

THE HEAD OF THE SERPENT BRUISED BY THE SEED OF THE WOMAN

By John Gill (1697-1771)

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BY THE SEED OF THE WOMAN.

*Occasioned By The Death Of Mrs. Martha Gifford, Late Wife Of The Reverend Mr.
Andrew Gifford, Preached January 14, 1733.*

GENESIS 3:15.

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

THIS book of *Genesis* is, in order, the first of the inspired writings, and gives us an account of the first principles of all things: It informs us that the world had a beginning, and is the produce of a wife and powerful agent, and not the effect of blind chance, or owing to the confused jumbling of fortuitous atoms, contrary to the notions of many philosophers. In this we learn who the first man was; and when, and by whom the several parts of the earth were peopled: It gives us the best light into the rise of the first and early monarchies, about which there has been so much contest, and leads us into the true origin of moral evil among men; concerning which there has been so much dispute in the world. In short, it is the fountain of all sound divinity, true history and philosophy.

The *three* first chapters especially, are an epitome both of nature and grace, and give us, in one view, the rise, ruin, and restoration of the world. *They* may be considered as the *text*, on which all the following parts of scripture are the *comments* and *expositions*.

The first chapter furnishes us with a most divine and beautiful account of the creation, in the order of six days work; by which *we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen, were not made of things which do appear*; in which the glory of the divine power and wisdom is so abundantly manifest. We learn from hence, that the heavens and the earth were made out of nothing, and not from any preexistent matter; that *the earth was without form, and void, a rude and undigested chaos, full of darkness and confusion, until the Spirit of God^[1] brooded upon the face of the waters*, and brought it into a beautiful form and order: Here we are informed when God first commanded light to break forth; when, by a firmament, he divided the superior

and inferior waters from each other; when he made the sea, and caused the dry land to appear; when he clothed the earth with grass, and filled it with fruitful trees; when he bespangled the heavens with stars, and hung up his *two great lights*, the sun and moon; *the one to rule the day, and the other the night*; when he filled the several parts of the universe with proper inhabitants the air with fowl, the sea with fish, and the earth with cattle and creeping things; and after all, as the *crown* and master-piece of all his works, that he *made man after his image and likeness*; placed him over all the works of his hands, and *put all creatures in subjection to him*.

The second chapter principally treats of the happiness of man in his state of innocence; and informs us, that the Lord God allotted him an habitation in the most fertile and delightful spot of ground in all the globe, even the garden of *Eden*; which was stocked with all manner of trees, pleasant to the sight, and good for food; and give him liberty to eat of the fruit of them all, excepting one: that the Lord brought before him every beast of the field, and fowl of the air, that he might give names unto them, and provided a proper help-meet for him, one that was *bone of his bones, and flesh of his flesh*; which two being joined together by the Lord himself, spent their happy hours in the service of their Creator, and in their own mutual solace and delight. But then,

The third chapter introduces a strange and sudden catastrophe of things, and opens a dark scene of wickedness and ruin; in which the just now happy pair are involved, through the cunning and subtlety of a serpent: Here we are informed which of the two he attacked; what artful methods were made use of, by which he gained his point, seduced our first parents to eat the forbidden fruit, whereby they ruined themselves and all their posterity. This brought down the just resentment of God against both the deceiver and the deceived; and all three, the serpent, the woman, and the man, are summoned to appear before him, take their trial, and receive their sentence in a judiciary way: and because the serpent was the instrument of this apostasy and rebellion, he receives his just sentence of punishment first; the account of which we have in the words of my text, and in the preceding verse.

Now, whereas the *serpent* is represented as the contriver and author of this mischief to man, and upon him a judicial sentence, of which my text is a part, is pronounced, it will be necessary, before I proceed any further, to inquire, who we are to understand by it. I apprehend, that by the *serpent* is meant a true and real serpent, and not the mere form and likeness of one, in which the devil might appear for a time. This is evident from its being reckoned among the beasts of the field, ver. 1, from the cunning and subtlety which is there ascribed to it;^[2] and more especially from the nature of the curse denounced against it in my text, and in the verse before it, which is thus expressed; And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life. And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

All which is literally true of this creature, the serpent; it is the most detestable and loathsome of all creatures; it is a reptile upon the earth; it goes upon its belly, however upright it might be before this sentence; it feeds upon what is exceeding mean; and

between this and man is an irreconcilable enmity; the sight of a serpent is disagreeable to man, and the fight of a man is as abhorrent to a serpent; the serpent's gall is poison to man, and the spittle of a man is venomous to serpents. This antipathy to serpents, in the human nature, is observed to be still more strong in the female sex; and it is averred, that the bare foot of a woman pressing a serpent's head, never so little, is immediate death to it: and though this creature may, at unawares, bite the heels of men; yet man has such an advantage over it, that he can easily bruise and crush its head; which it being sensible of, is most careful to cover and hide. These are things which naturalists^[3] say of this creature, and, if true, show that the curse denounced, is literally fulfilled in it; and consequently, that it was a real and proper serpent, which is here intended.

But then let it be observed, that not a mere serpent, or that only, is to be understood, but that as possessed and used by Satan as his instrument: This appears from its having a faculty of speaking; and more especially from its cunning and sophistic way of reasoning; nor is it rational to suppose, that human nature, in its bloom and glory, should be outwitted, seduced, and overcome by a creature so very inferior to it: besides, the writings of the New Testament ascribe the reduction and ruin of man to the devil. Our Lord calls him *a murderer from the beginning*; (John 8:44) and sometimes this seduction is attributed to him, under the name of *the serpent*: (2 Corinthians 11:2.) And it is easy to observe, that the Devil and Satan, (Revelation 12:9 and 20:2.) is called *the old serpent*; to all which agree the sentiments of many of the Jewish writers,^[4] who acknowledge that Satan, whom they *call Samael*, and the Angel of death, names proper enough for him, was in the serpent, and was the cause of man's ruin, and is principally designed in the curse.

