

THE RIGHT WAY TO SHAKE OFF A VIPER

By Cotton Mather
Published 1720

Edited by
Edward C. Wilde

Editor's Preface

Years ago, when a friend was suffering from a vicious round of slander and gossip, I asked why he thought this was happening to him. He replied, "Jesus loves me." This book answers how that could be so.

Slander and gossip present a unique sort of injury. If you wish to hurt my body, you must touch me directly. If you wish to take my property, you must enter my house. But if you aim to ruin my reputation, you can do this without seeing me, touching me, talking to me. One's reputation can be stolen without the knowledge of the one who suffers the loss. I can lock the doors to my house, but I cannot lock the ears of those who would gossip. And gossip so appeals to sin, it is a "delicious morsel" (Prov. 18:8) which slides into the heart.

I can replace a house, even if it burns to the ground. But my reputation once stolen, how can I get it back?

To be in ministry makes one a peculiar target of gossip and slander. One might expect that such a commonplace trouble would have produced a great deal of literature on the subject. It has not. But fortunately one of the most acute (and unfairly maligned) Christian pastors did write about this at length, Cotton Mather in *The Right Way to Shake Off a Viper*.

To the best of our knowledge, this book has remained unpublished and (practically) unavailable since its publication in 1720. However, since its content is so valuable, its subject matter so neglected, and its author so learned, we felt it necessary to provide this to you to help you navigate the difficulties of ministry – particular dealing with slander. We pray it blesses you.

Rather than rewrite and modernize the book throughout, we have decided to present you with Mather's original work in full. We will not pretend that the book is always easy to follow.

Cotton Mather was a man of enormous erudition, and that learning makes tremendous demands upon the reader. He assumes a comprehensive knowledge of church history, classical Greek and Roman history, classical literature, as well as Latin and Greek language; not to mention a thorough familiarity with the Bible and theology.

Cotton Mather was also writing 300 years ago. The English language has changed substantially in spelling and in the meaning of certain words.

To help you through this work, we have made certain decisions. First, when it comes to the meaning and spelling of the words, we have (1) modernized spelling throughout. Although we have kept *'tis* rather than *it's*. (2) For rare or obsolete words, we have provided a gloss in the text itself. The word so defined will be underscored. Immediately after that word, in brackets, you will find the gloss. (3) For Latin sentences or phrases, where Mather has not already provided a translation, we have provided a translation. Where the translation has been provided by this edition, that translation will be either in parenthesis or in a footnote. Mather's translation will appear in the text in italics. (4) Where the syntax of a sentence presents difficulty, we have provided footnotes to explain the meaning.

Second, for biblical allusions where Mather has not provided a reference, we have provided the citation in parenthesis. On occasion where more explanation was warranted, we have provided a footnote.

Third, for extra-biblical allusions, such as references to persons, history, literature, et cetera, we have provided footnotes throughout. You can easily skip such footnotes if you like.

Fourth, headings have been provided. These will appear in bold. Mathers did mark sections of the book with Roman numerals, I, II, et cetera. I have maintained his notation and called these "sections." His text does not contain a "II". Therefore, the number is I, III, & IV.

The book has been transcribed in whole, including the various Latin sentences in the text.

May God bless this work in your hands.

Note: This book is a gift of Grace Community Church. Please feel free to permit others to obtain a copy of this book. But as you have received this as a gift, we request that do not seek to resell this work in any manner.

If you find errors, please contact the editor at ewilde@masters.edu so that such errors may be corrected for others.

Finally, I wish to thank my family, particularly my wife who had to bear with my absence. I also wish to thank George Crawford who made this publication possible.

The Right Way to Shake Off a Viper
An Essay
Upon a
Case

Too commonly calling for consideration;
What shall Good Men do, when they are Evil Spoken of?
By Cotton Mather

With a Preface of
Dr. Increase Mather
The Second Impression

1 Cor. 4.12,13. *Being Reviled, we Bless; being Persecuted, we Suffer it; being Defamed, we Entreat.*

2 Cor. 4.4, 8. *In all things approving ourselves the Ministers of God in much Patience – By Honor & Dishonor; by Evil Report & Good Report: as Deceivers and yet True.*

*Cum recte vivas, ne cures verba malorum*¹

BOSTON: Printed by S. Kneeland for Gerrish, and Sold at his Shop.
1720

¹ The full maxim reads, “Cum recte vivas, ne cures verba malorum;/ Arbitrii non est nostri, quid quisque loquatur.” This comes from book three of the *Disticha Catonis*, a collection of maxims in Latin from 2nd or 3rd Century A.D. The English translation is, “If you live rightly, do not worry about the words of bad people;/ It is not our call as to what each person says.”

*Nec mihi ignominiosum est pati a meis, quod passus est Christus; nec illis gloriosum facere quod fecit Judas*².

Cyprian

*Rutili innocentia ac virtus lateret, nisi accepisset iniuriam; dum violatum effulsit*³.

Sen. Ep. 79⁴

² “For it is no ignominy to us to suffer from our brethren what Christ suffered, nor is it glory to them to do what Judas did.” Cyprian, Epistle LIV, To Cornelius, Concerning Fortunatus and Felicissimus, or Against the Heretics. It may be found here: <https://ccel.org/ccel/cyprian/epistles/anf05.iv.iv.liv.html> Translated by the Rev. Ernest Wallis, Ph.D

³ “If Rutilius had not resigned himself to wrong, his innocence and virtue would have escaped notice; the hour of his suffering was the hour of his triumph.” *Epistles of Seneca the Younger*, translated by Richard Mott Gummere Loeb Classical Library Edition, 1915 .

⁴ The original mistakenly references this as Epistle 72.

A PREFACE

Of the very Reverend
Dr. Increase Mather

In men's defaming their neighbors (especially such as have deserved better usage), there is no little evil. Not only does our Savior Christ instruct us do to as we as would be done by, but the moral philosopher among the Gentiles, by the light of nature, says *Quod tibi fieri non vis alterine feceris*.⁵

Nevertheless, as great an evil as it is, many are guilty of it: And many of the best and most serviceable men in the world have been exposed unto it. The holy prophets heard the defaming of many. The apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, being defamed yet blessed those that were most abusive to them. Nor was there every any man in the world more defamed than he that has been the Savor of it; who has taught his disciples to forgive their enemies, to bless those that curse them, and to do good unto those that hate them.

The essay not to be offered unto the reader was printed in London nine years ago. But I never saw it until within these few days; nor list [desire] I to inquire after the author. I find in it not only erudition and ingenuity, but that which is a thousand times better, a Gospel spirit of real piety: And that the author (whoever he be) is a person of great reading and acquaintance with learned writers; and has made his knowledge subservient unto his religion. I have therefore advised the reprinting of it in Boston, hoping that God will bless it, both for the conviction of them who are concerned as transgressors, and for the consolation of them who may be concerned as sufferers by defamation.

Boston, Sept. 1
1720

Increase Mather

⁵ The Latin reads, "Do unto to others as you would have them do unto you."

The Occasion of the Ensuing Essay

It has been earnestly wished by some, yea, it has been the first-born of their wishes that whatever special temptation and affliction befalls them, the glorious Lord may have some revenues of glory; yea, and his people also some revenues of service from it.

There are those who have seen their desire in this thing remarkably accomplished; and it has been sweet unto them; it has remarkably sweetened the bitterness of all their exercises. I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happen'd to me, have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel. But then, if we are any time exercised with injurious defamations, why should not this temptation and affliction be improved as well as the rest, and the Church of Christ, where the case occurs to all that will godly be interested (if we can attain to it) in the improvement of it?⁶

It is a pleasant criticism of Cocceius⁷ that the Church is compared unto a garden of nuts; partly because good men must, like nuts, be well knock'd and broken before other can get that good which is to be gotten of them. If the reader get any good by an essay now put into his hands, let him adore the faithfulness of the glorious Lord, who order'd a servant of his to be knocked with some calumnies and reproaches; which awakened in him (instead of answering and confuting them, as 'tis easy for him to do) to set himself upon strengthening his brethren with a discourse on a case where very many are concerned.

It must be confess'd that he had also in this essay a very particular eye to another servant of God whose watchfulness and faithfulness and industry had not excused him from unkind usage (which every wise man looks for) in an evil world.

Plutarch wrote a treatise, *De Capienda ad Hostibus Utilitate*⁸, How to Profit by One's Enemies. But Plutarch was a stranger on the maxims as this essay is composed of. And both the author and his friend have great cause to take satisfaction in the Divine Providence that has brought them forth for the service of the people to whom we owe our all.

⁶ By "improvement", he means to put it to good use; make it serviceable.

⁷ German Theologian, 1603-1669.

⁸ The modern Latin title is *De capienda ex inimicis utilitate*. The Greek original and English translations are readily available on the Internet. See, e.g., <https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3atext%3a2008.01.0156>

The famous Dod⁹ had been so greatly defamed by an office of the college whereto he belonged, that his vexation upon, threw him into a fever. But God sanctified it for so much good unto him, that he sent for his defaming accuser; and for the sake of good he gained him, heartily forgave him all the wrong he had suffer'd from him. Anon [immediately] the accuser himself saw and own'd his error.

If the author of this essay may not only gain the good propos'd in it; but also do the good that is intended by writing of it; he will have superabundant reason to forgive those that have been abusive to him; yea, though instructed of a smaller number and worthier of a better name, their name were Legion. (Mark 5:9)

Among other assaults upon him, he has had first and last above a dozen pamphlets published against him; unto any-one of which he never made the least reply; except it were that which the University of Helmstadt lately made unto an abuse put upon them, *Visum est non alio remedio quam generoso silentio & pio contemptum, utendum nobis esse* (Silence and contempt they thought the best reply). This unreplying silence has not proceeded from weakness of his cause, but from the strength of it.

For what loss of time is it (ill to be spared out of a short life!) to draw a saw with the people who have no reason or honor in them.¹⁰ Those children of unreasonableness write nothing worthy of a reasonable man's consideration. They themselves arm the considerate reader with their own refutation. To recite what they saw is to refute it. The men and their pens have seen such that still when his adversary has written a book he might well take it upon his should and bind it as a crown unto him.¹¹

The invective of such people have been taught by an Arch-Angel how little notice and with what patience is to be taken of them.

And sometimes there is occasion to think how Maximus Tyrius¹² resolves the case, *Ek ton adikeson antidikeson*¹³, *Whether being injured we make a return or no?* Says he, "Tis not at all convenient that an honest man should wrestle a fall with one of another character; for they were not brought under the same tutors or unto the same exercises, nor do they expect the same success or applause of what they do; so that *misert me ejus pugnae impar est congressus*¹⁴.

⁹ John Dod, English Puritan, 1549-1645.

¹⁰ By the phrase "to draw a saw with", he refers to two men who would use a large saw in tandem to cut a large tree. They would both be working together.

¹¹ Their attack is a "badge of honor", as we might say.

¹² Second century B.C. Greek Rhetorician. The work cited by Mather may be found here <http://www.platonic-philosophy.org/files/Maximus%20of%20Tyre%20-%20On%20Returning%20Injuries.pdf>

¹³ This Greek, not Latin. Mather provided Latin transliteration.

¹⁴

All that he does is this. At the take of Cadiz, Port Philip and all the Spanish galleys fired on Sir Walter Raleigh in the van [at the front] of the English Navy. Raleigh scorned their fire; and answered with a flourish of trumpets [and] without shooting a gun till he saw his time, and then did notable execution.¹⁵

He takes leave to say, he will not once fire on any libelers or revilers. He wishes what is here exposed, may be as acceptable a melody to good men as a flourish of trumpets. There may come a time for such things to be done as may render the adversaries ashamed of their abaseness.

One who is not the most unexceptionable author in the world, tho' a mighty clerk, a very great scholar and writer (Monsieur Le Clerc) has written a discourse beyond all exception upon that problem, *An Semper Respondendum Calumniis Theologorum*; or whether the Calumnies of Divines [theologians] written against a man, are always to be answered by him. He wisely answer's, "No. By no means, 'tis perfect loss of time. Do not go on writing of such books as will be of lasting benefit to mankind. Those books will be your sufficient and perpetual vindication. The sober part of mankind will be so far from regarding the calumnies published against you, they will be abhor the publishers."

This agrees well with what Sarracius wrote unto Salmasius when he threw away his time in answering many books written against him: *Non dubito quoniam te aculeate dicta angant quietemque claudere Aures omnibus illis maledictis hominesque ulcisci, compositione operum, que te Digna sint.* To revenge truly, say nothing unto the caluminators but to write something that mankind shall be the better for.

If Divines [theologians] writing against a man (which none such ever did against the author of this essay, that he has been sensible of) are so little to be regarded what then are men who proclaim themselves atheists and prophane pamphlets by such men darted against [attacking] him. The dirt of a *street* as little to be regarded.

Vertuous men it seems have had that opinion of a paper which I have seen, dispersed amongst the people so instructed and so disposed that in a little more than one week's time it was with very near an universal abhorrence chased out of the world. It strangely disappeared at once and hardly any-one man would so expose his own reputation as to be known to countenance it. That atheistical paper had a collection of gross and vile falsehoods wherein the author of this essay is belied with an uncommon degree of malignity. He has been at a loss about a proper conduct on this occasion. On each of the passages (which traduce him in points wherein if he ever did well and as became an honest man in his life, it was in those points!), he might give an answer which honest *valerius magnus* thought it enough to repeat on every

¹⁵ The capture of Cadiz, 1596.

charge which his adversary then falsely made upon him: *Mintiris impudentissime: 'tis a most impudent lie!*

But on the one side he had consulted flesh and blood, the cry would have been, *Nos haec patiemur inulti*. An Aristotle would have told him, It is a slavish thing, when used contumeliously to suffer it without making returns. An Isocrates would have told him, You must think it a base thing to be outdone by your enemies in ill turns, as by your friends in good ones. As Terrence taught us at school the evil maxim, *veterem ferendo injuriam invitas Novam*. And should he employ an hundredth part of that armour of righteousness, both on the right and on the left, that is, both defensive and offensive, wherewith he is furnished on this occasion, the poor men could not but repent of their having meddled with him.

