coram ipsis in laqueum et in retributionem [*al.* retributiones] et in scandalum. *Vulg.*

THE SECOND PART OF THE INFORMATION
FOR THEM WHICH TAKE OFFENCE
AT CERTAIN PLACES OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURE.

YE have heard, good people, in the Homily last read unto you, the great commodity of holy Scriptures: ye have heard how ignorant men, void of godly understanding, seek quarrels to discredit them: some of their reasons have ye heard answered. Now we will proceed, and speak of such politic wise men which be offended, for that Christ's precepts should seem to destroy all order in governance, as they do allege for example^a such as these be. *If any man strike thee on the right cheek, turn the other unto him also. If any will^b contend to take thy coat from thee, let him have cloak and all. Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth. If thine eye, thine hand, thy^c foot offend thee, pull out thine eye, cut off thy hand,^d thy foot, and cast it from thee. If thine enemy, saith St. Paul, be hungered, give him meat; if he thirst,^e give him drink: so doing, thou shalt heap hot burning coals upon his head.* These sentences, good people, unto a natural man seem mere absurdities, contrary to all reason. *For a natural man, as St. Paul saith, understandeth not the things that belong to God, neither can he* so long as old Adam dwelleth in him. Christ therefore meaneth, that he would have his faithful servants^f so far from vengeance and resisting wrong, that he would rather have him^f ready to suffer another wrong, than by resisting to break charity, and to be out of patience. He would have our good deeds so far from carnal^g respects, that he would not have our nighest friends know of our well doing, to win a vain^h glory. And, though our friends and kinsfolks be as dear as our right eyes and our right hands, yet, if they would pluck us from God, we ought to renounce them and forsake them.

Thus, if ye will be profitable hearers and readers of the holy Scriptures, you must firstⁱ deny yourselves, and keep under your carnal senses, taken by the outward words, and search the

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Margin Notes: By italics in order: [Matt. 5:39–40]. Matt. 6:[3]. Matt. 18:[8–9]. Rom. 12:[20]. 1 Cor. 2:[14].

^a example] examples 1563 D–1570. ^b any will] any man will *from* 1563 G. ^c hand, thy] hand, or thy *from* 1567.

^d thy hand] thine hand *from* 1563 EF. ^e he thirst] he be thirst 1563 C, he be thirsty *from* 1563 D. ^f servants *and* him] *so in all*. ^g from carnal] from all carnal *from* 1563 C. ^h win a vain] win vain 1623. ⁱ you must first] ye must first *from* 1571.

inward meaning; reason must give place to God's Holy Spirit; you must submit your worldly wisdom and judgment unto his divine wisdom and judgment. Consider that the Scripture, in what strange form soever it be pronounced, is the word of the living God. Let that always come to your remembrance which is so oft repeated of the Prophet Esay. *The mouth of the Lord*, saith he, *hath spoken it*. The almighty^j and everlasting *God who with his only word created heaven and earth*, hath decreed it. *The Lord of hosts, whose ways are in the seas, whose paths are in the deep waters*, that Lord and God by whose word all things in heaven and in earth are created, governed, and preserved, hath so provided it. *The God of gods and Lord of all lords*, yea, God that is *God alone*, incomprehensible, almighty, and everlasting, he hath spoken it: it is his word. It cannot therefore be but truth, which proceedeth from the God of all truth; it cannot be but wisely and prudently commanded, what Almighty God hath devised; how vainly soever, through want of grace, we miserable wretches do imagine and judge of his most holy word.

The Prophet David, describing an happy man, saith, *Blessed is the man that hath not walked after the counsel of the ungodly, nor stand^k in the way of sinners, nor sit^k in the seat of the scornful*. There are three sorts of people, whose company the Prophet would have him to flee and avoid which shall be an happy man and partaker of God's blessing. First, he may not *walk after the counsel of the ungodly*. Secondly, he may not *stand in the way of sinners*. Thirdly, he must not *sit in the seat of the scornful*. By these three sorts of people, *ungodly men, sinners, and scorners*, all impiety is signified and fully expressed. By *the ungodly* he understandeth those which have no regard of Almighty God, being void of all faith, whose hearts and minds are so set upon the world, that they study only how to accomplish their worldly practices, their carnal imaginations, their filthy lust and desire, without any fear of God. The second sort he calleth *sinners*: not such as do fall through ignorance or of frailness; for then who should be found free? what man ever lived upon earth, Christ only excepted, but he hath sinned? *The just man falleth seven times, and riseth again*. Though the godly do fall, yet they walk not on purposedly^l in sin; they stand not still to continue and tarry in sin; they sit not down like

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Margin Notes: By *italics* in order: [Is. 1:20, 40:5, 48:14]. [Is. 42:5, 44:24, 45:18]. [Ps. 77:19; Is. 43:16, 51:15, 54:5; 2 Pet. 3:5, 7]. [Deut. 10:17; Ps. 86:10]. Ps. 1:[1]. Prov. 24:[16].