This clears the justice of God, and shows that the punishment of the serpent is not unreasonable; since it was made use of by Satan as an instrument to bring about his wicked designs. If the earth was cursed for man's sake, why might not this creature be cursed for Satan's sake, who had employed it to so vile a purpose? The punishing the instrument, or what is accessory, as well as the principal, does more discover God's detestation of the fact for which they are punished, as may be observed in other instances. (Exodus 21:28, Leviticus 20:15.) But then,

Let it not be thought that the instrument only was punished, and the principal suffered to escape. No, this sentence of punishment, here pronounced, was chiefly designed against Satan, and to be inflicted on him; and every part of it is applicable to him; he is of all creatures accursed of God; he is now cast down from the realms of light and glory, in which he dwelt, and will never be able to rise more and regain his former place and dignity; he lives not upon *angels food*, as formerly, but upon earthly, impure, and sordid lusts. Between him and the woman's seed is an implacable enmity, which will issue in his everlasting ruin; whatever feeble attempts he may be able to make to defend himself, and destroy the kingdom of Christ. But on these things I have already more largely insisted, in a treatise^[5] published to the world some time ago. I go on to observe, that

These words, *I will put enmity*, etc. are spoken by a divine person; who is called *the LORD GOD*; at whose voice *Adam* trembled, and whose presence he dreaded; by whom

we are to understand, either God absolutely, or personally considered; if as personally considered, then either the first or second person in the Trinity is designed. I am inclined to think that the Lord Jesus Christ appeared in an human form to *Adam*, and spoke with an articulate voice to him; for *no man hath seen God* the Father at any time; ye have neither heard his voice at any time, says Christ, nor seen his shape. (John 5:37.)

It is a rule that, perhaps, will meet with few exceptions in the Old Testament; that whenever any visible appearance of Jehovah was made, any shape assumed, or articulate voice uttered, it is to be understood of the second person; who, in the fullness of time, was to be made flesh, and dwell among us; and, indeed, who so proper to carry on a judicial process against these criminals? before whom should they take their trials? and from whom should they receive the sentence of condemnation, but from him who is the Judge of all the earth? For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son; that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father: (John 5:22, 23.) And who more fit to bring the first tidings of grace and salvation to fallen man, than he who was to be the GREAT PROPHET in *Israel*? By this means the gospel of our salvation *first began to be spoken by the Lord* in the garden of *Eden*, as it afterwards was in the land of *Judea*, in such a manner, and with such power and authority, as it never was before or since. Add to all this, that the paraphrases anciently used by the Jewish church, seem to incline to this sense; for the *Targums* of *Onkelos* and *Jonathan* read the eighth verse thus: *And they heard the voice of the word of the Lord God walking in the garden*, etc. and the Jerusalem Targum reads the ninth verse after this manner: *And the Word of the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him*, etc. And both *Onkelos* and *Jonathan* paraphrase the tenth verse thus: *And he said, The voice of thy Word I heard in the garden*, etc. By the Word of the Lord, they mean the essential Word, the Messiah, who walked in the garden, called to *Adam*, and whose voice he heard. Now it is the very same person that continues talking with *Adam* and *Eve*, who, in my text, directs his discourse to the serpent; nor ought it to be any objection that he is here introduced speaking of himself, under the character of *the seed of the woman*, that should bruise the serpent's head, since this is not unusual, as appears from *John* 4:10, etc.

The principal thing designed in my text, is the victory the Messiah should obtain over Satan. The enmity put between the woman and the serpent, between his seed and hers, breaking out into open war, was to issue in an entire conquest over the serpent and his seed, in which the Messiah would interest all his people. This, and only this, could be a support to *Adam* in his present state and condition. We are not to imagine, to use the words of an ingenious modern writer,^[6] "we hear God foretelling, with great solemnity, a very trivial accident that should sometime happen in the world; that serpents would be apt to bite men by the heels, and that men would be apt to revenge themselves by striking them on the head. What has this trifle to do with the loss of mankind, with the corruption of the natural and moral world, and the ruin of all the glory and happiness of the creation? Great comfort it was to *Adam*, doubtless, after telling him that his days should be short, and full of misery, and his end without hope, to let him know that he should now and then knock a snake on the head; but not even that without paying dear for his poor victory, for the snake should often bite him by the heel. *Adam* surely could not understand the prophecy in this sense, though some of his sorts have so understood it."

It is certain these were not the sentiments of the old Jewish church; for the paraphrases of *Jonathan* and *Jerusalem* understand the words of the Messiah; the former of which says, "There shall be a healing for the heel in the days of the King Messiah;" and much to the same purpose says the latter. The word **awh**, which is rendered *it*, is one of the names of God, and is so used in *Psalms* 102:27, *Isaiah* 48:12, and well agrees with Christ, who is the unchangeable, omnipotent, and eternal HE, the *ajutov*, who is *the same yesterday, today, and for ever*. The work ascribed to him, which is the bruising the serpent's head, is what no other but the Messiah was to do, or could do, and is referred to in *Psalms* 110:6, which Psalm belongs solely to the Messiah; where it is said of him, *He shall wound the heads over many countries*; which may be rendered, *He shall wound the head over a large country*; or, *he shall wound him on the head who is over a large country*; which can be no other than Satan, the god and prince of this world. Besides, *in the volume of the book*, *ejk kefali>di bibli>ou*; at the head of the book, in the beginning of it, *it is written of Christ*, that he should *do the will of God*; which was to destroy Satan, the old serpent, with his works, and deliver sinful miserable man out of his hands; and can refer to no other prophesy than this, which stands at the head and front of the Bible; from the giving forth of which the Messiah has *been spoken of by the mouth of all God's holy prophets, which have been since the world began*. Nor can it be any just objection to his being the seed of the woman; that the word *seed* is a collective word, since it is often used to design a single person; as in *Genesis* 4:25, and chap. 15:2, and 21:13. From all which I conclude, that this is an intimation, and the first intimation of the Messiah, and of his work and office.

The manner in which this hint is given, is worthy of observation. It is commonly said, that these words contain the first promise of the Messiah, and of grace and salvation by him to sinful man; but it ought to be observed, that the words are not spoken to man, but to the serpent; not by way of promise to *Adam*, but by way of threatening to the devil: It is true, indeed, *Adam* was present, and heard what dropped from the lips of his Judge, which revived his fainting spirits and trembling heart, and sprung a dawn of light and joy in him, and laid a solid foundation for faith and hope, as to everlasting salvation.