On the other side, Christianity prescribes a world of silence and patience and goodness upon such provocations. And we have no more admirable savior and pattern, who, as a sheep before shearers his mouth is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. [Is. 53:7] He resolved therefore to treat that libel with silence and as unworthy of an answer. God rewarded his resolution and also supplied him with an answer in the conscience of every man who had any real virtue or honor in him. Indeed, if a man were not altogether so richly favor'd of the Lord abroad, it were no little favor to have that within which may comfort him in the testimony of his conscience.

It was a pleasant answer of an honest man unto a passionate lord, after he had patiently heard him call him [an] abundance of bad names: *Your honor may speak of me as you please, but I believe not one word of it, for I know myself to be an honest man.*

However this was the course taken by him. He knew no person of the least credibility in the world would ever assert such things to his face or in his life. And should he merely mention the names of those blades who divulged the libel, this alone would be (tho' his own sufficient vindication), yet such an exquisite piece of revenge upon his enemies as is not agreeable with his principles. Wherefore, he remains wholly silent for the present.

But lest, after his death, any wicked man should go on to make advantage of such things as they have done by his renowned grand-father before him, he leaves behind such well-attested instruments in manuscript as being produced will forever bury in confusion all attempts to wound religion¹⁶ by wounding a servant of it. We may and should speak upon some wrongs; not for the revenging ourselves but for suppressing of lies that may hurt our usefulness.

¹⁶ By "religion" Mather did not mean religion generically, but he specifically referenced Christianity.

In the meantime, he would loath come short¹⁷ of Musonius¹⁸ (commended for it by Grotius¹⁹) who protested he would never sue any upon an *hubreos-graphon*²⁰, an action of defamation or suffer another to do it on his behalf. He may go in doing all the good offices for his people for his people that he can; he is invulnerable. Some names are so oil'd that no ink will stick upon them.

It was the counsel of Sadoletus²¹ to Erasmus²², “You see, he counsels him, to answer once for all and let one book be a full and final answer to all calumnies that should be cast upon him. “

‘Tis hoped that the author of this essay will have no need of any other answer to calumnies. This one book is answer enough. After this, he need never trouble himself about anymore. He may go on to find better work which his hand finds to do, and not to turn aside for any.

¹⁷ He would hate to not go as far as, to be as good, to do as much as.

¹⁸ “Gaius Musonius Rufus was one of the four great Stoic philosophers of the Roman empire, along with Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius. Renowned as a great Stoic teacher, Musonius conceived of philosophy as nothing but the practice of noble behavior.” <https://iep.utm.edu/musonius/>

¹⁹ “Grotius, Hugo (1583–1645). A Dutch humanist theologian and jurist, Grotius wrote with passion and elegance against senseless wars, which in his day were often fought on religious grounds. Grotius rebelled against the Calvinism so prevalent in his native Holland and wrote Resolution for Peace in the Church in 1619 as well as Annotations on the New Testament between 1641 and 1650.”

Nathan P. Feldmeth, *Pocket Dictionary of Church History: Over 300 Terms Clearly and Concisely Defined*, The IVP Pocket Reference Series (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 70.

²⁰ Greek, abusive writing, a slander or attack.

²¹ “Cardinal, humanist, and reformer, b. at Modena, 1477; d. at Rome, 1547. His father, a distinguished lawyer, intended him for his own profession; but Jacopo devoted himself to classical and philosophical studies. At Rome he enjoyed the favour of Cardinal Caraffa, and afterwards of Leo X, who made him his secretary.”

<https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13324a.htm>

²² Erasmus, Desiderius (1466–1536). He published a critical edition of the Greek New Testament in 1516. The accomplishments of this man and the scope of his work are astounding. You simply must make his acquaintance.

The
True Way of Shaking off a
VIPER

There is a case which all good men, that ever were of any consideration in this evil world, have had occasion to take into their most serious consideration. A case it is, whereto a right answer cannot but be acceptable to all good men; cannot but be serviceable to exert and increase their goodness and bring about the Glory of Him²³ that has adorned them with it.

The Case is

What should good men do when they are evil spoken of?

Or,

What should be the conduct of a Christian when defamations are order for him to exercise his Christianity.

Upon this general case of all good men, the First Thing that I would propose is this:

Let then the defamed Christian set himself immediately to consider, *what his carriage ought now to be.*

My friend, be more solicitous to do well under defamations and be better for them, than now to vindicate yourself against them. Let this be the first care on this occasion. Immediately pour out your fervent supplications, *Lord enable me now to glorify thee. Oh! Leave me not to any forwardness or foolishness that may dishonor thy name when my own has dishonor cast upon it.*

Immediately set yourself to study and contrive, what is the behavior wherewith now I must endeavor to glorify God? Study and contrive, what shall I do that I may in the issue have cause to bless the name of God for those things wherein my name seems to be wounded?

When a scurrilous person once abused a very virtuous person, the wronged and patient servant of the Lord said. 2 Sam. 16.12. *It may be the Lord will look upon mine affliction and that the Lord will requite [return] me good for his cursing this day.* Truly if you begin your encounter with defamations 'tis beyond any, it may be, that the Lord will requite you good for the cursing of your friend Shimei. He has

²³ The Glory of God.

already done you good, that good which abundantly makes good for all the cursing. You are most certainly in the way of coming at good that will surpass all imagination.

Blessed, blessed of the Lord thou art. Oh! Cursed of them that have blessing far from them! Having proposed and premised this blessed introduction to all manner of good, I will proceed unto a more particular description of a defamed Christian pursuing the honor of Christianity.

Section I The Sovereignty of God in Trials

Acknowledge the Sovereignty of God, and not this only but the righteousness and faithfulness of the Sovereign God in the wrongs which are defamatory invectives of any man may offer you. If dirt be cast upon you, my first advice to you is what was once given to the prophet, *Go down to the house of the potter.*²⁴

Adore the uncontrollable sovereignty of God which may make you a vessel of dishonor on a much worse account than that of being a little reproached by some in whose reproaches perhaps a man is really honored. With a most profound adoration of divine sovereignty, confess that if God single out you to be an object of numberless indignities and malignancies and satisfy himself in beholding what is done to you and by you and under them, there is nothing to be murmured at²⁵.

Forever submit, yea, though the dispensations of sovereignty be never so dark, mysterious, unsearchable²⁶; and with all possible submission, say: *Lord, I am*

²⁴ This is a reference to Jeremiah 18, where God instructs Jeremiah to go the house of the potter and see that a potter has complete sovereignty over the vessels he makes from clay: Jeremiah 18:5-8 (ESV)

⁵ Then the word of the Lord came to me: ⁶ "O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter has done? declares the Lord. Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel. ⁷ If at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, ⁸ and if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I intended to do to it.

Thus, the instruction is to realize that in everything which happens God is ultimately sovereign. While it goes beyond the scope of this footnote, when this writer refers to sovereignty it does not mean fatalism. The way in which human freedom and divine sovereignty relate is a matter with significant discussion within Christian theology.

²⁵ God is sovereign. God is content with this attack upon you; therefore, there is no logical basis for human complaint.

²⁶

William Cowper

God moves in a mysterious way

willing to be whatever thou wilt have me to be; do what thou wilt with my name; if thou wilt have it vilified, let it be so. Only let thy Name be glorified.

I may tell you, this resignation will have admirable consequences. It had so when a servant of God oppressed with a world obloquies, thus resigned himself:

If the Lord say, I have no delight in thee, behold, there am I, let Him do to me as seemeth good unto Him!

1 Sam. 15.26²⁷

God is righteous in all that he does.

His wonders to perform:
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.
2
Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill,
He treasures up His bright designs,
And works His sovereign will.
3
Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.
4
Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.
5
His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour:
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.
6
Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan His work in vain;
God is His own Interpreter,
And He will make it plain.

²⁷ The reference is to David resigning himself to God's sovereignty at the time that David's son Absalom had raised a rebellion against David and drove David from Jerusalem.

*To the confession of Divine Sovereignty let there be added a confession of Divine Righteousness. As you are a creature, you must allow sovereignty to lay you low. Because you are also a sinner, you must not wonder if righteousness make you vile. Follow the example of the brave Emperor Mauritius who being stripp'd of his purple and run down in to the most abject and wretched circumstances, lift[ed] up his eyes to heaven and only said, *O Lord thou are righteous, and righteous are all thy judgments!*²⁸*

It is most certain that there cannot be the least wag of a tongue or scratch of a pen against you, but it is permitted by God.

Of your most calumnious adversary [the one who slanders you the most], you may say as that Great Man [King David] did of his abusive Shimei, 2 Sam. 16.11, *The Lord hath bidden him!* It will be but a due compliance with the righteousness of God, for you to confess before Him, That He is infinitely just, in the greatest injustice that any reproachful man can offer you.

You know so much amiss by yourself, that if were all known abroad in the world, they who would falsely speak what is ill of you might truly speak what is a great deal worse.

Be Humble

Make your defamations a provocation unto you, to humble yourself deeply before God for the secret sin which by leaving you defamed, you may see, He sets in the light of His Face. Under the law of ceremonies, if he who had an issue did spit upon another, the person spat upon was defiled.²⁹ Sir, if an unclean wretch spit upon you, it becomes you to inquire whether you have some defilement that is to be washed off and make a new flight to that which will cleanse from all sin.

Repent and amend

My friend, It were a very proper thing for you, upon the first blowing up of any storm of obloquies, presently to fall down before the Lord with this petition, *Lord,*

²⁸ The reference is to Emperor of Byzantium Mauritius who died at the hands of the usurper Phocas in 602. According to Gibbon, "The ministers of death were dispatched to Chalcedon. They dragged the emperor from his sanctuary, and the five sons of Maurice were successively murdered before the eyes of their agonizing parent. At each stroke, which he felt in his heart, he found strength to rehearse a pious ejaculation: '**Thou art just, O Lord! and thy judgments are righteous!**'..."

²⁹ Leviticus 15:8 (ESV) And if the one with the discharge spits on someone who is clean, then he shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the evening.

show me therefore thou contendest with me. And then go on with an impartial inquiry, a self-judging, a self-loathing inquiry. I am sure there will need be no long divination to bring you unto this one sensible stroke of repentance: *Lord, I have not honor'd thy name as I ought to have done, and therefore, thou art righteous in all the dishonor that my name labors under.*

Had we been more concerned for the Name of God, who can tell, but He would have been more concerned for ours? When you go on, it may be you will find that you have not always been so tender of your neighbor's good name as you should have been; or so cautious of making right, fair, exact representations when he has been spoken of. At least, when you have heard a neighbor with too much truth ill spoken of, there has not been that grief in you and that love which rejoices not in iniquity³⁰ as there should have been.

The injuries done to your name are it may be to chasten you, for this too common miscarriage. *Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God!* [Rom. 11:22] Severity, in His not leaving such a most frequent fault without chastening. But goodness, because you are chastened of the Lord, that you should not be condemned with the world.³¹

Or, 'tis possible you may have treated some very impious and vicious person with too much compliance and compliment; tho' your design might be nothing under Heaven but only to win them that you might do them good and bring them to do good; yet you may have indiscreetly forgotten the last of the Proverbs of Solomon.³²

God may correct this indiscretion of yours by making such persons to be the instruments of bring very great reproaches upon you. Briefly, carry on the scrutiny with all the accuracy imaginable to discovery the righteousness of God in your most unrighteous defamations.

Upon the discovery, repent of what has been amiss; abhor it; bewail it; weep to the Lord, that for the sake of His Blood, when cleanses from all sin, you may have pardon for it.³³

³⁰ 1 Corinthians 13:4-6 (ESV)

⁴ Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant ⁵ or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶ it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth.

³¹ 1 Corinthians 11:31-32 (ESV)

³¹ But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. ³² But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

³² Proverbs 29:27 (ESV)

²⁷ An unjust man is an abomination to the righteous, but one whose way is straight is an abomination to the wicked.

³³ Proverbs 29:27 (ESV)

O happy reproaches which quicken us in the great work of repentance! Be as meek as a lamb under the injuries that are done you; let the righteousness of God shining therein make you so. But fly to the Lamb of God³⁴: and verily when you have conversed with the blood of the lamb you will have white robes upon you: White robes, I say; you may defy earth and hell to bespatter them.³⁵

Even unrighteous persecution may be for our correction

That which makes me the more to urge a great regard unto the righteousness of God in your defamations, is this: Even persecutions that come upon us for the cause of God, yet oftentimes carry castigations in them. Rarely do there come any violent persecution on the churches of the Lord until they have by their formality and contention and abounding iniquity ripened themselves for such calamities.

Old Cyprian will tell you so³⁶. The French refugees at this day may tell you so. And yet persecutions do at last prove privileges to the People of God. Thus, particular servants of the Lord may be persecuted because heaven has a favor for them; they may be favorites of heaven.

Yet, Oh the wisdom of God! The sorrows brought upon them in their persecutions may be also to bring them into repentance for their errors which they have been guilty of. The most excellent, but reproached confessors of Christ, bearing the reproach of Christ, may yet also bear at the very same time a rebuke for sin.

When admirable Paul underwent stoning, he was honored in it; he was adorned by it; vastly enriched; every stone was to him as good as a pearl³⁷. Some think that while he lay under a swoon under those outrages of his enemies. Now was the time that he was caught up and had one of his raptures, either that into Paradise or that into the Third Heaven³⁸.

²⁷ An unjust man is an abomination to the righteous,
but one whose way is straight is an abomination to the wicked.

³⁴ John 1:29 (ESV)

²⁹ The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

³⁵ Revelation 7:14 (ESV)

14 I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

³⁶ African bishop. Cyprian, the bishop of Carthage, was martyred in 258 during a time of especially violent persecution of the church.

