

Orthodox Paradoxes
Theoretical and Experimental
Or
A Believer Clearing Truth
by Seeming Contradictions
With an appendix,
called The Triumph of Assurance

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OF IMMANUEL COLLEGE IN CAMBRIDGE

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To the Right Worshipful Colonel, Frances West Esquire,
Lieutenant of the Tower of London.

Worthy Sir,

To study a requital of the many favors which I have received from you, were to spend my time and thoughts about that which I cannot attain to: thankfully to acknowledge them is all I am able, and that I am as much willing as bound to do; and that this will be candidly accepted by you, I have more than ordinary ground to believe; having experimented your noble mind, to be like that of Artaxerxes King of Persia, who thought it as well become a royal mind, to accept of small things from others as to give great things to them; and this ended is to be like-minded to God himself, who gives the greatest gifts to men, and accepts the smallest returns from them; for if they have not a lamb, two turtle[doves] shall serve the turn.

Noble Sir, has encouraged me to dedicate these my first fruits as a thank-offering unto yourself, and under your name to present them to the world. Yet would I not use your name for patronage, having learned from the much-noble and much-learned Verulam, not to account any book worthy of a patron, which has not truth to patronize it; which if it have, it needs no other patron; which if this had not I should be as unwilling to set your name as mine own before it.

As for the matter, though it seem contradictions yet it does but seem so; for *utraque pars est vera* (each part is true): and though it be made up of paradoxes, yet they being grounded; not on stoicism, but Christianity, I hope they will answer the name of orthodoxy. Yet what can a man call orthodoxy in this heterodox age wherein scarce any-one-thing is spoken or written, but every man comments or glosses upon it; interpreting, not as the text speaks, the truth requires or the author means, but as his opinionative fancy pleases to criticize; and this indeed might have been an argument sufficient for me to have kept these ensuing paradoxes within my great and not have written them: but having had some approbation and importunity to make them public, I thought it better to lay myself open to any censure then to conceal anything which may conduce to common good.

Seeing therefore they are to go aboard, however they speed, it will be no small honor to me that you bid them welcome; and entertain them, as that which does and ever will witness to be

Sir,

Your worships devoted to serve you in the worship of Christ

Ralph Venning

To the Readers

Kind Readers,

These paradoxes which for the most part of them have lain by me these many month are at last presented to public view; not to make *me* but *Christ* and the mystery of godliness more perspicuously known in the world. That to me both in the first writing of them and since in the often reading of them, they have been not a little profitable, I cannot but declare; whatever my gain has been, I wish you as much as much more terque quaterque [three or four times]. If the Spirit of God join with you in reading of them, I believe you will find that made clear in two or three lines which many pages if I say not volumes have left under a veil. If it prove so, give glory to God in Christ for yourself and me; and pray for me that God will give more of himself into me, that I may give more out unto you; and may be in all things instrumental to his glory and your good: which is the highest ambition of him, who willing subscribes himself

Your in all Christian Service,

Ralph Venning

Orthodox Paradoxes
Or
A Believer Clearing Truth
by Seeming Contradictions

I CONCERNING GOD IN TRINITY AND UNITY

1. He believes that which reason cannot comprehend, yet there is reason enough that he should believe it.
2. He believes on God in three persons; among whom he denies not priority, yet grants eternity.
3. He believes in three persons in one God; two natures in one person; and one will in three persons.
4. He believes that God is nothing less than the three persons, and that the three persons are nothing more than one God; that they are one God, in one God, and all but one God.
5. He believes that the Father is not the Son; yet that the Father and the Son are one.
6. He believes that the Father and the Son are not the Spirit; yet the Father, Son and Spirit are but one and the same undivided and indivisible God.
7. He believes that God is in himself and of himself; and yet he believes that God did not make himself.
8. He believes that God is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end; and yet he believes that God had never a beginning and shall never have an end.

II CONCERNING GOD THE FATHER

9. He believes that the power of God is common to the three persons; and yet he believes that the Father does that which the Son and the Spirit cannot (be said to) do.
10. He believes that the Father begat the Son; and yet he believes that the Father was not before he begat the him.
11. He believes that the Father is great than the Son, and yet he believes that the Father and the Son are equal.
12. He believes that the Father is the first person in the Trinity, and yet he believes that the second and third persons are as equal as he.