These words contain a declaration of secret enmity between several parties, breaking out into open war, and the event of it.

The declaration of this mutual enmity is thus expressed: *I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed*; that is, "I will put between you, and raise up among you an implacable and irreconcilable hatred, which shall not lie secretly burning in your breasts, but shall break out into open acts of hostility, one against another; there shall be a perpetual war between you." Now in this battle there are two pair of combatants.

The one is the serpent and the woman; who is designed by the serpent, has been observed already: By the *woman*, cannot be meant the church, who is sometimes so called, both for her weakness and fruitfulness in her present state. Could this allegorical sense be admitted of, some passages in the twelfth chapter of the *Revelation* would serve as a proper comment on our text; particularly ver. 4, 13-15, 17.

But this mystical sense is not suitable; the text designs some certain woman literally understood, **hçah** "that woman," by way of emphasis: Some say, the virgin *Mary*, that famous woman, the mother of Christ, who is said to be *made of a woman*; a woman that both was mother and virgin at one and the same time, who, for the sake of him whom she bore, is *blessed among women*; and upon that account *blessed by all generations*. But rather by this woman, we are to understand *Eve*, the wife of *Adam*, the woman that was then present, who had beguiled her husband, being seduced by the serpent; the woman into whose affections he had ingratiated himself, and with whom he had lately so familiarly conversed: This woman, seeing herself imposed on, and seduced by him, and herself and posterity ruined, is filled with hatred to him; which must be no small mortification to that proud spirit, to have the weak woman opposed, as his match.

The other pair of combatants are, the seed of the serpent, and the seed of the woman.

By *the seed of the serpent*, may be meant either evil angels, or wicked men, or both. Evil angels may truly be called the seed of the devil, since they are of the same nature and principles with him; they are his angels, he is the prince of them; they move at his orders, and obey his commands; and these bear not only a secret grudge, but keep up an open war against Christ and his saints. Wicked men also may properly enough be called his seed; the devil is their father, and they are his children; they imitate him, they do his works, and are called after his name, *serpents, and generation of vipers*. (Matthew 22:23.) They hate Christ and his people, and persecute them that are after the Spirit. This has always been, and ever will be the case, as long as this present state of things continues.

By *the seed of the woman*, is not designed her immediate posterity, especially *Cain*; for whatever hopes she might have entertained at his birth, that she had brought forth the Messiah, the promised seed; which some conclude from her words, in chapter 4:1. *I have gotten a man from the Lord*; which they choose to render, *I have gotten a man, the Lord*; and which *Jonathan* the Targumist paraphrases thus; "I have gotten a man, the Angel of the Lord;" I say, whatever hopes of this kind she had encouraged in herself at this time, it appeared plainly afterwards that he was of the seed of the serpent, a child of the devil. Nor by the seed of the woman are we to understand the whole world, though, it is true, that *Eve* is *the mother of all living*; upon which account *Adam* gave her the name of *Eve*; yet many of her natural seed and offspring are children of disobedience, who are taken and led captive by the devil at his will, and in whose minds he works effectually; whatever aversion they may have to him, as he is represented as a frightful and horrible spirit, yet they have none to him, as an impure and wicked one; they love his works, and show themselves to be his children, and will be cursed companions with him in everlasting flames. Nor can I see any reason why the elect of God should be here called the seed of the woman; it is true, believers are called *the seed of Abraham*, in a spiritual sense, *inasmuch as they are partakers of the same faith*, and tread in the same steps of obedience: They are also called the seed of the church frequently; (Isaiah 43:5, and 44:3, and 59:21, etc.) and *Jerusalem*, which is above, is said to be *the mother of them all*, because they are born in her, and nursed up at her side; but they are never called the seed of *Eve*, in any particular and distinct sense from the rest of the world; the grace by which

they are regenerated, not descending to them from her by natural generation. I conclude then, that by the seed of the woman, is meant the Messiah: I have given my reasons already; it is the same seed whom God afterwards promised to *Abraham*, more clearly and distinctly, saying, In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; (Genesis 22:16.) which the apostle (Galatians 3:16.) *Paul* directly applies to Christ. It will not now be improper to consider in what sense Christ is called *the seed of the woman*.

Some think, he is so called because of his birth of a virgin, since he is said to be the seed of the woman, and not of the man; which agrees with what is said of Jesus, that he was *made of a woman*: But the phrase does not seem to design the miraculous conception and birth of the Messiah; at least, it was not so understood by *Eve*, if it can be thought, as some learned men are of opinion, as has been before observed, that she had entertained some hopes and faith too, that she had got the Messiah; which she could not, had she known that he was to be born of a virgin; nor does it appear that there were any intimations of this kind, at least, any clear ones, until the times of *Isaiah*, who prophesied thus, Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call his name Immanuel. (Isaiah 7:14.)

It may be, this phrase, *the seed of the woman*, is only designed to express the truth of Christ's incarnation, the reality of his human nature, that he should partake of the same flesh and blood with us; and, perhaps, the peculiarity of the expression may intend his assumption of a nature, and not a person; for Christ assumed not an human person, but an human nature, which is called that *holy Thing born of the virgin, the seed of Abraham*; and as here *the seed of the woman*. If Christ had taken to himself an human person, there must be two persons in him, which was the monstrous and absurd error of *Nestorius*, bishop of *Constantinople*, who lived in the fifth century, and was condemned by several councils. The human nature of Christ never subsisted of itself, which is proper to personality; it always was in union with the second person, subsisted in him, and was never separate from him since it had an existence. Besides, if Christ, as man, is a separate and distinct person, his actions and obedience, as such, would be of service to none but that single person; whereas, through Christ's assumption of an human nature in personality with himself, as the Son of God, all his actions, obedience, and sufferings as man, have a divine virtue and efficacy put into them, which renders the benefit of them communicable to as many as he pleases.