³⁷ Acts 14:19.

³⁸ 2 Corinthians 12:1–4 (ESV)

Yet, no doubt, this martyr of the Lord, when he came to himself, soon made this reflection. Lord, when the blood of the martyr Stephen was shed, I was also standing by³⁹. The share he had in the stoning the martyr Stephen, was not to be again repented of.

And so was the burning of the martyr Lambart⁴⁰ when the good man Martyr Cramner was going into the fire. *Consider what I say and the Lord give you understanding.*⁴¹

For I may not put you in mind that by being brought thus to flee the Divine Righteousness, you come to a most experimental sight of the Divine Faithfulness in what has befallen you.

God meant it unto good.

One that had been very defamed could say. Gen. 50.20 *God meant it unto good.*⁴² If you get so much good by your defamations as to discern the righteousness of God in

12 I must go on boasting. Though there is nothing to be gained by it, I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. ² I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. ³ And I know that this man was caught up into paradise—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows— ⁴ and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter.

³⁹ Acts 7:58 (ESV)

⁵⁸ Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul.

Acts 22:20 (ESV)

20 And when the blood of Stephen your witness was being shed, I myself was standing by and approving and watching over the garments of those who killed him.’

⁴⁰ Lambart was martyred 1538 in England. The complete recounting of the martyrdom of John Lambart may be found in the book, *The history of the worthy martyr of God, the rev. John Nicolson, better known by the name of John Lambert, who was burned in Smithfield, in the year 1538.* A copy may be found here:

<https://books.google.com/books?id=0rYCAAAAQAAJ&hl=en>

⁴¹ Thomas Cramner was martyred under Queen Mary on March 21, 1556. The text seems confused here, in that Cramner was present at Lambart’s burning.

⁴² The quotation comes from the words of Joseph, who had been kidnapped by his brother and then sold as a slave. Joseph ended up in Egypt, where through a series of remarkable circumstances, became the second-in-command overseeing famine relief. In position, Joseph not only saved the Egyptian people from starvation, but he ended up rescuing his own family. After Joseph reveals himself to his family, he brings them to live with him. Following the death of their father, his brothers fear that Joseph will take revenge upon them:

them and obtain, what is ill in you to be forgiven and amended, it is plain *that God has meant it for good*. You may go on with praises and wonders and say, *Lord, In faithfulness thou has afflicted me*.⁴³

It will most certainly be so, if you now set yourselves to improve in piety by means of defamations which are the by the impious hurled at you. O Man of God, you may be awakened unto the doing of much good by being evil spoken of. We say very truly, *Malice is a good informer tho' it be a bad judge*.⁴⁴ You may by malicious defamations be informed of those points in your conduct which may need a better

Genesis 50:15–20 (ESV)

¹⁵ When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "It may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil that we did to him." ¹⁶ So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this command before he died: ¹⁷ 'Say to Joseph, "Please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin, because they did evil to you." ' And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when they spoke to him. ¹⁸ His brothers also came and fell down before him and said, "Behold, we are your servants." ¹⁹ But Joseph said to them, "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? ²⁰ *As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.*

⁴³ Psalm 119:75 (AV)

⁷⁵ I know, O LORD, that thy judgments *are* right, and *that* thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.

⁴⁴ Malice notices all of the faults in an enemy. As Plutarch explains of the enemy:

As much as possibly he can, he enquires what we have done, and labors to dive into the most hidden counsels of our minds. Nay, our friends do often escape our notice, either when they die or are sick, because we are careless and neglect them; but we are apt to examine and pry curiously almost into the very dreams of our enemies.

Now our enemy (to gratify his ill-will towards us) doth acquaint himself with the infirmities both of our bodies and mind, with the debts we have contracted, and with all the differences that arise in our families, all which he knows as well, if not better, than ourselves. He sticks fast to our faults, and chiefly makes his invidious remarks upon them.

....So our enemies catch at our failings, and then they spread them abroad by uncharitable and ill-natured reports.

Plutarch, *Plutarch's Morals*, ed. Goodwin, vol. 1, "How a man may receive profit and reward from his enemies" (Medford, MA: Little, Brown, and Company, 1874), 283–284. However, the enemy's watchfulness does not prove the enemies wisdom. In fact the enemy is like to completely misjudge all things for the worse.

guard upon them. You may by being reproached be advised of those things which out to be reformed.⁴⁵

It contributed mightily to the advancement of temperance in the blessed Monica⁴⁶ that one reproachfully called her a “wine-bibber”.⁴⁷ It would be wisely done of you under defamations to search and try your ways. Particularly whether, tho’ what you enemies have said of you be false, yet the eyes of Holy God have not seen in you some faults akin to that which has been charged upon you. If find it so, Oh! Mourn for it and turn to God.

This is the language of heaven, in the bad language of the evil tongue in the fire spit at you by a tongue set on fire by hell.⁴⁸ At least you may find this, that you should grow more eminent in those graces and in those duties which are most contrary to the charges of your enemies upon you. They, ‘tis true, abuse you and yet at the same time they exhort you, they excite you.

God by them calls upon you: “My child, you are not yet come to a due eminency in those good things which are just contrary, most contrary to the ill things that are spoke of you. Oh! Be quickened unto an eminency in all godness by the evil spoken of you.”

A great man of Macedonia professed himself much obliged unto the chief men of Athens that by their abuses they taught him how to speak and how to live better than he should have done without such monitors.

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Hence, we are taught this useful lesson for the direction and management of our conversations in the world, that we be circumspect and wary in every thing we speak or do, as if our enemy always stood at our elbow and overlooked every action. Hence, we learn to lead blameless and inoffensive lives. This will beget in us vehement desires and earnest endeavors of restraining disorderly passions. This will fill our minds with good thoughts and meditations, and with strong resolutions to proceed in a virtuous and harmless course of life.

Plutarch, *Plutarch’s Morals.*, ed. Goodwin, vol. 1 (Medford, MA: Little, Brown, and Company, 1874), 284.

⁴⁶ The mother of Augustine.

⁴⁷ Monica was Augustine’s mother.

⁴⁸ James 3:6 (AV)

⁶ And the tongue *is* a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.

How the evil of others may make us better

Perhaps you may have enemies who being sensible that you have some friends who think well of you are so uneasy at it and so resolved upon rendering you unserviceable, that they will make venomous insinuations of your being a hypocrite; that your all your profession, all your appearance, all the flame of your zeal to do good is but hypocrisy. A wondrous venom! *Yet you have heard of the patience of Job.*⁴⁹ I am verily persuaded the end of the Lord [the purpose of the Lord] is to awaken you to a more thorough trial of your own sincerity; and unto a more hearty doing of those things which will be infallible demonstrations of your own sincerity.

I have read or heard of one who never arrived unto the joyful assurance of his own uprightness until an abusive neighbor had called him a hypocrite. The faithfulness of the Lord our Healer makes the sickly doses of doses of defamation (tho' they may seem sometimes unto us pretty churlish ones and a little strong of the metal⁵⁰) operate thus towards the healing of our distempers. Hereby our iniquity is purged and all the fruit is to take away our sins. The tongue that is a sharp sword serves only as in the well-known story to open up and relieve an ulcer of dangerous corruption within us.

Workers of iniquity⁵¹ may for a while prevail against you; must injustice and injury may be done [to] you in many defamations uttered by workers of iniquity. But if unrighteous men prevail in their unrighteous works and words against you 'tis that your transgressions may be more purged away. See this, and say, *O Lord, Great is thy Faithfulness!*

The reward to come

But it shines with a most heavenly luster in that the preparation of heaven which is marvelously promoted in us by defamations on earth. The dirt of reproaches is as the martyr said of it (and there never was a martyr without a share of it!) only to scour you and make you bright, that a high shelf in heaven may be assigned to you. You must have a name reviled on earth; 'tis that so you may be the fitter to find a name written in heaven. There will be a resurrection of names as well as bodies in the day when God shall raise the dead. All the Good that you have done; all your prayers, all your alms, and the steps of you watchful walk with God⁵²; all the brave

⁴⁹ James 5:11 (AV)

¹¹ Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.

⁵⁰ Too strong for our taste.

⁵¹ Job 31:3 (AV)

Is not destruction to the wicked? and a strange punishment to the workers of iniquity?

⁵² Acts 10:1-4 (AV)

efforts of your self-denial; all the continual contrivances to serve Christ and his people, and your neighbors in which you have been swallowed up every day (not one Day without them!) for many, many years together; they being sprinkled with the blood of the Lamb shall be found in the Lord's Book of Remembrance⁵³: They shall be proclaimed in the golden streets of the City of God. That you may be prepar'd for what shall be done for the man whom the King of Heaven will honor⁵⁴ in the world to come, you must be abased in this world, be abased with quite another sort of things reported and believed of you and be patient under it. God will first have you lie in the dust, first thrown in the dungeon and willing that it should be so, before he sets upon with the princes of his people in the heavenly places.⁵⁵

God knows what is done to their names; and will have them willing to go by other names; to be called by very mean and vile and ill names, before he takes them to shine among the stars. How sweet, how sweet will be your arrival among of the angles of God, going from a world which you found a place of dragons! A world where your complaint was, My soul is among lions and I lie among them that set on fire!

Yea, and who can tell, but you may yet shine more as lights in the world⁵⁶ for the snuffing which your defamations have bestow'd upon you? While the snuffing was a-

¹ There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian *band*, ² A devout *man*, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway. ³ He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius. ⁴ And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.

⁵³ Malachi 3:16 (AV)

¹⁶ Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard *it*, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name.

⁵⁴ This is an allusion to the language, though not the circumstance of Esther 6:6 (AV)

⁶ So Haman came in. And the king said unto him, What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour? Now Haman thought in his heart, To whom would the king delight to do honour more than to myself?

⁵⁵ This theme of reversal is common through-out the Scripture:

Mark 10:31 (AV)

³¹ But many *that are* first shall be last; and the last first.

Luke 1:51-53 (AV)

⁵¹ He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. ⁵² He hath put down the mighty from *their* seats, and exalted them of low degree. ⁵³ He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.

⁵⁶ Philippians 2:15 (AV)

¹⁵ That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;

doing, it threatened wholly to put out the lamp, or it was a lamp despised; presently it shines the more for it. How often have you seen it, that cruel defamations have been but forerunners of a greater and brighter serviceableness for God first chastens and instructs and humbles his dear servants. By and by, they see rest from the days of defamation; they prove more serviceable than ever they were in their lives before; and a pit is digged for the wicked⁵⁷, they are cut off in their own wickedness.⁵⁸

Being made fit for service

A man is never fit for serviceableness until he be humbled and broken and grieved and made of nothing and willing to be so. Then, then he is fit for the Master's use.⁵⁹ Defamations do contribute unto it admirably! A Joseph must be flouted as a dreamer⁶⁰; the basest person in the world must go to fix a character of baseness upon him; and this only because Hell could not obtain its ends upon him. He outlives the rage of them that hated him and vexed him. He shone brighter, and he did more afterwards a thousand times than ever in his life before: The God of his Father helped him.

The intent of Satan and of your enemies, may be by defamations forever to spoil your serviceableness. God over-rules them; God disappoints them; your opportunities to be serviceable do not lie at their mercy. God is perhaps fitting you to some good, which at present you little think or know of. You know not now, but you shall know hereafter. In the meantime, Oh! Glorify the faithfulness of God.

⁵⁷ Psalm 94:12–13 (AV)

¹² Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O LORD, and teachest him out of thy law; ¹³ That thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit be digged for the wicked.

⁵⁸ Psalm 94:22–23 (AV)

²² But the LORD is my defence; and my God is the rock of my refuge. ²³ And he shall bring upon them their own iniquity, and shall cut them off in their own wickedness; yea, the LORD our God shall cut them off.

⁵⁹ 2 Timothy 2:21 (AV)

²¹ If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.

⁶⁰ Genesis 37:18–20 (AV)

¹⁸ And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him. ¹⁹ And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh. ²⁰ Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams.

The opportunity afforded

Embrace Your Defamations, as affording you precious opportunities to exemplify a patience that shall glorify God; and imitate the exemplary patience of your admirable Savior.

Usually, defamations are little more than provocations. Nothing so unusually easily and provokes Men to intemperate passion as to be reproached. The old pagans and Stoics that could bear everything else found reproach to be insupportable. This would make them roar as loud as waves on the Aegean shore.⁶¹

He was a great and a strong man and a scholar, yea, a master of better philosophy who yet complained, *Reproach has broken my heart*. For patience to get the upper hand of passion on this occasion, and moderate it, and regulate it, verily this is a more perfect work of Christianity.⁶²

Sir, if you may be so happy as to attain unto it, you may, instead of being troubled say, I am happy that I ever had the occasion! Upon the first advice of any abuse offered to you, resolve, *I will take heed to my ways that I sin not with my tongue; I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while I have before me what the unbridled mouth of wickedness has uttered of me*.⁶³

But make your application to the *God of all grace*,⁶⁴ for the grace to keep this resolution. If you resist the first impression, the first resentments, which you may too readily feel upon vile reproaches, you have gained a great point; you have steered clear of abundance of sin; you will be more able afterwards to carry on a strain of lovely patience, and merit the judge's motto, *prudens qui patiens: a prudent man is a patient man*.

Do not retaliate

Let me beseech you, after this, to maintain most exact watch, a most severe guard upon yourself, lest while the waters of strife are broaching, your provoked spirit

⁶¹ Aegean: Greek. The reference is to the Iliad, Book 1, line 34 where the priest Chryses sits by the roaring sea.

⁶² James 1:2-4 (AV)

² My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; ³ Knowing *this*, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. ⁴ But let patience have *her* perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

⁶³ Psalm 39:1.