III. CONCERNING GOD THE SON

13. He believes that the Father is not the Son; and yet he believes that whatsoever the Father is, the Son is the same.
14. He believes that God has no form; and yet he believes that God Christ was in the form of God.
15. He believes that in Christ there be two natures; and yet he believes that Christ is uncompounded.
16. He believes that Christ is not God and a man, and yet he is God-man.

17. He believes that the Son of God and the Son of the Virgin is but one Son.
18. He believes that Christ was of man, and yet not by man; that he was the fruit of the fruit of the womb and yet not the seed of the loins.
19. He believes that Christ remained was he was, and without change became what he was not.
20. He believes that the Father of Eternity was born in time.
21. He believes that he who made man was made man.
22. He believes that he who was born of the Virgin did make his mother.
23. He believes that Christ was before Abraham was; and yet he believes that Abraham was born before him.
24. He believes that Christ is the first born among many brethren, and he he believes that all the brethren are first born.
25. He believes that Christ was for a little time with men on earth; and yet he believes that he was never wanting from God in Heaven.
26. He believes that Christ never offended his Father; and yet he believes that Christ lay under his Father's wrath.
27. He believes that God the Father was always well pleased with his Son; and yet he believes that the Father once forsook him in displeasure.
28. He believes that no man took Christ's life from him; and yet he believes that he as put to death.
29. He believes that Christ was dead; and yet he believes that Christ arose by his own power.
30. He believes that Christ went away from his disciples; and yet he believes that Christ is with them to the end of the world.
31. He believes that Christ made satisfaction once for all; and yet he believes that Christ does make intercession every day.
32. He believes that Christ in the body, yet not included in it; that is out of the body, yet not excluded from it.
33. He believes that wherever Christ is, there is God-man; and yet he believes not that, Christ's humanity is everywhere.
34. He believes that Christ has and shall have a kingdom in this world; and yet he believes that Christ's kingdom is not of this world.

IV CONCERNING GOD THE SPIRIT

35. He believes the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son; and yet he believes the Spirit to be the same being with the Father and the sone.
36. He believes that God has no corporeal members, and yet he believes that the spirit in the finger of God.
37. He believes that the Father sent forth the Son, and that the Son set forth the Spirit; and yet he believes they were never separated one from the other.

V. CONCERNING GOD'S ATTRIBUTES

38. He believes that in God, that which is understood and that which understands is all one.
39. He believes that there can no ideas framed of God, yet he believes that God can be known.
40. He believes that no man has seen God at anytime, and yet he believes that Moses talked with God face-to-face.
41. He believes that God can will nothing but our good; and yet he believes that God will that some should sin in our world.
42. He believes that God's will and power are equal; yet he believes that God can do what he never will do.
43. He believes that God's willing of sin is rather a permission than a willing; and yet he believes it to be a willing permission.
45. He believes that God's will is one: and yet that his will is manifold.
46. He believes that though men leave the will of God undone, yet his will is never disappointed.
47. He believes that God can do all things and yet he believes there is that done in the world which God cannot do.
48. He believes that God would that all man should be saved; and yet believes that his is not changed nor frustrated, though many are damned.
49. He believes that God will nothing but what is just, and yet he believes that justice is not rule to God's will.
50. He believes that God is always just, and yet he knows that God punish some men when they have done what he bid them do.
51. He believes that holiness, mercy and justice are in God; and yet he believes that there are no adjuncts nor qualities in hi.
52. He believes that it repented God for making mankind; and yet he believes that God never changed his mind.
53. He believes that God is sometimes angry and yet he believes that there is no passion in him.
54. He knows that the threatenings of God are not always fulfilled; and yet he believes that God is always faithful.
55. He believes that God does go and come; and yet he believes that God never changed places.
56. He believes that God foreknew all things; and whatever he foreknew to be, must needs be; and yet he believes that God's foreknowledge was not the cause of their being.
57. He sees that the things which God knows are variable and changing; and yet he believes that the knowledge of God never changes.
58. He believes that God shows mercy even then when he executes justice, and that God executes Justice when he shows mercy.