But to proceed: This phrase, *the seed of the woman*, seems to be used on purpose to comfort *Eve*, under her present sorrowful circumstances; that though she had beguiled her husband, through the seduction of the serpent, and was the cause of his, her own, and their posterity's ruin; yet one descending from her, of her seed and offspring, should avenge this wrong done her, by bruising the serpent's head, and thereby deliver her from his power, and save her with an everlasting salvation. The apostle refers to this, when he says, And Adam was not deceived; but the woman being deceived, was in the transgression, notwithstanding she shall be saved in child-bearing; (1 Timothy 2:13, 14.) which last part of the text I would choose to render thus, *Notwithstanding she shall be saved, or there shall be salvation for her, dia< th~v teknogoh>av, by the birth of a Son;*[\[7\]](#) that is, by the promised seed, the seed of the woman, the Lord Jesus Christ. Take

the words in the other reading, and they furnish out no good sense at all, neither with respect to temporal or eternal salvation: If they are to be understood of temporal salvation in child-bearing, this is not true; since many good women, as *Rachel*, and others, have died in child-bed; nor can they be understood in any sound sense of eternal salvation, seeing bearing of children can never be thought to be either the cause or condition, or means of that, and which, as is by a learned man rightly observed, would be small comfort to those who bear none; but read the words, as I have observed they may be read, there is a glare of gospel light in them, and give us reason to conclude, that *Eve*, who was first in the transgression, was nevertheless saved, through the Messiah, and that all other women, who believe in the same glorious person, shall be saved also. What a mortification must this be to the devil, to hear, that though he had drawn the woman into the transgression, yet she should be saved from it; that though, through his temptations, she had been the cause of man's ruin, yet there should be one who would spring from her, that would be the author of salvation; and that the seed of that woman, whom he had deceived, should be the ruin of him. Now between Satan and his seed, evil angels and wicked men, on the one side, and Christ the seed of the woman, and the Head of the elect, on the other, there is a rooted enmity. The serpent and his seed hate Christ; those proud spirits could not bear that the human nature should be advanced to union with the Son of God, and be exalted above that of theirs; this is thought, by some, to be that which occasioned their apostasy from God. As soon as they had an intimation of this, they broke away from him in rage and wrath, and with a disdainful pride, left their first habitations of bliss and glory, and fell into mutiny and rebellion against their Maker, and into plots and conspiracies to hinder the salvation of man by the incarnate God; though all in vain, and to no purpose. As soon as the man Christ Jesus was born, Satan stirred up *Herod* to seek the young child's life to destroy it; and when he was grown up to the estate of man, he had the front to solicit him to destroy himself; he put the Jews more than once upon stoning of him, and, at last, put it into the heart of *Judas Iscariot* to betray him; by which means he attained his end, so as to bring him to death, though it issued in the destruction of himself. The same hatred and malice are to be observed in all his seed.

On the other hand, Christ, the seed of the woman, who loves righteousness, and hates iniquity, cannot but hate all the workers of it; whose trade and business it is to commit sin: He hates Satan and all his followers, maintains a war against them, in which he is the mighty conqueror; all his enemies will fall into his hands, to whom he will say, *Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.*

This leads me to consider the issue and event of this mutual enmity, discord and war; the Messiah, the seed of the woman, *shall bruise the serpent's head*; and the serpent, the devil, *shall bruise the Messiah's heel*; a vast disparity this; great are the advantages of the one over the other. I proceed to inquire,

What may be meant by *bruising* the serpent's *head*. Perhaps, what the author of the epistle to the *Hebrews* says, will give us some light into it, when he observes, that forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. (Hebrews 2:14.)

What is expressed in metaphorical terms in my text, is, in this scripture, signified without a figure; the bruising of the serpent's head, is the *destruction* of the devil himself, by which must be understood, not an annihilation of his being; for though that is in the power of the woman's seed, yet he will preserve him as a monument of his wrath and vengeance, to be a tormentor of others, and to be punished himself; therefore not an annihilation of him, but a destruction of his power, authority, dominion, and works, is intended. It may be, a passage of the apostle *John's* may instruct us in this matter yet more clearly, when he says, For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. (1 John 3:8.)

The works of the devil are sinful works, which he, in all ages, has been plotting and contriving, soliciting men unto, and engaging them in. Christ was manifested in human nature to destroy these works; that is, to put away the sins of his people, make reconciliation for them, finish them, and make an end of them by the sacrifice of himself; and thereby save them from them, and from the wrath of God, which they deserve; in doing which, he has bruised the serpent's head, and confounded a design of his, which was to involve them in all the miseries of an eternal death, from which Christ has secured them; for he has *abolished death*, another of the devil's *works*, and *brought life and immortality to light by the gospel*.

There is a threefold death, which sin is the cause of, and has introduced into the world, and which are the just *wages* of it, a corporal, spiritual or moral, and an eternal one; all which are, in some sense, abolished by Christ. Though his people, whilst in a state of nature, are *dead in trespasses and in sins*, yet he having procured spiritual life for them, puts it into them, preserves and secures it, so as they shall never die more, in that sense. They die, indeed, a corporal death; they are not exempted from the general decree of heaven, and lot of all men; they are *brought to death, to the house appointed for all living*. Daily instances confirm this, Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live for ever? (Zechariah 1:5.) But then the sting of death is taken away, the curse is removed; death is not inflicted on them as a penal evil, or by way of punishment for sin, that being fully satisfied for by Christ. Death is one of the believer's privileges; it frees them from the troubles of this world, and lets them into the glories of another; wherefore, Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord; they rest from their labors, and their works follow them. (Revelation 14:13.) Nor shall they always abide under the power of death; their bodies shall be raised immortal, incorruptible, and glorious; when, being reunited to their souls, they shall be received into the everlasting kingdom and glory of Christ, and spend an endless eternity with him in joy and praise; where they shall be forever secured from the second death, which is the eternal death; Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power. (Revelation 20:6.) This is all owing to Christ, *the resurrection and the life*; who says, He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die. (John 11:25, 26.) This is comfortable to a believer, living and dying.