⁶⁴ 1 Peter 5:10.

may at any time speak unadvisedly with your lips. The meekest man in the world⁶⁵, you know, did so.⁶⁶

My friend, your calumnious adversaries furnish you with valuable opportunities to adorn the doctrine of God your Savior⁶⁷ and do such things as are done by none but those that may lay hold on the comforts of eternal life. The blessed Eliot's three words, bear, forbear, forgive: Now, now is the time for them to come into exercise.

All tendencies to revenge upon your enemies the wrongs which they have done you must now be abhorred, be suppressed; must be looked upon as worse things than the worst of your enemies' [bad acts]. 'Tis probable they may be such people as may deserve to have much evil spoken of them. However, 'tis now decenet for you to be more sparing in speaking of it than you would have been if you had suffered nothing from them. Leave that just work to others; there is hazard lest you overdo, or least some revengeful glance of your own do work in it, if you go meddle with it.

On the other side, if you know any good of those that have spoken ill of you, be you not adverse to speak that good and not ill-pleased if you hear it spoken by others.

How famous, how precious is the name of Calvin for the answer which he gave when he was told that angry Luther put some hard names upon him. An answer so recited, so esteemed by all the world that there is no need now of my telling any of my neighbors what it is.⁶⁸

But be sure that your heart stand always in awe of that word: Proverbs 20.22, "Say not thou, I will recompense evil." And Romans 12.17, "Recompense to no man evil for evil."

⁶⁵ Numbers 12:3 (AV) Now the man Moses *was* very meek, above all the men which *were* upon the face of the earth.

⁶⁶ Numbers 20:10–13 (AV)

¹⁰ And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? ¹¹ And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts *also*. ¹² And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them. ¹³ This *is* the water of Meribah; because the children of Israel strove with the LORD, and he was sanctified in them.

⁶⁷ Titus 2:10 (AV) Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

⁶⁸ In a 1544 letter from John Calvin to Heinrich Bullinger, he wrote, "Often have I been wont to declare, that even though [Martin Luther] were to call me a devil, I should still not the less esteem and acknowledge him as an illustrious servant of God."

Athenagoras, I remember, gives this description of the primitive Christians, “Tis counted an indifferent thing for a man to revile another, by whom he has been first reviled. But we Christians do speak as well as ever we can of them that speak nothing but evil of us.”⁶⁹

And Justin Martyr bears just witness for them, “We don’t ask that they who have most accused us, and abused us, and falsely spoken evil of us may be punished for it; no ’tis punishment enough to be left unto such folly and rashness.”⁷⁰

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Allow me here to lift up my voice boldly in loud and audible out-cry, pleading as I do before philosophic princes. For who of those that reduce syllogisms, and clear up ambiguities, and explain etymologies, or of those who teach homonyms and synonyms, and predicaments and axioms, and what is the subject and what the predicate, and who promise their disciples by these and such like instructions to make them happy: who of them have so purged their souls as, instead of hating their enemies, to love them; and, instead of speaking ill of those who have reviled them (to abstain from which is of itself an evidence of no mean forbearance), to bless them; and to pray for those who plot against their lives? On the contrary, they never cease with evil intent to search out skilfully the secrets of their art, and are ever bent on working some ill, making the art of words and not the exhibition of deeds their business and profession. But among us you will find uneducated persons, and artisans, and old women, who, if they are unable in words to prove the benefit of our doctrine, yet by their deeds exhibit the benefit arising from their persuasion of its truth: they do not rehearse speeches, but exhibit good works; when struck, they do not strike again; when robbed, they do not go to law; they give to those that ask of them, and love their neighbours as themselves.

Athenagoras, “A Plea for the Christians,” in *Fathers of the Second Century: Hermas, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, and Clement of Alexandria* (Entire), ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, trans. B. P. Pratten, vol. 2, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 134.

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For all are called Christians. Wherefore we demand that the deeds of all those who are accused to you be judged, in order that each one who is convicted may be punished as an evil-doer, and not as a Christian; and if it is clear that any one is blameless, that he may be acquitted, since by the mere fact of his being a Christian he does no wrong. For we will not require that you punish our accusers; they being sufficiently punished by their present wickedness and ignorance of what is right

Justin Martyr, “The First Apology of Justin,” in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 1, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 165.

Oh! Do not look upon this generous patience as impracticable or a lesion only for the Elohim whose dwelling is with flesh!⁷¹ Rather, look upon it as an unmanly weakness to be unable to bear the ill words of other men. It is a pretty [clever, sharp] remark when Abishai could not bear the railing tongue of Shimei.⁷² Says David unto him, *What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah?* Now, Zeruiah was their mother. Why, the sons of Zeruiah? He seems to intimate you have more of your mother than of your father in you. You talk as if you were of the weaker sex. If you had the souls of men in you, a few ill words would not be such an intolerable grievance to you.

If you will harken to me, you shall take little notice of the affronts that are offered you: For the most part they are not worth your notice.

Examples of those who responded well

When the famous Doctor Sands was ignominiously carried on a lame jade through the city of London, a base woman in scorn threw a stone at him and hit him full on the breast. He took no other notice of it, but only made this mild answer, "Woman, I pray God forgive thee." This was notice enough.⁷³

⁷¹ That is, Jesus.

⁷² The incident can be found in 2 Samuel 16. David is fleeing with his people from the rebellion of Absalom. While leaving the city, Shimei stops along the road and mocks David.

⁷³ This incident is recorded in Foxes Book of Martyrs. It may be found here: <https://www.exclassics.com/foxe/foxe429.htm>

Commend me to the sweet-spirited Melanchthon⁷⁴. Osiander⁷⁵, a hot [angry, emotional] man, had preached against Vitus Theodorus.⁷⁶ Osiander made the pulpit

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MELANCHTHON, PHILIP (1497–1560)

Scholar and theologian; associated with Martin Luther in the German reformation. Born in Bretten, Baden, the son of George Scharzerd, Philip was given the Greek name “Melanchthon” (meaning “black earth”) by his great-uncle John Reuchlin, the famous Hebraist, when he showed signs of academic ability. He graduated at the age of fourteen (1511) and received an M.A. from Tübingen the following year. On Reuchlin’s recommendation he came to Wittenberg University as professor of Greek in 1518, took his B.D. in 1519, and published his Rhetoric and Dialectics the same year. He married Katherine Krapp in 1520, and the pair had four children.

G. Bromiley, “Melanchthon, Philip,” ed. J.D. Douglas and Philip W. Comfort, *Who’s Who in Christian History* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1992), 466.

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Osiander, Andreas (1496/8–1552), Reformation theologian. Ordained priest in 1520, he joined the *Lutherans c. 1524 and took part in the *Marburg Colloquy of 1529 and the *Augsburg Diet of 1530. He collaborated with J. *Brenz and others in the Ansbach-Kulmbach-Nürnberg Church Order, adopted in 1533. In the same year he published his influential *Kinderpredigten* on the Catechism. He left Nürnberg in 1548 as a result of the *Augsburg Interim and soon afterwards became professor at Königsberg, where he published his *De Justificatione* (1550). A violent and bitter controversialist, he opposed M. *Luther’s doctrine of *justification by faith, maintaining that justification was not a mere imputation of Christ’s merits, but a substantial transference of His righteousness to the believer. His other writings include a revised edition of the *Vulgate and a ‘Harmony’ of the Gospels, the first of its kind. His niece, Margaret Osiander, became the wife of T. *Cranmer (1532).

F. L. Cross and Elizabeth A. Livingstone, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 1207.

⁷⁶ Veit Dietrich:

The most important human contact for Luther in the loneliness of the fortress was Veit Dietrich. Born in 1506 the son of a Nuremberg shoemaker, Dietrich had come to study in Wittenberg in 1522. Presumably he was one of the students who lived in the Black Cloister after 1528 and had thus become more closely acquainted with Luther. As mentioned above, he had probably previously accompanied Luther to Marburg. In November 1529 he became a master. Dietrich (did not actually function as Luther's famulus (servant)). He has been described as his "amanuensis" (in contemporary terms, something like Luther's secretary), for not only did he perform important writing tasks and take care of Luther's papers, but he also engaged in significant theological dialogues with him. Moreover, he functioned not least as an intermediary and contact person for those outside-for Katy and for

the stage to on which he acted and vented his dissatisfaction to that servant of God. *What shall I do?* Says Vitus Theodorus. I know what passion would have done; come up make the pulpit a cock-pit [a place for roosters to fight]. *No*, says dear Melanchthon to him, *I beg you for the love of God, & I charge you, that you do not answer Osiander again. Hold your peace; go on in your ministry. Make as if you heard nothing.* Anon [shortly thereafter Osiander had found that he not lost himself among the People of God, and Vitus Theodorus was no loser by his conduct.

If it would not be too much a contradiction to the very design which I am upon; too much of an encouragement to passion, the very least ebullitions [a sudden outburst, display] whereof I would have to be discountenanced, I would say, *You cannot more certainly revenge yourself upon your defamers, than by a resolution to take little notice of them.* You cannot more gratify them than by bestowing much notice upon their spiteful folly, and being must discomposed at it.⁷⁷ Be sure, it is for the most part a point of prudence to let the tongue-squibs [those speaking sharp, sarcastic things] go out of themselves [go their own way]. Do you forget them, and they will soon be forgotten by all the world. Irritation will do no good. Chrysippus⁷⁸ being told that one privately reproached him, replied, *Say nothing, else he would go on to do it publicly, too.*

But I throw aside this consideration, and in the room of it [in place of it], I will bring in what brave old Marquis of Argyle⁷⁹ observed, *Men would seem, says he, to be very*

Luther's friends in Augsburg-informing them objectively about Luther's health and, conversely, providing a way for them to bring matters to Luther's attention.

Martin Brecht. *Martin Luther 1521-1532: Shaping and Defining the Reformation* (Kindle Locations 5937-5942). Kindle Edition.

⁷⁷ The desire of the slanderer is that you will be upset. If you show yourself to be upset, you give them the most pleasure.

⁷⁸

Chrysippus (c. 405–79), 'of Jerusalem', ecclesiastical writer. A native of Cappadocia, he accompanied his two brothers, Cosmas and Gabriel, to Jerusalem c. 428 and became a monk at the laura of St *Euthymius. He was ordained priest c. 455 and later succeeded Cosmas as guardian of the Holy Cross at the Church of the *Holy Sepulchre ('staurophylax').

F. L. Cross and Elizabeth A. Livingstone, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 344.

⁷⁹ "Archibald Campbell, 1st marquess and 8th earl of Argyll, in full Archibald Campbell, 1st marquess and 8th earl of Argyll, Lord Campbell, Lord Lorne, and Lord of Kintyre, (born 1607?—died May 27, 1661, Edinburgh, Scotland), leader of Scotland's anti-Royalist party during the English Civil Wars between King Charles I and Parliament. He guided his country to a brief period of independence from political and religious domination by

jealous of their honor, when for words spoken in prejudice or diminution of it they commence suits or processes [start legal proceedings] against the speakers of them. But there is nothing so below a generous spirit, and which argues more weakness of mind, than that they cannot contemn words, that are vain and uttered in haste. I can set my approbation to this, that I never knew any man that got advantage by so doing. Thus, that noble person.

Often the best defense is to ignore⁸⁰

The truth is, *Omnis injuria est in sensu patientis. The injury is in the sense of the suffering*, that is, it is suffering only because you feel it to be so. Let the sun say, nothing, but only shine on when owls or snails complain of him.⁸¹ I still advise, take little notice of impertinent stories. Be as a great man once among would often advise all wise men to be tattle-proof.⁸²

Indeed conscience of the Ninth Commandment [Do not bear false witness], may oblige us to confute some sorts of slanders with vindications.⁸³ [Such instances are] When religion [Christianity, not a negative term] is like to suffer by our silence. Or, when many of our godly brethren are in danger of taking up a false character of us if we be silent.⁸⁴ Then 'tis time to speak.

But for the most part, we shall enjoy most peace by holding our peace.

Especially if God has placed us in circumstances of honor and service, that shall render our esteem as rough and strong as a file [a metal file] to every little whistle thing that shall grate upon it. 'Tis a threadbare saying⁸⁵, but never to be worn out, always of use to wise men when others go to pick holes in their coast: *Magnum contumeliae remedium negligentia*.⁸⁶

England." britannica.com/biography/Archibald-Campbell-1st-Marquess-and-8th-Earl-of-Argyll

⁸⁰ This is sound, practical council and has been demonstrated repeatedly in contemporary business experience, where slander is a common media weapon. The response, the objection, the apology provide room for a continued attack. The defense can easily become wood for fire. Not always; exceptions exist. Knowing when to ignore and when to respond will take wisdom.

⁸¹ Owls cannot bear the sun. Snails would die in the sunlight.

⁸² Be impervious to, be armored against false stories and gossip.

⁸³ While we may often ignore slanders, there may be times where it is necessary to correct the falsehood.

⁸⁴ If many Christians will be the falsehood against us.

⁸⁵ You may note he did not write "cliché". "The first known use of cliché was in 1881."
<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/cliché>

⁸⁶ This could be translated as the best remedy for hatred is to ignore it, or to despise it. Cotton opts for "despise".

The best way to conquer contumelies [hatreds] is to contemn them. The best way to silence many contumelious people is to despise them⁸⁷. It is a maxim of wisdom, Proverbs 12:19, *A lying tongue is but for a moment*. Lies are usually short-lived things. Do you by your piety and innocence and usefulness take away what must be necessary to support the credit of the lies with all reasonable men and for the most part you need not concern yourself. The lie will be but for a moment. They will die away from themselves. The only way to keep them alive [to keep the lie alive] will be for you to keep up the talk of them with laborious, troublesome, vindications.

The Jews have a proverb, *Lies have their feet cut off*, they can't stand long. To use the ancient phrase, *Tempus mendacio lupus*, a little time will be wolf enough to devour it. My friend, all would have been dead long ago, if you had not unadvisedly commenced a lawsuit upon it.