VI. CONCERNING ELECTION

59. He believes that God is no respecter of persons; and yet he believes that God elected some and left others — when he found no difference.
60. He believes that none were elected but in and by Christ, and yet he believes that Christ is not the cause of election.
61. He believes that God never made any man on purpose to reprobate him, and yet he believes that God ever purposed to reprobate some.

VII. CONCERNING THE SCRIPTURES

62. He believes that the Word of God is true, and yet believes that God does not speak the Word because the Word is true, but that the Word is true because God speaks it.

63. He believes that no man knows the mind of God, and yet he believes that the Scripture contains his will.

64. He believes that the Scriptures were written by men subject to error, and yet he believes that there is no error in them.

65. He believes that there is no contradiction in Scripture, and yet he finds the same thing commanded (Gen. 17:12) and forbidden (Gal. 6:12).

66. He believes that the Scriptures are true, and that they are from God, because the world does not believe them.

VIII. CONCERNING CREATION

67. He believes that God wrought six days, and yet he believes that God kept an everlasting Sabbath.

68. He believes that God created all things in time, and yet he believes that all which God does is done in eternity.

69. He believes that nothing has no good in it; and yet believes that God make all things of nothing and behold they were very good.

70. He believes that God never spake a word, and yet he believes that all things were created by the word of his mouth.

71. He believes that the creation was ended in six days, and yet he believes that creation is continued in providence every day.

IX. CONCERNING ANGELS

72. He believes that angels re better than himself, and yet believes himself to be better than they.

73. He believes that angels know God more perfectly than saints on earth do, and yet believes that to the angels is made known by the saints the manifold wisdom of God.

X. CONCERNING MAN

74. He believes that man did enjoy blessedness before he fell, and yet he believes that man was never sure of blessedness before he lost it.

75. He believes that the two extremes of being, matter and spirit, be in men; and yet he believes that man is but one being.

76. He believes that man was made after God's likeness; and he believes that when man was made, he was not like God.

77. He believes that every man has a being, and yet he believes that all nations are less than nothing.

78. He believes that there is but one God, and yet he believes that many men are gods (Psalm 82:6).

79 He believes that he is to respect no man's person, and yet he believes that he may reverence one man more than another.

80. He believes that he is bound to love all men as himself; and yet he believes that he may reverence one man more than another.

80 [the mis-numbering is in the original]. He believes that he is bound to love all men as himself; and yet he believes that he breaks no commandment though he hate some men with a perfect hatred.

XI CONCERNING SIN

81. He knows that he was not when Adam was; and yet he believes that he sinned when Adam did.

82. He believes that sin had no being; and yet he believes that God knows it.

83. He knows not, nor can hardly perceive how he becomes a sinner by generation, and yet believes and confesses that he was born in sin.

XII CONCERNING LAW [THE ORIGINAL HAD NO TITLE HERE]

85 [mis-numbering in original]. He believes that the law was from the beginning; and yet he believes that it was first given to Moses.

85. He knows that when the Law was given, it was said, do this and live; and yet he believes that there was no covenant of works since Christ was promised.

86. He believes that circumcision is cast out of the Church, and yet he believes that every saint is a circumcised person.

87. He believes that Christ obeyed and fulfilled the Law for him; and yet he believes that the Law is to be observed by him.

88. He believes that the Law is to be abolished, and yet he believes that Christ came not to destroy it.

89. He knows that there is a curse denounced against them that break the Law, and yet he believes that he shall not be cursed though he has never kept it.

90. He knows that he cannot be justified by the law, and yet believes that the law cannot but justify him.

91. He eagerly pursues the works of righteousness, but does not peremptorily reject the righteousness of works.

XIII. CONCERNING GRACE

92. He believes that the Christ by his merits did purchase salvation for sin; and yet he believes that his salvation is of grace.

93. He believes that God will not acquit the wicked; and yet he believes that God justifies the ungodly.

94. He believes that by faith without the works of the Law we are justified, and yet he believes that faith without works does not justify.

95. He knows that grace is much resisted, and yet he believes that there is nothing [that] works so irresistibly.

96. He believes that he cannot be saved by his working; and yet he believes that he is to work out his own salvation with fear and trembling.