Moreover, by the head of the serpent, we are not to understand the devil singly and alone; but the whole posse of devils with him, even all the powers of darkness, all the fiends of the infernal lake, who came out in a body, and attacked the Lord of life and glory, the

seed of the woman, the true Messiah, when he hung on the cross; at which time, he *spoiled principalities and powers*, apekdusamenov, "unclothed them," stripped

them of their armor, and left them naked and defenseless, and made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it; (Colossians 2:15.) which, when he had done, he *ascended on high; and led captivity captive*.

Again, The head being the seat of power, which commands the body and the members of it, may here intend the power, authority, and dominion, which the devil, as the god of this world, has usurped over mankind; and has endeavored to establish among them, and in which he arrived to a very great pitch in the Gentile world; as is very evident from that universal idolatry which he spread over it, and which continued there for many hundreds of years. There was scarce any sort of creature in the world, but he prevailed upon the^[8] heathens to worship, even some the most mean and contemptible; for they not only worshipped the heavens, and the host of them, the sun, moon, planets, and fixed stars, and the four elements, fire, earth, air, and water, but even fishes of the sea, fowls of the air, four-footed beasts, and creeping things; nay, even vegetables, trees, plants, and roots, and such as leeks and onions; which made the poet^[9] deride them for their garden gods. Nay, the devil so far prevailed, as to obtain worship and adoration for himself, and that sometimes under^[10] the name and form^[11] of a serpent, or in a^[12] real one, in remembrance of that which he had used as an instrument^[13] to ruin mankind. In our Lord's time, Satan fancied he had such a power over the world, as to dispose of it at his pleasure; and therefore, in an insolent and audacious manner, offered the kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them, to Christ, if he would fall down and worship him. The sacrifices which he instituted, and which were not only impure and trifling, but cruel and barbarous; such as the sacrifices^[14] of human creatures themselves, is a full proof of what power and authority he had over men, and how much they were devoted to him, and infatuated by him: But now his head is bruised and crushed by the seed of the woman; he has not the authority he had in the Gentile world, Christ having sent his gospel thither, has dispelled the former darkness and ignorance, which has opened their eyes to see their folly and madness, and has been the means of their shaking off the devil's yoke, of delivering them from the power of Satan, and of turning them from their idols to serve the living God.

Another way by which the devil got power and authority in the Gentile world, and which, for some time, he secured and established, was by setting up^[15] oracles in many places; the most famous of which were those of^[16] *Jupiter Ammon* in *Egypt*, and of *Apollo*, the same with^[17] *Apollyon*, one of the names of the devil in *Revelation* 9:11, at *Delphos* in *Greece*. These seem to be set up in imitation of the oracle of God, at which the people of *Israel* received answers by *Urim* and *Thummim*. The responses which the Gentiles received at their oracles, were generally delivered in a dark, intricate,^[18] and ambiguous manner, so as to be sure to preserve the credit of the oracle, and the good opinion of the votary. These continued in great vogue for a time; but upon the coming of Christ, *the seed of the woman*, were struck dumb; the Gentiles^[19] were sensible of it, but were ignorant of the cause. The fullest proof of the ceasing of these oracles, and the reason of it, is the application of *Augustus Caesar* to the oracle at *Delphos*, after the birth of Christ,

who, when he had offered some hundreds of sacrifices, urged *Apollo* to give him an answer, who should reign after him, which was the last, as it is said, he ever uttered, and was delivered in three Greek verses to this purpose:^[20] "An Hebrew child that rules the blessed gods, hath commanded me to leave this dwelling, and go immediately to hell, from henceforward therefore depart in silence from our altars." It is also said,^[21] that *Augustus* upon his return to *Rome*, set up an altar in the Capitol, with this inscription on it, *The altar of the first-born of God*. A very considerable instance is this of the seed of the woman's bruising the serpent's head, for by silencing his oracles, his power and authority were greatly diminished. Now in some sense may be said the judgment of the Gentile world, and the prince of it to be *cast out*, as he was out of his oracle-temples: We have an account of something of this kind in the *Acts* of the apostles, (Acts 16:16-18.) where we read, that as the apostles *went to prayer, a certain damsel, possessed with a spirit of divination*; it is in the Greek text a spirit of *Python*, the same with^[22] *Apollo*, met them, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying; to which spirit Paul turned and said, *I command thee, in the name of Jesus Christ, to come out of her; and he came out of her the same hour*. The old serpent not being able to stand before the seed of the woman, Christ Jesus, in the ministry of his apostles.

The power of Satan over the bodies of men in the land of *Judea*, was very considerable about the time of Christ's being upon earth: It was a strange and uncommon dispensation; doubtless, those frequent and numerous possessions by devils were suffered, that the Son of God might have an opportunity of giving full proof both of his Deity and Messiahship. It is certain, that *he went about, and healed all that were possessed with devils*; they were obliged to quit their habitations at his order; he dispossessed them wherever he came; they dreaded him, as their tormentor and destroyer; he turned out a legion of them at once from one man; the whole posse of them was not able to stand before him. Since those times, it is remarkable that possessions of this kind have been very rare; which shows that *the seed of the woman has bruised the serpent's head*, and crushed this part of his power. Christ has not only dispossessed Satan of the bodies of men by his power, but of the souls of many by his gospel, both among Jews and Gentiles; has delivered them from the power of darkness, and translated them into his own kingdom.

The author of the epistle to the Hebrews observes, that the devil had *the power of death* formerly; this may be ascribed unto him, because he introduced sin into the world, which brought in death; he tempts to sin, and then accuses of it, and terrifies for it with the fears of death; and, in the Old Testament-dispensation, he was sometimes employed by the Lord to inflict death upon offenders; he was God's executioner of it, so we read of some who murmured and were destroyed of the destroyer; (1 Corinthians 10:10.) the destroying angel, *the angel of death*, as the Jews were used to call the devil; by reason of this multitudes in that day were under a servile spirit, and, *through fear of death* in this way, *were all their lifetime subject to bondage*. But now this power of Satan's is crushed, which he had either by usurpation or permission; the serpent's head is bruised; Christ the seed of the woman, has took into his own hands *the keys of hell and death*.