I will here take the liberty to transcribe another passage I have met withal [something I found somewhere]

If I hear that any person has done me wrong, in word or deed, I find it is often (perhaps not always) the best way in the world not to let them know that I have knowledge of it. The best way is to forgive and forget the wrong, and bury it in silence. For besides the consideration due to the internal advantage, reaped by such Christianity, there is this to be considered, Such is the malignity of most men that they will hate you only because you know they have wronged you. They will, as far as they can, justify the wrong they have done, and because their wicked heart imagine that you must needs bear a spite unto them, for the wrong you have received from them, they will bear a confirmed spite unto you on that vile account.

Whereas, I have often found that my concocting with patience and silence a slight or a burst that has been offered me, has been followed (& rewarded by God) with this consequence, that the very persons who have wronged me have afterwards be made instruments of singular service to me.

I have met a notable person among the *Axiomate Philosophiae Christianae* [fundamental propositions of Christian philosophy] written by Christopher Besoldus above a hundred years ago, axioms whereof every one is more valuable than gold. Says he, "They who take an antidote, won't swell upon the bite of the viper, provided the antidote be good. We pretend we have humility and manseutude [the quality or state of being gentle] for our antidote. If when we are bitten by maledicent [evil speaking] people, we swell and are in a feverish rage upon it, our

⁸⁷ He does not counsel hatred of the person, but rather hatred of the lie. One of the most powerful ways to despise a lie is to ignore it.

antidote was not good. *Signum id est humilitatem nostrum & mansuetudinem esse fucatam.* (It is a sign of our humility and gentleness to be so colored. That is, it is proof of our humility and gentleness.)

If there were no other argument for your long suffering, methinks the loss of time that unavoidably attends our prosecution of every calumny [slander], were enough to affright us from it. You have but a little time to live; you have lost a great deal of time already. You have abundance of work to do for God in your own heart, and life, and family. Perhaps you have work to do for the churches of the Lord. The Devil would feign make this work lie by [be ignored, put to the side]. He throws calumnies in your way to divert you from your work. Instead of serving the Lord and his people in the most significant methods, you time is to go this way: to fend and prove, and at last gain weighty points. *Such a vain man has said something he should not have said.* A weighty point! Certainly, discretion shall preserve thee from this folly. You had better say to the most of calumnies, *I can't spare the time for you. Say, I am doing a great work; why should my work cease while I leave it and come down to you?*

What we must speak

And now, after all the pains I have taken to dissuade you from speaking on this occasion, I will persuade you to speak. And this, unto the best purpose imaginable. I must set before the heavenly counsel & command of our Savior. Matthew 5:44, *Pray for them which use you despitefully.* You must give me leave to press this with a great importunity upon you: that whenever you understand that any person has injuriously defamed you and abused you, you make this very thing an occasion for you to pray for that person.

Pray for him by name, if you never did so before, before you go to bed that night, mention the very name of that person before the Lord. And let this pray be made without lips of deceit. *Lord, pardon this person and bless him, and make him wise and good, do him good!*

Be not able to rest until you have done so. When you have done this, Oh! The peace, Oh! The joy, which may now fill your mind in the assurance of your own pardon from the Lord. The comforting Spirit of God in the grace now exercised by you seals your pardon. Receive his testimony, *Child be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee.* A blessing worth a thousand worlds. I am importunate with you to assure it in this excellent way.

Upon such a text as this, Psalm 92:11, "Mine eye shall see my desire on my enemies; mine ears shall hear my desire of the wicked that rise up against me." I have heard one say it gave some shock to his thoughts, it compelled him to behold none but the great Messiah speaking. When it came to be sung in the Assemblies of

Zion [at church], the thoughts were constantly awakened in him were, *Lord, my desire is that my enemy may be pardoned and come to have a share with me in the blessings of goodness.* This truly were to sing with melody in his heart unto the Lord.

Hereupon I consulted the original, I found this word *my desire* is not in the original.⁸⁸ I wish that some other word of supply might be brought unto the translation instead of *my desire*. Why may not we read, *What God shall do, or, what shall be done?* Accordingly, Darby in his version of the Psalms, when that clause comes in Psalm 54:7, *Mine eyes has seen its desire on my enemies,* turns it so, *Thou makest my foes to fall before mine eyes.*

One says very truly, “’Tis an easy thing to forgive injuries when God has changed the properties of the and turned them into blessings.” I hope you got so much good by your defamations that you can bless God for them. Then it will be no hard thing for you to wish a blessing on the author of them.

Nor shall your generosity stop there. It is part of the gracious yoke which our Savior has laid upon us, Matthew 5:44, *Do good unto them that hate you.* I think you should watch the next opportunity after an injury, and particularly after an injurious defamation to do some kindness unto the person that has injured you. *Do something wherein he may be the better for you.* It was an ancient maxim, *Disce diligere inimicum si vis cavere inimicum. Sir, love your enemies and you will bravely arm yourself against your enemies.*

Never decline any justice or service which may lie in your way to do unto such a person because he has defamed you. But let his ill-doings provoke you to love and

⁸⁸ The verse is translated variously,

And my eye has looked *exultantly* upon my foes,
My ears hear of the evildoers who rise up against me.

Psalm 92:11 (NASB95)

My eyes have seen the downfall of my enemies;
my ears have heard the doom of my evil assailants.

Psalm 92:11 (ESV)

My eyes look down on my enemies;
my ears hear evildoers when they attack me.

Psalm 92:11 (HCSB)

My eyes have seen the defeat of my adversaries;
my ears have heard the rout of my wicked foes.

Psalm 92:11 (NIV)

good works; provoke you of some way of being useful to him, which else you had never thought upon. Your discretion may so manage the circumstances of your action that the man shall not be hardened in sin by what you do. It may be so managed that you may find the sweet accomplishment of that word, Romans 12:20, "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink. For in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head." That is to say, thou shalt melt him. The expression may seem to carry some damage in it, but the allusion has not been commonly understood. It alludes unto them that are concerned with the melting of metals. The metals which will not be melted by fires put under them are melted with coals of fire are heaped upon them; are laid over the crucible. It may be by such good conduct of yours, you may overcome evil with good. You may bring your adversaries such a remorse, that they shall bear this glorious testimony of you, *He is a good man*. Whether this be done or no, it is most certain you will, by such a conduct exceedingly glorify Christ. Your concern for such a conduct will exceedingly discover the love of God flaming in your soul. The consolations of that love will be wonderful! Be wonderful!

A peculiar danger in ministry

I will now observe to you this one thing more.

There are none that have so much occasion to have such a good carriage under defamations, as a faithful minister of the gospel. Upon that cause, in the fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us, as we forgive," says Luther, *Mirabilise est haec additio!* (*What a wonder is that extra clause.*) The like appendix might have been added to the other petitions. As before, "Give us this day our daily bread *as we disperse bread unto those who are about us.*" And after this, "Lead us not into temptation, as we are loath to lead others into temptation." Indeed, we should look upon ourselves as being so obliged. But then our Savior intimates unto us that our charity and forgiveness towards our neighbor will depend all the other good operations which are thus to be pursued. It is a world full of such offenses, that except we can forgive, we shall do very little good unto our neighbors.

But it is a remark, as I remember of a French writer, that this platform of prayer, the condition of the minister is peculiarly accommodated⁸⁹. I will not go through all the particular, 'tis enough to note the ungodly part of mankind will multiple injuries every faithful minister. His fulfillment of his ministry will expose him to the envy and malice of many people and a thousand injuries. For such a peculiar manner is this petition calculated, *Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.*

⁸⁹ The command to give others has a unique application to minister. If the minister does his work well, he will find himself criticized by others. It is a paradox that being a good minister should lead to attacks. Yet that paradox leads to the minister of all people to be especially careful to forgive others.

It was the happy [here, “happy” means will placed, useful] *Rule of a Minister* [a book he had access to which was named “Rule of a Minister”] which I have somewhere recited in these terms.

It is a rule with me, rather to suffer and bury in silence any manner of injuries abuse abused from absurd people in the flock, than to manage any contention with them, on any occasion. Let the matter or the issue be what it will, I shall generally gain more in regard of the great interest⁹⁰ by remitting of my right, than by pursuing it.

Soar to heaven

A minister, above other men, should soar to heaven, live in heaven, keep near heave; and if he would do so, I tell you, what will be his experience.

The incomparable Newton⁹¹ has demonstrated that the weight of bodied or the force of their descent toward the center decreases as their distance from the center increases.⁹² A tone eight on the surface of the earth raised heavenwards unto the height of one semi-diameter of the earth-hence would weigh but one-quarter of a ton.⁹³ At three semi-diameters from the surface of the earth, it would be as easy for a man to carry a ton, as here to carry little more than a hundred pounds.

I know the further you fly toward heaven, the more (if I may use the falconer’s word) you must lessen. There is great reason why it should be so! Defamations will be some of the things by which you must be lessened. It’s true, defamations are heavy things, they are hard to carry. It is hard to carry well under them; some of them are ton weight. But my friend, if you were as near heaven as you ought to be, you would make like of them [they would weigh less]; you would bear them wonderfully.

⁹⁰ The “great interest” is salvation. See, for example, William Guthrie, *The Christian’s Great Interest*. You would do well to know this book,

<https://banneroftruth.org/us/store/christian-living/the-christians-great-interest/>

⁹¹ Isaac Newton, English mathematician, scientist, 1642-1726, commonly accounted one of the greatest minds ever.

⁹² The gravity exerted by a body decreases over distance.

⁹³ The weight of an object on the surface of the earth will be greater than that same object raised into the atmosphere, because the gravitation pull of the earth will decrease. Just think of the images you have seen of astronauts “floating in space”.

Section III⁹⁴ The Best Men Have Been Defamed

It may be some relief of your disquietments under your defamations to consider what company you have in your affliction. To consider how defamed and ill-spoken of the best of men in the world have been before you. What you undergo has much temptation in it. But sir, no temptation except what is common to the best of men. [1 Cor. 10:13] This comfort for the miserable, seems to be recommend as no miserable comfort [poor, inadequate comfort] by our Savior. Matt. 5:11-12, “Blessed are you when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.”

Well known is the story of that knight who going to his martyrdom and seeing himself because of his quality [station in society] excused from wearing a chain worn by the other martyrs, he cried out, “I pray let me be a knight of that order!”⁹⁵ And [he] asked that he might wear a chain as well as they!

Biblical examples

There never was a useful servant of God in the world without so many defamations. And if you should be wholly without tem, and all men should speak well of you, you might well question whether you are a saint of their order or not. The enmity which is fix'd at the beginning between the two seeds [Gen. 3:15] has ever since been operating in defamations. The third chapter of Genesis has predicted them. For all that will renounce and oppose the kingdom of Satan in the world, and such is the influence of Satan on the tongues of his children [John 8:44] that he continually procures their prediction⁹⁶ to be accomplished.

Moses, the writer of this [Genesis], was a famous instance [example] of this. Moses, the greatest man (Let the insolent critic of Amsterdam say what he will!)⁹⁷ that ever shone in the world in four-thousand-years together, an angel in flesh. How often did his own people defame him in their murmurings. The people that were under more obligations unto him than [to] any other man under heaven. So impertinent as to make [up a false] story that there an Arabian woman whom he had harkened unto more than he should have done. [Num. 12:1]

⁹⁴ As noted in the Editor's Preface, Mather did not mark any section "II".

⁹⁵ An "order" would be a particular rank or group of privilege, such as "The Order of the Garter". See, <https://www.royal.uk/order-garter>

⁹⁶ The word means "before-speech": that is the prophecy of Genesis 3:15, that the children of the Serpent will be at war with the children of God.

⁹⁷ Spinoza.

The pagans did their part also in defaming him. He had once a leprosy on his hand most miraculously, most honorably circumstanced. [Ex. 4:6] The ancient historians hereupon spread a story that he was a leper and for this cause driven with his people out of Egypt. Yea, which is unaccountable: the accounts which the wicked Jews himself in their Talmuds, give both of Moses and of David, would render them the most scandalous Men that ever were in the world.

“The time would fail me to mention” (Heb. 11:32) all the holy prophets who have complaint made by one of them. Jer. 20:10, “I heard the defaming of many.” They have been defamed as the troublers of Israel (1 Kings 18:17), when they were the chariots of Israel (2 Kings 2:12). They were deserted and defamed until they have retired unto the Juniper tree. (1 Kings 19:5)

Under the New Testament, the matter has not been mended. The old enmity has been carried on in the old way which wicked men have trodden. The Apostles of our Savio could appeal to all that knew them, “Ye are witnesses who holily, how righteously, how unblameably we have behaved ourselves.” (1 Thess. 2:10)

But then those men of God were called unto this marvelous proof of their being so. 2 Corinthians 5:4,8, “Approving ourselves as the ministers of God in much patience, by dishonor ... by evil report.” Above all thou must not be forgotten, O Paul, who didst labor (and in this way suffer) “more abundantly than they all.” (2 Cor. 11:23)

Nor the “thorn in the flesh” (2 Cor. 12:7), the strange aversion which the Christianized Jews had unto him, on the score of his labor among the Gentiles: A reproachful aversion which could not be removed. The gracious God, though he be sought thrice (2 Cor. 12:8) by his prayerful and faithful servant, yet would not remove this buffeting encumbrance, but have him content with the favor which he had in other things bestowed on him.

Examples from Church history – Early Church

In early times, the primitive Christians, how defamed were they? Such vile accusations were brought unto the imperial throne [of Rome], that some of the best emperors looked on them as the worst of people. Trajan⁹⁸ himself because their persecutor. The church was long with child and in travail (full two hundred and eighty-eight prophetic days⁹⁹) before the revolution when the Accuser of the Brethren could not be heard against her; yea, after the Constantinian Revolution, it was astonishing to see how professed Christians but shamefully divided ones

⁹⁸ Roman Emperor 98-117 A.D.