^j The almighty] the almighty 1563 G–1571, and almighty *from* 1574. ^k stand and sit] *so in all*. ^l purposedly] *purposely from* 1563 G.

careless men, without all fear of God's just punishment for sin; but defying sin, through God's great grace and infinite mercy, they rise again, and fight against sin. The Prophet then calleth them *sinner*s whose hearts are clean turned from God, and whose whole conversation of life is nothing but sin: they delight so much in the same, that they choose continually to abide and dwell in sin. The third sort he calleth *scorners*, that is, a sort of men, whose hearts are so stuffed with malice, that they are not contented to dwell in sin, and to lead their lives in all kind of wickedness, but also they do contemn and scorn in other all godliness, true religion, all honesty and virtue.

Of the two first sorts of men, I will not say but they may take repentance, and be converted unto God. Of the third sort, I think I may, without danger of God's judgment, pronounce, that never any yet converted unto God by repentance, but continued on still^m in their abominable wickedness, heaping up to themselves damnation, against the day of God's inevitable judgment. Examples of such scorners we read of inⁿ the second book of Chronicles. [2 Chron. 30:[1–10].] When the good king Ezechias in the beginning of his reign had destroyed idolatry, purged the temple, and reformed religion in his realm, he sent messengers into every city, to gather the people unto Hierusalem, to solemnize the feast of Easter in such sort as God had appointed it.^o *The posts went from city to city through the land of Ephraim and Manasses even unto Zabulon.* And what did the people, think ye? Did they laud and praise the name of the Lord, which had given them so good a king, so zealous a prince to abolish idolatry, and to restore again God's true religion? No, no. The Scripture saith, the people *laughed them to scorn, and mocked the king's messengers.* [2 Chron. 36:15–20.] And in the last chapter of the same book it is written, that Almighty God, *having compassion upon his people, sent his messengers the Prophets unto them, to call them from their abominable idolatry and wicked kind of living. But they mocked his messengers, they despised his words, and misused his Prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, and till there was no remedy:* for he gave them up into the hands of their enemies, even unto Nabuchodonozor king of Babylon, who spoiled them of their goods, brent^p their city, and led them, their wives, and their children, captives unto Babylon. The wicked people that were in the days of Noe made but a

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Margin Note: Last line: [Gen. 6, 7; Luke 17:27].

^m continued on still] continued still *from* 1582. ⁿ read of in] read in *from* 1563 C. ^o appointed it] appointed *from* 1567.

^p brent] burnt 1587, 1595, 1623.

mock at the word of God, when Noe told them that God would take vengeance upon them for their sins. The flood therefore came suddenly upon them, and drowned them, with the whole world. Lot preached to the Sodomites,^λ that, except they repented, both they and their city should be destroyed. They thought his sayings impossible to be true, they mocked and scorned^q his admonition, and reputed him as an old doating fool. But, when God by his holy angels had taken Lot, his wife, and two daughters from among them, he rained down fire and brimstone from heaven, and brent^r up those scorners and mockers of his holy word. And what estimation had Christ's doctrine among the Scribes and Pharisees? what reward had he among them? The Gospel reporteth thus [Luke 16:14]: *The Pharisees, which were covetous, did scorn him in his doctrine.* O then ye see that worldly rich men scorn^s the doctrine of their salvation. The worldly wise men scorn the doctrine of Christ, as foolishness^u to their understanding. These scorners have ever been, and ever shall be till^t the world's end. For St. Peter prophesied [2 Pet. 3:[3–4].], that such scorners should be in the world before the latter day. Take heed therefore, my brethren, take heed. Be not ye^u scorners of God's most holy word. Provoke him not to pour out his wrath now upon you, as he did then upon those givers and mockers. Be not wilful murderers of your own souls. Turn unto God while there is yet time of mercy: ye shall else repent it in the world to come, when it shall be too late; for there shall be *judgement without mercy.* [James 2:13.]

This mought^x suffice to admonish us, and cause us henceforth to reverence God's holy Scriptures: but *all men have not faith.* [2 Thess. 3:2.] This therefore shall not satisfy and content all men's minds; but, as some are carnal, so they will still continue, and abuse the Scripture carnally^y to their greater damnation. *The unlearned and unstable,* saith St. Peter [2 Pet. 3:[16].], *pervert the holy Scriptures to their own destruction.* Jesus Christ, as St. Paul saith [1 Cor. 1:[23–24].], *is to the Jews an offence, to the Gentiles foolishness; but to God's children, as well of the Jews as of the Gentiles, he is the power and wisdom of God.* The holy man Simeon saith [Luke 2:34.], *that he is set forth for the fall and rising again of many in Israel.* As Christ Jesus is a fall to the reprobate, which yet perish through their own default, so is his word, yea, the whole book of God, a cause

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Margin Notes: λ [Gen. 19; Luke 17:28–29]. μ [1 Cor. 1:18–23; 2:14].