XIV CONCERNING THE LORD'S SUPPER AND BAPTISM

97. He believes that they who are baptized may be not be members of Christ, and yet he believes that they who are baptized may be members of the church.

98. He finds no express warrant or the baptizing of any infants, and yet he finds it warrantable that some should be baptized.

99. He believes that believers are much better for baptism, and yet he believes that the washing of what does them no good.

100. He eats Christ's flesh and drinks the blood of Christ, and lives by it; and yet he never takes the flesh and blood of Christ into his mouth.

101. He believes that the bread and wine are not the body and blood of Christ, nor that Christ in them nor under them; and yet when he takes them he partakes of Christ.

XV. CONCERNING THE RESURRECTION

102. He knows that when he dies, his body may conduce to making up of many beings and yet at the resurrection, he shall have all his, and they want none of theirs.

103. He believes that the saints deceased want no happiness, and yet he believes that they shall not be made perfect till the resurrection.

XVI. CONCERNING HEAVEN AND HELL

104. He believes that in Heaven his desire shall never want satisfaction, and yet he believes that satisfaction shall never breed society.

105. He believes heaven to be God's dwelling place, and yet he believes that the heaven of heavens cannot contain him.

106. He believes that in hell sinners are ever dying and they shall never die.

107. He believes that there is no goodness in hell, and yet he believes that God is there.

The ensuing paradoxes [are called] miscellaneous, not observing order or method in placing them. The former are more theoretical, the following more practical and experimental.

Miscellaneous Paradoxes

A BELIEVER CLEARING TRUTH BY EXPERIENCE, THROUGH SEEMING CONTRADICTIONS

1. He cries out, What must I do to be saved? And yet he never expects to be saved by doing.

2. He knows that he is so much indebted to God as any man, and yet he believes that God will never charge the debt upon him as he will upon other men. Rom. 8:3.
3. He admires God that he shows him mercy [he looks in wonder that God shows him mercy], and yet he believes that God could not be just if God should not do it. Rom. 3:26
4. He enjoys what he longs for, and yet his soul keeps longing.
5. He is every day pursuing out the old leaven; and yet he believes he is unleavened. 1 Cor. 5:7
6. He is every day endeavoring in the strength of Christ to root sin out of him, and yet he is contented it will be within while God will suffer it to be there. (Not with the sin, but with the will of God which permits it to remain for a time. Rom. 7:24-25.)
7. He fears to cots sin more than any man, and when tis committed there is no man fears it less.
8. He grieves that ever he sins at all, and yet he blesses God that he was once a sinner.
9. It sads his soul that he has dishonored God by sinning, yet it glads his heart that God is glorified by his sin.
10. He looks on himself as the chief of sinners; and yet he believes that God accepts him as if he had not sin at all. 1 Tim. 1:13-15.
11. He is often led captive by sin, and yet he is always triumphing over it. Rom. 7:15, 8:1-3.
12. He confesses that he sins daily, and yet he says that it is not to be Rom. 7:17
13. He confesses himself to be a scarlet-sinner, and yet he looks upon himself as a milk white saint. Jeremiah 21:34.
14. He believes that God has forgotten his, and yet he believes that God sees sin in him.
15. He knows that he is born of God, and yet he finds by experience that he sins.
16. He is ashamed that he is a sinner, and yet he is not ashamed to confess himself a sinner.
17. He would not sin against his God, because God loves him; and yet he does not that God loves him though he sin against him. Hosea 3:1
18. He believes that God lets no man's sin go unpunished, and yet God winks at some men's sins. Acts 17:30.
19. He often-times does weep for sorrow and yet he rejoices when he weeps.
20. He knows that he is not yet delivered from fears, and yet he believes that he delivered from what he fears.
21. He affects and strives to be the highest of saints, and yet is contented to be the lowest.
22. He oftentimes disappointed of his joys; and yet he always joys in his disappointments.
23. He is willing to die daily, and yet daily prays to live longer.
24. He accounts his life but as a bobble; and yet he prizes it above the whole world.
25. He cannot say he is dead, and yet he dies daily; and though he lives, yet he says that it is not he. Gal. 2:20
26. He believes that he shall die once, and yet he believes that shall live with God forever.
27. He dares not put himself to death, lest he sin; and yet thinks he sins if does not die daily.
28. He knows that though he die, death cannot take away his life.
29. He account himself less than the least of all mercy, and yet he looks on the greatest as his due. 1 Cor. 3:21.
30. He knows himself to be a king, and yet refuses not to be any many servant.
31. He believes that he is a priest to God (Rev. 1:6); and yet he should sin if he offered a sacrifice.