⁹⁹ This appears to be a reference to the time between Christ's death and Constantine's victory in 321 A.D. Mather is here dating the Millennial Reign of Christ from the date of Constantine's victory.

persecuted one-another with defamations. Especially the Arians against the Orthodox.

The one example of Athanasius¹⁰⁰ may be enough. You may learn all from what was done to that one. Church history reports that they accused him of beating some other ministers and offering them horrid outrages, and for spoiling and robbing of churches. The Arians compelled him to some necessary things for his own defense and then those unreasonable men complained of him doing those things. They accused him of murdering a man and cutting off one of his hands to serve certain magical purposes: though that man appeared alive, safe and sound, unto the confusion of his accusers. They accused him of a criminal conversation with women, though the accusers were anon [immediately] confounded by their confessions which the wretches had made that they never anything amiss by him.

Sometimes their accusation prevailed so far as to compel his retirement out of the town. The chief rulers were violently set against him. The corrupt clergy hated him and would have had him utterly deposed.

The glorious Christ whose cause he espoused strangely [miraculously] supported him and preserved him. Once by singing of Psalms, he so charmed the soldiers who came to seize him, they could not meddle with him. He had many triumphs over his adversaires. He often saw them reduced unto such confusion that they were afraid, they were ashamed of owning themselves to be his adversaries. At last, he died peaceably and honorably in his own city, after he had been bishop for six and forty years.

I trouble antiquity to spare us on example more, from the many which it might afford us.

Narcissus the serviceable and admirable minister of Jerusalem, a man of such a shining sanctity, the sore eyes of envious men were offended at the brightness of it. Three of them accused him of unchastity, and swore to it with dreadful imprecations. One wished that he might be burnt if he had not spoke the truth. The second wished that he might rot alive. The third wished that he might lose his eyesight. Very few believed the accusation; yet this humble and modest servant of God withdrew upon it.

But the vengeance of God soon followed the accusers. The house of the first unaccountably took fire, and he with all his family were burnt to ashes. The second fell into a disease in which he did rot and die. The third saw this and was terrified

¹⁰⁰ Bishop of Alexandria. He lived 328-373 and was the great defender of the divinity of Christ against the Arian position that the Son was a created being.

and owned the wicked combination [conspiracy], and with the very tears of his repentance, he wept his eyes out.

Narcissus returned and became a brighter saint than ever had been in his life before.

I mention this because the authors of defamations ought to be afraid of the judgment wherewith God may vindicate his wronged children, who patiently bear all the wrongs that are done unto them and commit themselves to him that judges righteously. (1 Pet. 2:23)

Indeed, those great men who illuminated the primitive church met with strange absurdities in the dealing of their adversaries with them. Their adversaries let them see how ready they were to catch at anything that might look defamatory upon them. Jerome¹⁰¹, for instance, had written some very applauding things concerning Origen¹⁰². Yet afterwards wrote other things greatly condemning him.¹⁰³ Ruffin for this raised a horrid clamor against Jerome as being a man of no truth in him. Yea, Austin [Augustine] himself censured Jerome for levity and inconstancy.

¹⁰¹ "JEROME (ca. 347–419/420). A church father and biblical scholar who produced numerous commentaries and homilies on Scripture, historical treatises, theological essays, a vast correspondence, and other miscellaneous works. He is most noted for his translation of the Bible into Latin, later known as the Vulgate.' Brian C. Small, "Jerome," ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

¹⁰² "ORIGEN (Ὠριγῆνης, Ōrigenēs). Also known as Origen of Alexandria. A prolific and influential church father who lived ca. AD 185–254. Known for his allegorical approach to interpreting Scripture." Justin M. Gohl, "Origen," ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016). And, "The details of Origen's life were recorded by his student Gregory Thaumaturgus in a panegyric, by Eusebius in his history, and by Jerome in several references. The first two were favorable. So was Jerome at first, but he later came to disapprove of Origen's exegesis. Yet, Jerome called him the second teacher of the church after Paul." A. Cabaniss, "Origen (Origenes Adamantius)," ed. J.D. Douglas and Philip W. Comfort, *Who's Who in Christian History* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1992), 522.

¹⁰³ Origen was later condemned as a heretic in the Fifth Ecumenical Council, "IF anyone does not anathematize Arius, Eunomius, Macedonius, Apollinaris, Nestorius, Eutyches and Origen, as well as their impious writings, as also all other heretics already condemned and anathematized by the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, and by the aforesaid four Holy Synods and [if anyone does not equally anathematize] all those who have held and hold or who in their impiety persist in holding to the end the same opinion as those heretics just mentioned: let him be anathema." Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds., "The Second Council of Constantinople: The Capitula of the Council," in *The Seven Ecumenical Councils*, trans. Henry R. Percival, vol. 14, *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1900), 314.

It was a mistaken in them. Jerome defended himself with this fair apology: “I commend the man for his accomplishments. But I always disliked his principles. I highly valued his abilities. But I did not tie myself upon from disliking what is to be found amiss in him.” A man may be reproached as inconstant when he observes the rule of the trust consistency. ‘Tis the object and not he that changes.

Examples from Church history – Reformation

Let us come down to the time of the Reformation, we shall not find this way of wickedness then reformed. Good men were still defamed wonderfully. What hideous defamations of the most excellent men in the world are the writing of such men as Tympius¹⁰⁴, and Cochleus¹⁰⁵, and Genebrard¹⁰⁶ stuffed withal? To such a degree of defaming did sottish [drunken] malice and madness of their adversaries carry them that tye printed stories about the tragical deaths of these excellent men, while the men were yet living! But forced it seems by writing and printing of answers to prive they were indeed alive.

None suffered more this way than the famous Luther. Whereupon Whitaker made this remark, “*Felix ille, quem Dominus eo honore dignatus est, ut homines nequissimos suos haberet inimicos*” [which means] “There is a sort of wicked men whom it will be your enemies. You are honored if you may enjoy their enmity.”

What smutty stories did they invent and foment concerning the admirable Beza?¹⁰⁷ I will not mention the rest of the notoriously defamed heroes, but on the great, the sweet, dear Calvin must not be left unmentioned. France never saw a better man; yet how odious the name of Calvin? The witlings of the time (a knot of them at Bruxells particularly) laid their wits together to write atheistical pamphlets of “modest inquiry” upon him. The title was “Calvino-mastix.” They made their satires as pungent as they could. They introduced the enraged Prince of the Bottomless Pit as threatening to plague the world with the most pestilent monster he could procure for the punishment of mankind. This cursed monster must be Calvin! They charged him being guilty of the villainies and forgeries which produced (as they said) his

¹⁰⁴ Theology professor, University of Köln 1586-1593.

¹⁰⁵ I have been unable thus far to track this scoundrel down.

¹⁰⁶ Archbishop of Aix appointed 1591.

¹⁰⁷ Beza, Theodore (1519–1605), *Calvinist theologian. De Bèze (the original form of his name) came from an old Catholic family of Vézelay in Burgundy. He was educated by his tutor M. Wolmar, first at Orléans, later at Bourges, where Wolmar became a Protestant and made his house a centre of the new religion, J. *Calvin being one of its most frequent guests. In 1534 Wolmar returned to Germany, and from 1535 to 1539 Beza studied law at Orléans with a view to embracing an ecclesiastical career. ... In 1558 Calvin offered him a professorship at the newly founded academy at Geneva, a post which Beza held until 1595.” F. L. Cross and Elizabeth A. Livingstone, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 199.

being burnt on the shoulder for a rogue. They stigmatized him for one that in treating certain possessed people had scandalously misbehaved himself. When he was dead, what a hideous character did Bolsecus¹⁰⁸ publish of him, which passes among the adversaries of the Reformation for a true "History of the Life and Death of Mr. Calvin". It accuses him as being a drunkard, an epicure, a whoremaster, the worst of men; that he pretended unto certain supernatural powers of heaven, but was detected in his deceit. That he died eaten up with lice (the word phthisis [a conition of the eye] they extended into phthiriasis [an infestation of lice]) blaspheming God, invoking devils, detesting his work of Reformation, and cursing the day that ever he put pen to paper.

Yea, in the English nation itself, how odious the name of Calvin? Though the true friends of the Reformation have generally concurred with Dr. Hoyl, when he said, "That great instrument of God's glory John Calvin was a man of whom I had almost said as it was almost said of Moses, that 'There arose not a prophet since like him in Israel' [Deut. 34:10], nor since the Apostles' day was before him. His works the world may admire how they could be so many, being so good, and so good being so many." Yet you will find a venomous Dr. Heylin¹⁰⁹, (a son of the church, who

¹⁰⁸ I found this reference in Trapp's commentary on Zechariah 13: "God hath secret ways to waste his enemies, and to bring them on their knees when they are best underset. He can trip up their heels when they are standing upon their feet, and lay them low enough in the slimy valley where are many already like them, and more shall come after them, Job 21:31-32. God hath a Marasmus, an evil messenger for a malicious persecutor; as he had for Antiochus Epiphanes, 1Ma 6:8-13 ; for both the Herods; for Maximius, the tyrant; for Philip II of Spain, Charles IX of France, Queen Mary of England, Stephen Gardiner, Archbishop Arundel, Nestorius, Arius, and other odious heretics and enemies of the Church; among whom a Lapide, the Jesuit, reckons here Calvin, and saith, That like another Herod, he died a lousy loathsome death; and for his authority thinks it enough to say, *uti refert Bolsecus in eius Vita.* as Bolsecus reports in his history. But it must be understood that the lives of Calvin and Beza were spitefully written by this Bolsecus, their sworn enemy, that twice banished and thrice renegade friar (liar I might have said) and physician; for those names his often changes and hard chances have given him. This man, being requested by the Popish side, and it is likely hired by them, to write thus, is in all their writings alleged as canonical."

¹⁰⁹ "Peter Heylin, D.D. (1600-1662) was born at Burford, Oxfordshire. Educated at Magdalen College, Oxford, and became in succession, chaplain to Charles I., rector of Hemmingford, rector of Islip, and a prebendary of Westminster. He wrote the weekly paper, "Mercurius Auhcus," and lost his estates during the Civil War. He was reinstated at the Restoration into all his preferments. His works are voluminous, consisting of a "Cosmography," "A Help to English History," a "Life of Charles I.," a "History of the Reformation," a "History of Presbyterians," a "Life of Archbishop Laud," and a few theological works. The work on the Presbyterians, here referred to by Swift, was published in 1670." <http://www.online-literature.com/swift/religion-church-vol-one/17/> As you

usually discovered a soul as black as the ink he wrote withal) dress him up in *sambeinto's*; and at the best make but a reverend scribbler of him.

I am very much mistaken if the most reformed country in the world have no sons of Bolsecus in it.

I will no longer believe some defamations which I see published in some of the most received English histories. No, nor some that have been rashly taken up from Tory reporters, and published in the life of our Baxter¹¹⁰ himself, concerning such persons as our Goodwin¹¹¹, and our Owen¹¹²; servants of God as unworthy to be exposed for taking wrong steps as the historian [Baxter].

And that holy man, the historian whom I now mention, might remember that he was himself accused of a criminal familiarity with a lewd woman, yea, and with killing a man in cold blood; though he was really man of as much grace & worth as most that ever the nation had.

I will tell you why I will not readily believe such stories. I have known ill men to spread stories (like themselves) of certain cheats and frauds as used by some servants of God in religious matters; when I have certainly known that the stories have been lies and vile fiction of ill-minded men.

And, I can cheerfully say, *The great God knows the truth of his declaration*. Yea, I have seen the remarkable judgments of God on the authors of them. But such men as Goodwin & Owen had done so much to pull down the kingdom of the Devil in the world that the Devil must by defamations take an exemplary revenge upon them. And some good men were so ill affected unto their most valuable brethren as to let themselves be therewith imposed on. And will take leaven to transcribe a passage from Owen on this occasion:

A man may have the blessing of God and curse of a professing people at the same time. Man's condemnation and God absolution do not seldom meet upon the same person, for the same things. If you do the will of the Lord, pray

can see from his history, we would have been antagonist to the Calvinist side of the Reformation.

¹¹⁰ English Preacher 1615-1691; hesitate to call him a "Puritan" due to some points of his theology. Start with the *Reformed Pastor* or *Dying Thoughts*.

¹¹¹ English Puritan, 1600-1680. Start with *The Heart of Christ in Heaven*.

¹¹² The prince of Puritan theologians, 1618-1683. Start here with J.I. Packer's note on Owen which begins, "I owe more, I think, to John Owen than to any other theologian, ancient or modern, and I am sure I owe more to his little book on mortification than to anything else he wrote. Let me explain." <https://banneroftruth.org/us/resources/articles/2013/packer-on-owen-on-mortification/>

think it not strange if among men curses be your reward and detestation your wages.¹¹³

I mention this observation by-the-by, because you may live to have occasion for it.

How this worked for their good

The glorious God has in this way, exercised his most faithful servants. It has been to humble them and prove [test and in so doing prove to be true] them, and to them good in the latter end: Of such defamations, I may say as Jerome concerning other calamities:

They are monitors put upon us to humble us, as when the conquerors of old rode in triumph, there was a person placed behind them in the triumphal chariot who as often as the citizens made their acclamations, whispered in the ear with an, *Hominem te esse memento*: Remember, Sir, you are but a man.

When servants of God have triumphed with continual serviceableness, the way of heaven has been to clap detractors upon them, from whom in the midst of the acclamations which the obliged churches of God have bestowed upon them, they have had the most wholesome admonitions.

¹¹³ Mather has produced a slightly edited version of the quotation. In Owen's collected works it appears as follows:

A man may have the blessing of God and the curse of a professing people at the same time. "Behold, I and the children whom God hath given me, are for signs and for wonders in Israel," Isa. 8:18. "Cum ab hominibus damnatur, a Deo absolvimur."¹ Man's condemnation and God's absolution do not seldom meet upon the same persons, for the same things. If you labour to do the work of the Lord, pray think it not strange if among men curses be your reward, and detestation your wages.