I take no notice of Satan's being called, *the prince of the power of the air*, (Ephesians 2:2.) because that does not refer to any power he has, or ever had, over the air in raising

of winds, and the like; but of his dominion and government over the rest of the devils, who have their dwelling in the territories of the air, until they receive their final doom.

Once more: As the head is the seat of wisdom, by the serpent's head, and the bruising of it, may be meant his cunning and crafty schemes, all which have been, or shall be baffled and confounded by Christ, the seed of the woman. He once formed a scheme to ruin all mankind, which was drawn with so much cunning, and managed with so much craft and subtlety, that it succeeded so far, as that he thought all was sure; when, on a sudden, it was declared, that a Savior was provided, who, in due time, was sent into the world, and saved his people from sin, law, hell, and death. He forms another scheme to take away the life of Christ: This was so craftily laid as to succeed; but then, through the death of him, Satan, who had the power of death, is destroyed. When the gospel was carried into the Gentile world, he opposed it with all the cunning he was master of: He stirred up the greatest wits of the age against it, but all in vain; *for it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe;* and though the apostles preached *Christ crucified, to the Jews, a stumbling-block; and to the Greeks, foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God;* and maugre all the opposition made against their doctrines, *the weapons of their warfare were not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds, calling down imaginations; and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.* Satan is still framing many devices and stratagems against the saints, and makes use of many artful wiles and methods to ensnare their souls, distress their minds, and disturb their peace; he lays many snares and temptations in their way; but Christ, the seed of the woman, as he has both an ability and a heart to *succor them that are tempted*, so he will never *suffer them to be tempted above that they are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape;* and, in a little time, as he has bruised the serpent's head under himself, so he will bruise it under the feet of his saints; they shall never more be hurt or harassed by that enemy of their souls.

In a word, the whole empire of Satan is crushed by the Messiah; he is no more the god of this world, as he was before the Messiah's coming; the prince of this world is judged, condemned, and cast out, and will still have less power than he now has, when *the Lord shall be King over all the earth, and his name one;* which will be when the Jews are converted, and *the fullness of the Gentiles is brought in.*

There is but one thing more to be taken notice of, and that is the bruising of the Messiah's *heel* by the serpent, which is the other part of the event, following the enmity, hatred, and war, between the devil and the seed of the woman. Some ^[23] think, by the Messiah's *heel*, is meant hypocrites, who profess to be members of Christ's body, and are not, whom Satan gets an advantage over, draws with his tail, and casts down to the earth; but the heel of Christ, though it is the lowest part of his body, yet it is a part of it, which hypocrites are not. Others think, that the people of Christ, his members on earth, are designed, who are exposed to persecutions, raised by Satan and his emissaries, against whom they kick, and sometimes bruise. But, perhaps, some *slight trouble*, which Christ himself met with from Satan, may be intended; such as his temptations in the wilderness,

where he *fasted forty days and forty nights*, from whence he was carried by the devil into the holy city, and set upon a pinnacle of the temple, and from thence to an exceeding high mountain; or his agony in the garden, his conflict with the prince of darkness there, when *his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground*, and his soul was *exceeding sorrowful, even unto death*; or rather by the *heel* of Christ may be meant his human nature, which, as his divine nature is the *head* and chief in him, this is the *heel*, the inferior and lowest nature in him, and what was frequently exposed to Satan's insults, temptations, and persecutions, and which he much struck at; and so far prevailed, as to bring him to a shameful and an accursed death; *the iniquity of his heels*, the sins of his people, which *he bore in his own body on the tree*, then *compassing him about*; but though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God; and though he was put to death in the flesh, yet was quickened in the Spirit, whereby he got an entire victory over Satan, and became *the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him*.

From the whole of this passage we may learn, that the Messiah was to be God and man, to suffer, die, and rise again, and so become the Savior of his people: If he had not been man, he would not have had a *heel* to be bruised; and if he had not been God, he could not have bruised the head of the serpent: His *sufferings* are fitly expressed by *the bruising of his heel*; his resurrection from the dead, after which *he ascended on high, and led captivity captive*, by his bruising the serpent's head; and, from the whole, it appears that he is *able to save them to the uttermost that come to God by Oim, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them*. I have done; I conclude my subject.

It may now be expected that I should say something concerning the deceased, whose death has occasioned this discourse. I understand she was verse to great and long encomiums; and, for my own part, I ever had a disinclination to them: However, what I shall say in this way upon the testimony of those that knew her, I believe, is just, and to be depended on. It pleased God to call her, by his grace, very early, and to engage her heart betimes to give up herself, not only to the Lord, but to a church of Christ, by the will of God, to walk with his people in all the ordinances of the gospel; and as it was through the preaching of the doctrines of grace that she was at first wrought upon, so she ever retained a value for them, and an esteem of them. God, in his providence, indulged her with a plenty of worldly substance; but this fullness was without forgetfulness of her God, or pride and haughtiness towards her fellow-creatures. As she was of an easy temper and disposition, and in easy circumstances of life, so the former was without indolence, and the latter not without industry. She had firmness and resolution of mind, both in the affairs of religion, and in the things of life, but without obstinacy and stubbornness. She was constant and zealous in the exercise of religious duties, but without dependence on them, or ostentation in them. In her last hours, this passage of scripture I have been discoursing from, and indeed the whole chapter, were very refreshing to her, when, as she said, the adversary was very busy; but Christ, the seed of the woman, who has bruised the serpent's head, appeared to her relief, and graciously assured her, that he that comes to him, *he will in no wise cast out*; and that he had *loved her with an everlasting love, and therefore with loving-kindness had drawn her to himself*; from whence there is reason to conclude a comfortable and well-grounded hope of her everlasting salvation and happiness; wherefore it becomes her relatives and

friends, not to *sorrow as others, which have no hope; for if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.*

FOOTNOTES:

[1] As the hen, or any other fowl, broods upon its eggs or young, which is the sense of the word *tpjrm*, according to the Jewish writers as R Sol. Jarchi, R. Aben Ezra, R. Levi Ben Gersom, in Genesis 1, 2.

[2] See Matthew 10:16.