32. He has nothing of his own, yet all things are his; he is often in wants [things he lacks] and yet still abounds.
33. He lives when he has no livelihood and is maintained, though he want maintenance.
34. When the irons entered into his soul, yet they do not touch his inward man.
35. He may be imprisoned, yet never deprived of liberty.
36. Men may kill him, but they cannot hurt him.
37. He may be bound hand and foot, yet cannot be hindered from walking with God.
38. Men may cast him out of house and home, but they can never banish him from his inheritance.
39. He prays that bitter cups may pass from him, yet he would not have his own will done.
40. He has not a will of his own and follows it, and yet he is ruled by another's will.
41. He does all the good he does out of choice, and yet he cannot choose but do it.
42. He is never willing to be alone; yet often refuses to be with company.
43. He loves nothing but what he knows; and yet there is what he loves beyond what he knows.
44. He finds that which he seeks for, and yet keeps seeking when he has found.
45. He believes that he goes not to heaven for [because of] holiness; and yet he believes that cannot go there without it. Matt. 5:8.
46. He see reason enough why God may damn him; but he sees more reason why God should save him.
47. He dares not justify himself, yet cannot think that God will condemn him.
48. He disowns all duties he performs; and yet believes that God does own them all.
49. He is sometimes without bread to put in his mouth; and yet he fares deliciously everyday.
50. He sees God in all him providence, yet never beheld him with his eyes.
51. He confesses his heart sometimes commits idolatrous adultery against God and yet he believes God will never give him a bill of divorce.
52. He knows God's dwelling is not with flesh, yet a heart of flesh is his habitation.
53. Temptations are a grief to him, and yet he rejoices though he fall into many temptations. James 1:2.
54. He is one that does live on earth, but he has his conversation [course of live] in heaven. Phil. 3:20
55. He believes that no man can be born twice, and yet he believes that every saint is born again.
56. He believes that there is more in Christ than he needs; yet less than all will not content him, nor serve his turn.
57. He believes that all other saints besides him are filled with the fullness of God, and yet he believes that himself has never the less.
58. He believes that no man can see God and live, yet his life is in seeing God.
59. He believes that God saves men freely, and yet he believes that Christ bought salvation for them.
60. He believe that God will reward him for all he does for good; and yet whatsoever he does for God, God does it in him.
61. He believes that God is always giving out himself to the being of creates and faith of saints, and yet remains as full as he ever was.
62. There is nothing so clear to him as godliness, and yet there is nothing more mysterious.

63. There is no man denies himself but he, and yet there is no man who seeks himself so much as he.
64. He sometimes misses what he would have, and yet he think not his will to be therein crossed.
65. He knows he does not live by bread, and yet he eats to maintain his life.
66. He believes that his prayers do purchase nothing; and yet he could not expect to enjoy what he does if he did not pray.
67. He is by the Spirit led into duties, and led out of them by the same Spirit.
68. He cannot demonstrate what he knows in believing, and yet his knowledge by faith is as clear as any demonstration.
69. He believes that his qualification do not cause God's love; and yet he might question whether God loved him if he were not qualified.
70. He prizes righteousness at a high rate, and yet he counts his righteousness no better than dung.
71. He knows that he can never attain to the perfection of God; and yet he labors to be perfect as God is perfect.
72. He is all men most humble, yet none has a heart so lifted up as he.
73. He drinks gall and wormwood, yet accounts it sweeter than honey or the honey-comb.
74. There is no so vile among men as he; there is none among men so honorable.
75. He thinks highly of himself, though the world despise him; and yet despises himself though God should think highly of him
76. He is the meekest man upon all the earth, yet none so angry as he.
77. He would willing be the best of saints, yet is willing that everyone be better than himself.
78. He believes that God does always hear his prayers, and yet he often goes without that he prays for.
79. There are none so much in love peace as he, yet none maintain such a constant warfare.
80. He believes that he shall never be infinite; and yet he believes that he shall be filled with an infinite God.
81. He is careful in nothing, yet none so careful as he.
82. He believes that though he lie in the grave a thousand years, yet he shall be with God as soon as he dies.
83. He esteems his name a precious ointment, yet cares not who reviles him.
84. He importunate to prevail with God, yet he think not to prevail for his importunity.
85. he believes that none know the heart of God, and yet he meets with many saints who can tell him his heart.
86. He believes 'tis life eternal to know God, and yet he accounts it his happiness to be known of God.
87. He finds that grace never waxes old, though it be ever growing; but that elder 'tis, the new 'tis.
88. He believes that a man converted is the same man that he was before; and yet he believes that he is more man and more than man.
89. He does not know his own wants, and yet he makes them known to God.
90. He is no prophet and yet his prayers are prophecies.
91. He is afraid to think of God, least he wrong him; and yet he believes that he should wrong God should not think of him.