John Owen, *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold, vol. 8 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, n.d.), 140.

Section IV True Honor Comes From Christ¹¹⁴

The conformity to the ever blessed Jesus, whereto his defamed servants do and may arrive, should be much in their eye, under the defamations. Looking after an adequate notion of honor, I finally determined upon this: All true honor lies in a conformity to the admirable Jesus.

Wherein a man is conformable to the admirable Savior of the world, so far, and no farther, he is an honorable man. Thence I infer, to be defamed may be to be honored. For I am sure the Savior of men was extremely defamed among men; despised and rejected of men. It was foretold of him that he should be spoken against. And it was fulfilled unto extremity: there was not a person in the land so spoken against. Indeed he had some that stood by him, yet there was but some. we read, John 7:12, “Some said he is a good man. Others said, No, but he deceiveth the people.”

In the vision which the beloved John had of our Savior, we see, Rev. 1:15, “His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace.” The learned Grelot¹¹⁵ has a curious [interesting, insightful] thought upon it. Our Savior passed through a burning furnace of afflictions, so that he might come to his glory. Grievous defamations were some of the scorches that afflicted him in that fiery furnace and compelled him to cry out, Psalm 69:19–20

Thou hast known my reproach, and my shame, and my dishonour: mine adversaries are all before thee. Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none.

He took a friendly notice of some that had not the best reputation; but with no other intention than the charitable one of a physician, intending to recover his patients. For this he was defamed, as familiar friend of wicked people. He compassionately provided a large quantity of wine for the neighbors at a wedding feast: For this he was defamed as a wine-bibber [wino]. He did wonderful things to deliver poor people from the hands hurts of the evil spirits: He was requited [paid back] with being defamed as one that carried on an unlawful converse with evil spirits.

¹¹⁴ The question of “honor” concerns the way in which one is esteemed by others. A criminal may be “honored” by other criminals for his cruelty or violence. But that same criminal same be dishonored by society at large. Likewise, one may be dishonored by the society for remaining faithful to Christ. Moreover, at his return, the Lord will bestow honor upon his people. 1 Pet. 1:7. We need not be concerned with what others say of us, because it is the judgment of God which establishes our true honor. Rom. 8:29-34.

¹¹⁵ I have been unable to track down this “learned” commentator.

“No man heard his voice in the streets.”¹¹⁶ He fled from the very whispers of a temporal kingdom. Yet he was defamed as one that moved sedition. A thief was preferred before him. His own kindred had those among who maltreated him and called him all that was bad. (Mark 3:21)

I find by travelers, the Jews to this day make this great offense against him. “He went about doing good.” (Acts 10:38) Yet a great part of mankind conspired for to treat him as an evil doer.

Though he could challenge all men living to tax him with the least ill thing, yet he was numbered with the transgressors. (Is. 53:12) He was crucified between two robbers. From when Hierocles, almost three hundred years later, published and fomented a tradition that he was a highway man [robber], the head of a desperate crew of *Banditti* [bandits]. Thus, a generation of vipers [Luke 3:7], the most remarkable set of the seed of the serpent (Gen. 3:15) that had been in any generation, stung the holy, harmless, undefiled, Jesus! O Disciple, how canst thou propose any other sort of treatment that what thy glorious Lord met withal?¹¹⁷

There never can be better advice given to. Defamed Christian than that, Hebrews 12:2–3:

Look unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

Accordingly, in the defamations that you suffer, you may very allowably examine, *What conformity to the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ may be discovered.*¹¹⁸

Indeed, we must with all the contrition & confusion imaginable, make the acknowledgement of the penitent sinner, who was crucified with our Savior:

And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: [Our Lord never did] nothing amiss.

¹¹⁶ Matthew 12:19–21 (AV)

¹⁹ He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. ²⁰ A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. ²¹ And in his name shall the Gentiles trust.

¹¹⁷ What circumstance could you be in which was worse than what Jesus suffered?

¹¹⁸ In what way is your suffering similar to his suffering?

[Luke 23:41] But this does not forbid us poor sinner to consider what there was in the sorrows of our Savior to which anything in our sorrows may be conformable.

It is an observable passage in Col. 1:24, “[I] rejoice in my sufferings [], and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ.” The Greek word used there [ἀνταναπληρῶ] properly signifies the hollow marks and strokes of the seal, which are filled up with wax.

In your defamations you may without immodesty (but oh! Do it with a very trembling modesty!) observe perhaps the signatures which may, as the wax under the seal, answer something that befell Christ in his afflictions.

A brave man once undergoing very barbarous indignities as well as the loss of his life on the scaffold, cheerfully said upon it, “What a deal of do here is [what a great ado this is] to make a poor sinner like his blessed Savior.” I make the more bold with this matter, because antiquity has told me, *Contumelia sunt Christi insignia.* [*Indignities are the insignia of Christ.*] This may be the glory of defamations and indignities. If you find yours to have any of this glory in them, Oh! Count it glory, and rejoice in it with joy unspeakable. (1 Peter 1:8)

The great thing remains, is your imitation of glorious Christ under all the provoking defamations that are heaped upon you. Of him you read, 1 Peter 2:21, 23:

For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps ... Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:

Are you in the hands of the shearers? Oh! That you could imitate the Lamb of God. His incomparable meekness and patience and silence. His readiness to forgive his most unreasonable adversaries! When all manner of evil was to only spoke of him, but also done to him, he expressed no undue resentments; he did not let fall one outrageous or intemperate word; he silently concocted the wrongs that were done unto him; he left to his Eternal Father the way and the time of his just vindication. He prayed for his persecutors. His obliging prayer for them was, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” (Luke 23:34)

The consolations we will receive

If you follow the steps of your suffering Savior, I will set before you the consolations of God, which Oh! How can they be small unto you? There will infallibly belong to you those great consolations of God. 2 Tim. 2:12, “If we suffer we shall also reign with him.” The scars of your defamations and other calamities leave upon you, will be the marks of the Lord Jesus (Gal. 6:17) upon you: The marks, which as often as

you look upon, you may with a triumphant faith conclude, My glorious Lord intends a part in the glories of his heavenly kingdom for me! My friend you will find Joy of such considerations to be inexpressible.

'Tis a blessed thing to suffer like your glorious Lord. But then if you suffer for him, or if the cause of the malignity which disposes ill med readily to utter or to receive defamations against you, be your known serviceableness to his [Christ's] interest, and churches', this a vast addition to your blessedness. Your Christ-like behavior under the suffering will consummate the tokens of a great reward in heaven (Matt. 5:12) reserved for you (1 Pet. 1:4) and of your being one day with him to behold his glory. (Ps. 27:4)

Here, sir, is the consummating point of your conformity to your Savior.

Consciously live in the presence of Christ.

First, you must be full of Christ: always thinking of him, acting for him; watching all occasions decently to make mention of his glories; daily pleading of his sacrifice, flying to his righteousness; resigning to the possession of his Holy Spirit; admiring, studying, following, of his holy pattern; perpetually rendering some acknowledgments to him by yourself, and bespeaking acknowledgements of him from others; this must be the very business of your life!

Show kindness

Then you must be as Christ was, full of benevolence and beneficence to mankind; ever filled with compassions toward the miserable; ever doing to them all the kindnesses imaginable: Particularly contributing to the reconciliation of such as are at variance; and seeking out poor and mean [not angry or unkind, but lowly in social standing] people, and with delight stooping to any king offices for them; and all this upon his account; continually contriving how to be serviceable unto all that are about you; relishing of no pleasure comparable to that of doing any service whereof you may be capable; thankful to any one that will but show you an opportunity how to do good, and not needing any arguments and persuasiveness to lay hold upon it: Having imprinted on your mind a deep apprehension of your being but a steward of all your possession in this world; and in a discreet and faithful stewardship dispensing all to just such uses as your great Redeemer has prescribed for all.

Expect trouble

When you have gained these two points, you may be tempted now to think, "'Tis well; 'tis all!" No, my friend, it is not well, it is all spoilt if there be not a third supper-added. It is this, if you thus glorify Christ, you must be greatly exposed unto

the envy and hatred of a malignant world. You must look to be as he as despised and rejected of men.

Satan operating in the minds of men, will procure you a vast encumbrance of prejudice from the world. Men will have a strange aversion to you. Yea, many that pass for good men will have so; and yet not be able to give any good reason for the aversion.

Well you must cheerfully undergo all the neglect, all the contempt, all the obloquies that shall be case upon you. Your love to a glorious Christ, and you hope of being loved by him, and [being] like to him, is to carry you cheerfully through it all. Yea, though you should be hated as the off-scouring of all things. You must be willing that the providence of God, and the disesteem of man, should make a very nothing of you¹¹⁹. And this not only from a mind really convinced that you are nothing, but also from the marvelous exinanition [emptying; in current theological language, kenosis] of your glorious Christ when came into the world. Now, it is finished! (John 19:30)

This is the point of conformity of your blessed Savior which I mightily press upon you: a spirit reconciled unto humiliations; a spirit not adverse to diminutions.

And among the previous discoveries [experience] of such a spirits there is especially one which you shall allow me to insist upon.

Pride is the not the remedy for slander

You know that the beloved Apostle [John] mentions pride as the last part of the Old Man which dies within us. It is the Pride of Life; it lives on to the end of life, till we ourselves do die. I have been inquisitive, "What is the last essay of pride?" It is doubtless for a humble man to be willing got be thought humble, or to be impatient, when pride is charged upon him¹²⁰.

This then is the thing I demand of you: Be always, really, heartily, inwardly loathing yourself. Really esteem others wiser and better than yourself. Really shun

¹¹⁹ You should be willing to be made as nothing; to have no standing or social status.

¹²⁰ The ultimate allusion here seems to be:

15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. 17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

1 John 2:15–17 (AV)

honors, be adverse to them, afraid of them; never be uneasily at being overlooked by other men; of there if there be three hundred in Sparta preferred before you.¹²¹

The very first motions of a design to make yourself a name, suppress them immediately. After all this, be not angry if you are still called a proud man. It is the easiest thing imaginable for disaffected people to find something or other by which they will imagine to justify their passing such a censure upon you. But now let not such a censure produce the least impatience in you.

I was not well satisfied with a very good and great man, the martyr Cyprian¹²² for this thing: he had his adversaries whose principal clamor against him was that he was a proud man; he wanted [lacked] humility. Now the only symptom of it that I know of was that he took the pains to write a letter in own vindication against that foolish calumny. His best vindication and the best confutation of the calumny in my poor opinion would have been to bourn it patiently and have said nothing at all.

When to expect to be attacked

I will mention to you one circumstance of conformity to your blessed Savior which if it should occur in your experience, I would not have you wonder at it. Our Savior having had Heaven opened, with astonishing testimonies with astonishing testimonies of divine favor to him at his Transfiguration in the the Mount. (Mark 9:2-13) He presently [immediately] met with what was grievous to him; a horrid spectacle of one possessed by a devil and something in the carriage of his own disciples which administered grief to him.

In conformity with this, it has been the observation made by some servants that just after they have been admitted unto a more than ordinary familiarity with Heaven, the Evil Spirits presently entertains them with some vexatious object, something that proves very troublesome and abusing unto them, and most probably some obloquy raised by the Devil against them. It may be you have (especially in the days which you have set apart for religion of the closet) had an admission into Heaven, yea, into the most Holy Place of Heaven by a lively faith beholding Jesus in the Holy of Holies concerned for you. You have been swallowed up with raptures of assurance of what the Glorious One has done and will do for you. It has been with you a time of astonishing irradiations from the Heavenly World.

¹²¹ An allusion to the Battle of Thermopylae: <https://www.history.com/topics/ancient-history/leonidas>

¹²² "CYPRIAN (c. 200–58). Latin church father, and Bishop of Carthage from about 249 until his death, Cyprian was a pagan who was converted to Christianity in middle age and quickly rose to the office of bishop. He was well educated and a gifted speaker, able to unite and inspire a church which was undergoing severe persecution." Sinclair B. Ferguson and J.I. Packer, *New Dictionary of Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 184.

Now let it not surprise you if you immediately have to do with people that have the evil spirit in them. Oh, 'tis an unknown power that the Devil has over the minds and tongues of defamatory people. Nor let it be a surprise to you, if some from whom you might expect better things be now left unto something that may grieve you wonderfully. Nor let it surprise you if some from whom you might expect better thing be now left unto something that may grieve you wonderfully. *Rejoice, again I say rejoice* (Phil. 4:4) in this conformity to your Savior.

Paul: If thou hast been in Heaven, expect a messenger of Satan (some Zedekiah) immediately to buffet thee. (2 Chron. 18)

Part V **Do not Let Slander Keep You From Service**

Let not your defamations be the discouragements unto your usefulness; by no means be discouraged from well-doing by being ill-spoken of.

Doubtless one design of Satan (the Prince of Defamers) in raising a storm of defamation against you is to upset your disposition for the service of God. But, oh, do not gratify him. So, when the prophet heard the defaming of many, he fell into that unhappy pang. Jer. 20:9 “Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his Name.” I hope sir you’ll be better advised. If you had not been a fruitful tree, it may be there had not been so many stones and sticks thrown at you. Now my friend, bear not fewer good fruits because of what you have met withal.

What a triumph was that? Rom. 8:37, 39. “We are more than conquerors—DEPTH—shall not be able to separate us from the Love of God.” Though you are brought into a depth of disgrace, and laid low by defamation, yet, Oh! Love God, as much as ever, and Lover the service of God with a flame that shall never be extinguished. Let no defemations retund [blunt, turn aside] or flatten your brave resolutions to do all you can.

Stand steady like a beaten anvil

Ignatius¹²³ of old said unto Polycarp¹²⁴, “Stand steady like a beaten anvil.”¹²⁵ Give me leave to address you with the like advice. Bear all the blows that are given you: And after all, be what you were before. Be as firm in your intentions and endeavors to do good as you were before. Be much better than you were before. Let nothing issue from you but bright strictures of piety and patience, and sparkingly devotion and usefulness.