[3] All these instances of antipathy are observed, by the learned Mr. Joseph Mede, from naturalists, in his works, Book 1. Disc. 39. p. 295. Vid. Franz. Hist. Animal. Part 4. 100:1. Topsel's. History of Serpents, p. 604, 606.

[4] Zohar in Genesis 3. fol. 127, 1, 2, Targum Jon. in Genesis 3:6. Vid. Aben Ezra in Genesis 3:3.

[5] The prophecies of the Old Testament respecting the Messiah, literally fulfilled in Jesus, chap. 1. p. 5, 6, etc.

[6] "Sherlock's use and intent of Prophecy, p. 70, 71.

[7] See Kidder's Demonstration of the Messiah, Part 1. p. 24, 25. and the notes of his learned editor, Mr. Bedford.

[8] Vid. Alex. ab Alex. Genial. Dieram, 50:3, 100:12, and 50:6, 100:26.

[9] Quis nescit Volsi Bythinice qualia demens Aegyptus portenta colat: Crocodilon adorat Pars haec: illa pavet saturam serpentibus Ibin; Illic caeruleos hic piscem fluminis illic Oppida tota canem, nemo veneratur Dianam. Porrum & caepe nescit violare & srangere morsu: O sanctas Gentes, quibus haec nascuntur in hortis Numina. — Juvenal. Satyr. 15.

[10] Para foinikwn de ki< ferekudhv labwn twv aformav, eqeologhse pri tou par autw legomenou Ofiwnewv Qeou ki< twv Ofiwnidwn. Euseb. Prepar. Evangel. 50:1. 100:10. p. 42. Ed. Paris. L. Vives in Aug. de Civ. Dei, 50:14. 100:11. reports from the same Pherecydes, of whom Eusebius speaks, that this god Ophioneus, or Serpentinus, was the price of the demons, or devils, whom Jupiter cast down from heaven.

[11] Ipsa novissime sacra & ritus initiationis ipsius, quibus Sebadiis nomen est, testimonio esse poterunt veritati: in quibus aureus coluber in finem dimittitur consecratis, & eximitur rursus ab inferioribus partibus atque imis, Arnob. adv Gevtes, 50:5. p. 203. Ed. Elmenhorst. Vid. Clement. Alex. admon, ad Gentes, p. 11. Ed. Paris. & Jul. Firmic.

de error. Proph. Relig. p. 18. Ed. Oxon. & Justin. Martyr. Apolog. 2. p. 70, 71. Ed. Paris. The figure of the Egyptian god Typhon, was in this manner: His upper part was human, his lower part was in the form of a serpent; he was represented with serpents coming out of his hands, and many others wrapping themselves about his body, Chartar. Hist. Deorum, p. 186. Imag. 71. AEsculapius was also worshipped in the form of a serpent, and is called by Ovid, Phoebeius anguis, Metamorph. 50:15. fab. 50. And by Horace, Serpens Epidaurius, Serm. 50:1. Satyr. 3. who, in the shape of a snake, was brought from Epidaurus to Rome, to free the city from the pestilence, an. U. C. 462. Vid. Liv. 100:11. Brev. & Sext. Aurel. Victor. de illustr. viris, 100:25. The Genii, which belonged to any place, city, or country, were painted in the same form. Virgil. Aeneid. 50:5. 5:95. & Servius in ib. p. 896. Vid. Pers. Satyr. 1. 5:113.

[12] Colebant enim bestias sere omnes, quas portentorum mater Aegyptus alebat, in his & serpentes & dracunculos, quos illi Agathodaemonas vocabant. Pignorii mens. Isiac. Expos. 100:1. p. 5. Osiridis subsequentis caput ornat sacra serpens in tabula ita frequens, ut in mentem veniat mirari hominum stoliditatem, qui a Deo opt. max. ita aberrarent, ut sordidum hoc animal venerarentur. Neque vero Aegyptii tantum huic dementiae assines. Indi enim Phoenices, Arabes, Babyionii, Poeni, Baetii, Epirotae, Sicyonii, Epidaurii, Romani, è nostris haeretici quidam & novi orbis in colae huic insaniae manus dedere. Ibid. 100:3. p. 23. 24. Vid. p. 26-28. & Tomasin. Cecropii votum, p. 46, 47, 55. Serpents were sacred to Jupiter. Herodot. 50:2. 100:74. and to AEsculapius, Pausan. 50:2. p. 106, 136. and to Ceres and Minerva Chartar. Imag. Deorum, p. 100, 162.

[13] Dionuson mainolhn orgiazousi Bakcoi wnofagia ten ieromanian agontev ki< teliskousi tav krewnomiav twn fonwn anesemmenoi toiv ofesin epololuzontev Euan ekrinhn di hn h planh parhkolouqhse ki< semeion orgiwn bakcikwn ofiv evi tetelesmenov autika goun kata thn akriqh twn Ebraiwn fwnhn to onoma tou Euia dasunomenon ermhneuetai ofiv h qhleia.. Clemens Alexandr. admon. ad Gentes. p. 9. Of the use of the word Eva, and the repetition of it in the Bacchanalian rites, when the idolaters appeared with serpents platted on their heads, see Virgil. Aeneid. 50:6. 5:518, 519. 50:7. 5:388. Pers Satyr. 1. 5:101, 102. and Catull. Epithal. Theddis. Hence Bacchus is called Evius, Horat. Carmin. 50:2. Ode 11. 5:17.

[14] Vid Caesar. Comment. 50:6. Porphy. de Abstinent. 50:2. §. 54-56. Ed. Cantabr. Minut. Fel. Octav. p. 33. Ed. Oxon. Clement. Alex. admon. ad Gentes, p. 27. Tertull. Apol. 100:9. Lactant. de fals. relig. 50:1. 100:21. Alex. ab Alex. Genial. Dierum, 50:6. 100:26.