^q mocked and scorned] scorned and mocked *from* 1563 D. ^r brent] burnt 1587, 1595, 1623. ^s rich men scorn] rich men scorneth 1563 A. ^t be till] be to *from* 1571. ^u Be not ye] Be ye not *from* 1563 D. ^x mought] might *from* 1563 G.

^y Scripture carnally] Scriptures carnally *from* 1563 G.

of damnation unto them through their incredulity. And, as he is a rising up to none other than those which are God's children by adoption, so is his word, yea, the whole Scripture, *the power of God to salvation to them only that do believe it*. [Rom. 1:16] Christ himself, the Prophets before him, the Apostles after him, all the true ministers of God's holy word, yea, every word in God's book, is unto the reprobate *the savour of death unto death*. [2 Cor. 2:26.] Christ Jesus, the Prophets, the Apostles, and all the true ministers of his word, yea, every jot and tittle in the holy Scripture, have^z been, is,^z and shall be for evermore *the savour of life unto eternal life* unto all those whose hearts God hath purified by true faith. Let us earnestly take heed that we make no jesting-stock of the books of holy Scriptures. The more obscure and dark the sayings be to our understanding, the further let us think ourselves to be from God and his Holy Spirit, who was the Author of them. Let us with more reverence endeavour ourselves to search out the wisdom hidden in the outward bark of the Scripture. If we cannot understand the sense and the reason of the saying, yet let us not be scorers, jesters, and deriders; for that is the uttermost token and shew of a reprobate, of a plain enemy to God and^a his wisdom. They be no idle fables to jest at, which God doth seriously pronounce; and for serious matters let us esteem them.

And, though in sundry places of the Scriptures be set out divers rites and ceremonies, oblations and sacrifices, let us not think strange of them, but refer them to the times and people for whom they served; although yet to learned men they be not unprofitable to be considered, but to be expounded as figures and shadows of things and persons afterward openly revealed in the New Testament. Though the rehearsal of the genealogies and pedigrees^b of the fathers be not to much edification of the plain ignorant people, yet is there nothing so impertinently uttered in all the whole book of the Bible, but may serve to spiritual purpose in some respect to all such as will bestow their labours to search out the meanings. These may not be condemned because they serve not to our understanding, nor make not to^c our edification. But let us turn our labour to understand, and to carry away, such sentences and stories as be more fit for our capacity and instruction.

And, whereas we read in divers Psalms how David did wish

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Margin Note: Last line: [Ps. 35:4, 8, 26; 68:30; 109:13].

^z have *and is*] *so in all*. ^a and his wisdom] in his wisdom *till* 1563 G. ^b pedigrees] petegrues 1563 A–F, petegrees 1563 G–1574, pedegrees *from* 1582. ^c make not to] make to *from* 1582.

to the adversaries of God sometime shame,^d rebuke, and confusion, sometime the decay of their offspring and issue, sometime that they might perish and come suddenly to destruction, (as he did wish to the captains of the Philistians,^e *Cast forth, saith he [Ps. 144:[6].], thy lightning, and tear them; shoot out thine arrows, and consume them;*) with such other manner of imprecations; yet ought we not to be offended at such prayers of David, being a Prophet as he was, singularly beloved of God, and rapt in spirit, with an ardent zeal to God's glory. He spake them not^f as of^g a private hatred and in a stomach against God. He was of like mind as St. Paul was, when he did deliver Hymeneus and Alexander with the notorious fornicator to Satan to their temporal confusion, *that their spirit might be saved against the day of the Lord.* And, when David did profess in some places that he hated the wicked, yet in other places of his Psalms he professeth that he hated them *with a perfect hate*, not with a malicious hate to the hurt of the soul. Which perfection of spirit, because it cannot be performed in us, so corrupted in affections as we be, we ought not to use in our private causes the like words in form, for that we cannot fulfil the like words in sense. Let us not therefore be offended; that we may the more reverently judge of such sayings, though strange to our carnal understandings, yet, to them that be spiritually minded, judged to be zealously and godly pronounced.

God therefore, for his mercy's sake, vouchsafe to purify our minds through faith in his Son Jesus Christ, and to instil the heavenly drops of his grace into our hard stony hearts, to supple the same; that we be not contemners and deriders of his infallible word, but that with all humbleness of mind and Christian reverence we may endeavour ourselves to hear and to read his sacred Scriptures, and inwardly so to digest them, as shall be to the comfort of our souls and sanctification^h of his holy Name. To whom with the Son and the Holy Ghost, three Persons and one living God, be all laud, honour, and praise for ever and ever. Amen.

Margin Notes: 2d italics: [1 Tim. 1:20; 1 Cor. 5:5]. 3d italics: [Ps. 26:5, 31:6, 139:21–22].

^d sometime shame] sometimes shame *from* 1563 G. ^e Philistians] Philistines *from* 1574. ^f spake them not] spake not 1623.

^g not as of] not of *from* 1563 D. ^h souls and sanctification] souls sanctification *from* 1582.