92. He knows that idiots are not fit for counsellors, and yet one of them God takes his sages.
93. he finds that love of God has height and depth without ends, length without points, breadth, yet no lines, that it is circular (emblem of eternity) and yet fills every angle.
94. He would be anything rather than nothing, yet he would be nothing if that would exalt his God.
95. He believes that man's will does freely turn to God, and yet that man has not freewill to turn to God.
96. He gives no price for grace, and yet he values it above all price.
97. He loves the consolations of God; but the God of consolation is his love.
98. He fears God, and yet is not afraid of God.
99. He knows that similitude has some loveliness in it; yet he does account hypocrisy the more odious because of its similitude to Religion.
100. He believes that some have grace who cannot define it; and that some can define it who have it not.
101. He is always in pilgrimage, and yet he is never from home.
102. He believes that God tempts no man; and yet believes that God tempted Abraham.
103. He is very jealous lest God should leave him, and yet he believes God will never do it.
104. he believes that having made a promise, he ought to be as good as his word, and yet he thinks he may go from his word to go to truth.
105. He believes that a saint has a vocation on earth, but that earth is his advocacy.
106. God has commanded him to love his neighbor, and yet God requires all his heart for himself.
107. He seems much folly in the world and much confusion, and yet he sees wisdom and order therein.
108. He cannot think that his soul was ever absent from his body since it came in, yet he finds it often so drawn out to God, that he even thinks it separated.
109. When his obedience is most complete he does not rejoice in that and though it be incomplete he can rejoice notwithstanding that.
110. When he is most enlarged and his soul is upon the wing in prayer, he does not believe his acceptance for that, when he is at the lowest and most confined, he believes his acceptance notwithstanding.
111. He knows that he was once an enemy to God and yet he believes that God was never an enemy to him.
112. He knows that God did never offend him, and yet God entreats him to be reconciled.
113. He has an eye to the recompense of reward and yet he looks after nothing but God.
114. He believes that all saints have a zeal for God, yet all that have a zeal for God are not saints.
115. He believes that all things are ordered by providence, yet time and chance happens to all.
116. He looks to things that are invisible, and yet his eye never wants an object.
117. He is one that accounts all things loss for Christ, yet accounts not himself a loser thereby.
118. He believes that every saint is careful to avoid sin, yet every one that is careful to avoid sin is not a saint.
119. There is nothing hinders acceptance but sin, yet sin does not hinder his acceptance.
120. He has no sufficiency of his own and yet he is able to do all things.

- 121.He is no man-server, and yet he is willing to serve any man.
- 122.He is one who is nothing, has nothing, can do nothing, and yet no man is, has, or can do, so much as he.
- 123.He is what he was not, and is not what he was, and yet still is the same man.
- 124.He works not for wages, yet has an eye to recompense of reward.
125. He desires not to glorify God that he may be glorified of God, bot to be glorified of God that he may glorify God.
- 126.He is one who lives to die, and dies to live; yet he is dead while he lives, and lives when he dies.
- 127.He is one who lives in another and for another; he seeks not himself when he aims most at his own good: God is his all, and his all is God's; he aims at no end but the glory of God, of which there is no end.