[15] Herodotus takes notice of several oracles among the Egyptians, where, besides that of Jupiter Ammon, were the oracles of Hercules, Apollo, Minerva, Diana and Mars, and what was had in the greatest esteem, the oracle of Latona in the city Butus, 50:2. 100:83, 152, 155. Ed. Gronov. among the Grecians, besides that of Apollo Pythias at Delphos, were the oracles of Branchidae, or Apollo Didymaeus at Miletus, of Trophonius in Labadia, and Amphiaraus in Thebes, and others at Abae and Dodona, 50:1. 100:46. and 2. 52. and 8. 134. The same author makes mention of the oracles of Mars and Bacchus among the Thracians, 50:7. 100:76, 111. and of several among the Ethiopians, 50:2.

100:139. Pausanias observes, that there was an oracle of Apollo Thyrkxeus at Cyaneis, upon the borders of Lycia, 50:7. p. 440. Ed. Hanov. of Mercury at Pharae in Achaia, *ibid.* of Hercules Buraicus at Bura, *ibid.* p. 449. of Apollo Ptous at mount Ptous, near the city Acraephnum, which Herodotus, 50:8. 100:135. calls Acraephia, 50:9. p. 576. and of Bacchus in Thrace, *ibid.* p. 589. with others. Besides, there was an oracle at Delos, one of the islands called the Cyclades, and another at Patara in Lycia, which is a place mentioned in Acts 21:1, and of Apis in Egypt. Vid. Alex. ab Alex. Genial. Dierum, 50:6. 100:2.

[16] Concerning which, Vid. Herodot. 50:2. 100:55. Pausan. 50:3. p. 195. Q. Curt. 50:4. 100:7.

[17] They both have their names from a word which signifies to destroy, ton dj Apollwna wv apoluonta hmav twn noswn h apelaunonta af hmwn autav h apollunta tauthv tetuchkenai thv proshgoriav. Phurnutus de natura Deorum, p. 92. Ed. Gale. Macrobius, gives us the several etymologies of the name of Apollo, which, according to him, is the sun, and, among the rest, mentions this: Alii cognominatum Apollinem putant, wv apollunta ta zwa. 24 Exanimat enim & perimit animantes, cum pestem intemperie caloris immittit. Saturnal. 50:1. 100:17. O Apollwn ek tou apollein onomazetai. Eustathius in Homer. Iliad. a.

[18] Apollo was called Loxiav, from the intricacy and ambiguity of these oracles; Loxwn de ki< priskelwn ontwn twn crhsmwn ouv didwssi Loxiav wnomasai, Phurnutus de natura Deorum, p. 94. Vid Schol. Aristophan. Plut. p. 2. Ed. Genev. fol. Clemen. Alexandr. Strom. 50:5. p. 556. where the same reason is given for this name. The common instances of these ambiguous responses are, that which was given to Croesus, king of Lydia, Croesus Halyn *penetrans magnam pervertet opum vim*; which left it uncertain whether he should overcome the great army of the Persians; or Cyrus, who lay on the other side of the river Halys, should conquer the army of the Lydians; also that which was delivered to Pyrrhus, king of Epirus, Aio te AEacida Romanos, vincere posse. From whence it could not be concluded whether he who was a descendant of AEacus should conquer the Romans, or the Romans conquer him. Much such another oracle was that which was given out to another, Ibis, redibis nunquam per bella peribis; where, by placing a comma either before or after nunquam, the words have a different sense; and in much such a way did the old serpent impose on our first parents, when he said, Ye shall be as gods, or angels; in which sense the word is sometimes used, knowing good and evil; where it is not certain whether he meant angels of light or darkness; most probably the latter, and that they should be like himself, and the rest of the apostate angels. See more instances of this ambiguous way of speaking, used in these oracles of the Gentiles, in Pausanias, 50:8. p. 474, 475.

[19] Vid. Ciceron. de Divinatione, 50:2. p. 1996. Ed Gothofred. Porphyry. in Euseb. Prepar. Evangel. 50:5. 100:16. p. 204, 205. And Plutarch. Ari twn ekleloipotwn crhvhrian.

[20] Παῖν Ἐβραίων κελεταὶ μεθεοῖν μακαρῶν ἀνασσῶν Τόνδε δὲ μὲν πρόλιτον κί< αἰδῆν αὐτῶν ἰσχυροῦσιν Λοιπὸν ἀπὸ τῆς σὺν ἐκ βωμῶν ἡμέτερον. Suidas in voce Augousov, Tom. 1. p. 377. Ed. Kuster.

[21] Suidas in ibid. Ryckius de Capitol Roman. 100:36. p. 427, 428. 25

[22] Apollo was called Pythius, from the coming of the people to him, to inquire of him, and consult with him about difficult matters; his oracle is called so for the same reason; Καὶ εὐρεθὲν τὸ ἐν Δελφοῖν μαντεῖον τῶν Ἀπολλωνίων προσηγορίας Πυθίων ἀπὸ τοῦ δερὸ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐρχομένου πυθάνουσιν τὰ κατὰ εαυτοῦ. Phurnutus de natura Deorum, p. 94. Vid. Schol. Aristoph. Plut. p. 6. Ed. Genev. This is rejected by Macrobius, Saturnal. 50:1. 100:17. He is rather called so from the Hebrew word **ztp** Pethen, which signifies a serpent; and Apollo is said to have his name Pythius, from his killing the serpent Typhon, or Python, as appears from some verses in Homer. Τὴν δὲ αὐτοῦ κατέπυθον ἰμερον μενοῦ ἡλίου ἔξ ου νῦν Πυθῶν κίχλησκειται οἱ δὲ ἀνακτὰ Πυθίων κίχλησιν ἐπὶ νῦν.—Homer. Hymn. in Apoll. 5:372-374. Vid. Ovid. Metamorph. 50:1. fab. 8. Hygin. fab. 140. Hence the city of Delphos, where was the oracle of Apollo, was called Pytho, Pausan. 50:10. p. 619. The she prophet that sat on the golden Tripod, and delivered out the oracles, Pythia; the place of the oracle Pythium; and the feasts and plays instituted to the honor of Apollo, Pythii ludi & festa Pythia; vid. Alex. ab Alex. Genial. Dictum, 50:6. 100:2.

[23] Vid. Mede's Works, Book 1. Discourse 39. p. 299.

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