The great God is by the defamations which are smitten withal making a trial of your sincerity and fidelity.¹²⁶ He is trying whether you will serve him upon purer principles than the praise of men.

¹²³ “IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH (Ἰγνάτιος Ἀντιοχείας, Ignatius Antiocheias). An early church father and bishop of Antioch of Syria. Wrote seven letters before his martyrdom (ca. AD 110–117) that provide insight into the post-apostolic church. Ignatius is also known as Theophorus (“God-bearer”).” Alexander H. Pierce, “Ignatius of Antioch,” ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016). Contemporary and acquaintance of Polycarp. Ignatius left behind a series of letters written as Polycarp was being transported to his martyrdom. The letters of Ignatius, as well as the documents by and concerning Polycarp can be found here:

<https://www.ccel.org/l/lightfoot/fathers/cache/fathers.pdf>

¹²⁴ Bishop of Smyrna. His dates are uncertain, but likely 69-155 A.D.

¹²⁵ At this point, Mather quotes the original Greek. The text itself is difficult to read at this point, but the Greek text in Lightfoot’s edition here reads, “στῆθι ἐδραῖος, ὡς ἄκμων τυπτόμενος” Joseph Barber Lightfoot and J. R. Harmer, “The Apostolic Fathers” (London: Macmillan and Co., 1891), 132.

A longer quotation from Ignatius’ letter to Polycarp, as Ignatius was on his way to be martyred, reads, “Let not those who seem to be specious and yet bring novel teaching dismay you. Stand firm as an anvil when it is smitten. It is the part of a great athlete to suffer blows and to conquer. And above all for God’s sake we ought to endure all things, that He also may endure us. Become more zealous than you are. Consider the seasons.³ Look for Him Who is above all seasons, Who is timeless, invisible, made visible for our sakes, Who is beyond the touch of our hands, beyond suffering, Who yet suffered for us, Who in every way endured for us.” J. H. Srawley with St. Ignatius, *The Epistles of St. Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, Second Edition, Revised.*, vol. 1 & 2, *Early Church Classics* (London; Brighton: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1910), 50–51.

¹²⁶ Two allusions stand behind this section. First, Job 1-2, where Satan argues that Job only serves God for the benefit to Job. Second, 1 Peter 1:3–7 (AV)

³ Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵ Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Oh, that you may be able to say when tried, I shall come forth as gold. It is a wonderful speech of Plato, “For the trial of true virtue ‘tis necessary that a good man should be defamed as an evil doer, when he does all things well, justly and fairly; and that he should hold immovable under such discouragements.”

I will mention to you two observable experiments, things which I have observed in the course of my pilgrimage:

Where the slander will often fall

First, It is a passage which famous Baxter has in his Christian Directory:¹²⁷ “If you be famous for any grace or good work, expect to be defamed for quite the contrary. I have known some that have given away almost all they had to the poor, and hardly kept necessaries for themselves; yet these person have been accused of covetousness, unkindness hard-dealing.”

‘Tis most certainly so, *Insani sapiens nomen feret, Aequus Iniqui.* (A wise man will bear the accusation of insanity, even iniquity.) If you decline a thousand opportunities to make yourself a name, and very patiently bear [difficulties], and almost seek to be overlooked; yet, you shall be called “The proudest of men.” If you are ever devising liberal things and ever scorn little things, you shall be reproached as a “Man always looking for gain.” I you contrive all the methods imaginable not only to be good, loving, tender in your several relations, yet you shall be treated as a very unkind person, and perhaps most unkindly by them that have the least reason for it.

Methought, I have often seen some resemblance of this matter in a thing which I have seen befalling a minister, when in the way of his pastoral duty he visited persons possessed with evil spirits; the persons though they knew everyone else in the room, yet through the unaccountable operation of the evil spirits on their eyes, the minister who was most likely to do them good, still appeared so dirty, so ugly, so disguised unto them, they could have no knowledge of him.

So misrepresented shall good men often be to the minds of people, when evil spirits are working on the unpersuadable children. Sir, if ever you find it so remember that God is not trying you, whether you will grow in that grace; hold on in that good

⁶ Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: ⁷ That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

¹²⁷ Essentially a mountain of pastoral notes. It contains a number of quite useful observations. You can find electronic copies here: <http://digitalpuritan.net/richard-baxter/>

work,, for which you have hithero had so mall encouragements, in the representations of the neighborhood.

You will be attacked by those for whom you do the most good

Secondly, 'Tis a passage which I have somewhere else met withal, "Though I have done good offices for all men whatsoever, as they have come in my way, yet a great part of them, whom I have distinguished by doing of something peculiar for them, have afterwards treated me most ungratefully and abominably; have proved prodigies of ingratitude."

Indeed, it is no rare thing for great services to be worse rewarded than great injuries. They that were lately your dependents will be shortly your defamers. It is a maxim of Seneca¹²⁸ , "Men bear a secret hatred unto those who have most obliged them."¹²⁹

Make yourself a scaffold for another to rise by; when is up, he will kick you down if he can. The prophecy is fulfilled in private as well as public instances, *Men shall be unthankful*. The French Protestants must for this very cause be destroyed by a tyrant because they brought him to the throne and made him able to destroy them.

Sir, if you meet with such usage too, let it not at all dishearten you from doing unto eight those good offices which you have done already to seven. But learn to good for its own sake; do it, hoping for nothing again.

God can use even defamations

O blessed improvement of defamations!¹³⁰ My friend, make it and the issue will be glorious. Your experience will be that, Gen. 49:23,24, "The archers have sorely

¹²⁸ Seneca, Roman Stoic philosopher, 4 B.C. – 65 A.D. Counselor to Emperor Nero. At this place in the text, Mather has the word "unmasked" which makes no sense. It has been omitted.

¹²⁹ So far I have been unable to track down the original source.

¹³⁰

Mistake me not, I do not say that of their own nature they are good, for they are a fruit of the curse; but though they are naturally evil, yet the wise over-ruling hand of God disposing and sanctifying them, they are morally good. As the elements, though of contrary qualities, yet God hath so tempered them, that they all work in a harmonious manner, for the good of the universe. Or as in a watch, the wheels seem to move contrary one to another, but all carry on the motions of the watch: so things that seem to move cross to the godly, yet by the wonderful providence of God work for their good. Among these worst things, there are four sad evils work for good to them that love God.

grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him, but his bow abode in strength.” You know not what good arrows of service may yet be sent from you among the People of God; perhaps the more for the mischiefs which the archers have attempted upon you. Don’t sit down, and sink down under discouragements as if your opportunities to do good would be utterly lost by the malice of your defamers, with a tempest of defamations. Don’t say, “I shall one day perish by their tongues or pens.” But say, “O my soul, hope in God for I shall yet praise him.” (Ps. 42:5) God will wonderfully rescue your opportunities. They are not at the disposal of your malicious enemies.

And you know not what may happen to hamstringing those enemies or to muzzle the lions that you are thrown among. ‘Tis very possible they that are now your enemies may come to befriend you wonderfully, and your defamers may prove the very instruments of your good. Yea, of your doing more good and of that by which your fame will be but advantaged and propagated.

I have heard a servant of God make this observation, That he has been defamed and abused by some, and he has out of obedience to Christ forborne to take notice of it. Christ has afterward put it into the hearts of those very men singly to assist him in his most valued serviceableness. Yea, if you duly humble yourself under the mighty hand of God, and rage of man, it would be no ne thing if anon ou find the accomplishment of that promise, Zeph. 3:19, “I will get you praise and fame in every place where they have been put to shame.”

Or, while these envious men are wishing and striving that you may come to nothing, they may do so themselves, *Non ego sic cecidi, quamvis abjectus!* (“I have not cut down him who was struck down.”)

It may-be they will become so contemptible and so miserable that you shall have them objects, not so much of your indignation as of your commiseration. Their esteem shall be very little, and the divine providence will order it, that they shall be the less esteemed for their disaffection of you.

It may be, God will give you that room in the hearts of his people and such a testimony in their consciences and sentiments that malignity toward you shall be reckoned a mark of an ill man by very man of them. The intoxicated creatures find that they have in truth only done the part of a viper in the fable. Their own viperous tongues bleed by licking of the file. But the servant of God is found invulnerable. AS you know, the Scripture gives it as good mark, to be a lover of good men. So, when the poet would paint out his Thersites as a very sorry wretch, this is the finishing stroke of his wretchedness. He is an adversary of brave Ulysses.¹³¹

Thomas Watson, *A Divine Cordial; The Saint’s Spiritual Delight; The Holy Eucharist; and Other Treatises, The Writings of the Doctrinal Puritans and Divines of the Seventeenth Century* (The Religious Tract Society, 1846), 23.

¹³¹ A reference to the *Iliad*, from book II, Samuel Butler, translation:

The rest now took their seats and kept to their own several places, but Thersites still went on wagging his unbridled tongue- a man of many words, and those unseemly; a monger of sedition, a railer against all who were in authority, who cared not what he said, so that he might set the Achaeans in a laugh. He was the ugliest man of all those that came before Troy- bandy-legged, lame of one foot, with his two shoulders rounded and hunched over his chest. His head ran up to a point, but there was little hair on the top of it. Achilles and Ulysses hated him worst of all, for it was with them that he was most wont to wrangle; now, however, with a shrill squeaky voice he began heaping his abuse on Agamemnon. The Achaeans were angry and disgusted, yet none the less he kept on brawling and bawling at the son of Atreus.

"Agamemnon," he cried, "what ails you now, and what more do you want? Your tents are filled with bronze and with fair women, for whenever we take a town we give you the pick of them. Would you have yet more gold, which some Trojan is to give you as a ransom for his son, when I or another Achaean has taken him prisoner? or is it some young girl to hide and lie with? It is not well that you, the ruler of the Achaeans, should bring them into such misery. Weakling cowards, women rather than men, let us sail home, and leave this fellow here at Troy to stew in his own meeds of honour, and discover whether we were of any service to him or no. Achilles is a much better man than he is, and see how he has treated him- robbing him of his prize and keeping it himself. Achilles takes it meekly and shows no fight; if he did, son of Atreus, you would never again insult him."

Thus railed Thersites, but Ulysses at once went up to him and rebuked him sternly. "Check your glib tongue, Thersites," said he, "and babble not a word further. Chide not with princes when you have none to back you. There is no viler creature come before Troy with the sons of Atreus. Drop this chatter about kings, and neither revile them nor keep harping about going home. We do not yet know how things are going to be, nor whether the Achaeans are to return with good success or evil. How dare you gibe at Agamemnon because the Danaans have awarded him so many prizes? I tell you, therefore- and it shall surely be- that if I again catch you talking such nonsense, I will either forfeit my own head and be no more called father of Telemachus, or I will take you, strip you stark naked, and whip you out of the assembly till you go blubbering back to the ships."

On this he beat him with his staff about the back and shoulders till he dropped and fell a-weeping. The golden sceptre raised a bloody weal on his back, so he sat down frightened and in pain, looking foolish as he wiped the tears from his eyes. The people were sorry for him, yet they laughed heartily, and one would turn to his neighbour saying, "Ulysses has done many a good thing ere now in fight and council, but he never did the Argives a better turn than when he stopped this fellow's mouth from prating further. He will give the kings no more of his insolence."

Thus said the people.

Vengeance is mine

Yea, it is possible God may punish them with reducing them to low and sad circumstances wherein they may need some assistances: They must fly for help to the very man whom they have abused. And sir, I assure myself that you will readily and heartily help them and utterly forget all their abuses, as if they had never been offered.

The governor Eutropius did but affront Chrysostom for his faithful rebukes of his briberies and oppressions. Anon the Emperor strips Eutropius of his offices and his like to fall a sacrifice unto his enemies.¹³² Eutropius then flies to Chrysostom for defense. And Chrysostom is the man who most now defends him from his enemies. Yea, it is possible that God may bring the fate a Pashur upon him that smites the servants of God. (See, Jer. 20) And the smitten saint must be the man whom the dying and woeful sinner then begs to pray for him, which you may be sure he cannot but do with all the charity imaginable.

Some that have been more than ordinarily virulent and violent in uttering their calumnies against good men, have hastened upon themselves that which is incurred by them who will keep their tongues from evil. (Ps. 34:13) But that which I know you would very loath to see come upon the work of your calumniators. It was a strange providence among the old Roman Law, of the XII Tables, ¹³³ *Si quis carmen occentassit, quot alteri flagitium parit, Capitale esto*. The plain English of that old Latin is, "That it was a capital thing to publish a reproach which procured infamy of another man." Our old Arnobius having occasion to twit the defamatory pagans with with it, I find citing it with this explanation, *Carmen malum conscribere, quo Fama alterius Coinquinetur*. (By writing an evil song, another's reputation is ruined.)

The awful hand of Heaven oftener executes that strange punishment than men are well aware of. Vavasor Powel¹³⁴'s maxim was a very true one, "The less a good man

¹³² Chrysostom the greatest preacher of the early church. You really must make his acquaintance.

You can find Chrysostom's Homilies on Eutropius here:

<https://orthodoxchurchfathers.com/fathers/npnf109/npnf1034.htm#TopOfPage>

¹³³ You can find the law here: <https://law.gwu.libguides.com/romanlaw/twelvetables>.

¹³⁴ Welsh Baptist minister, born 1617. "He had no fear of men, or jails, or death in his heart. He was a strong republican, and he openly denounced the protectorship of Cromwell when his power was dreaded by all Europe; and Cromwell was so apprehensive of his influence that he arrested him. He spent eight years in thirteen prisons. And he died in the Fleet jail, in London, in the eleventh year of his incarceration, Oct. 27, 1671. His death was unusually blessed; the power and love of God filled his soul with enthusiasm in the miseries of a cell and in the agonies of a distressing complaint."

<http://baptisthistoryhomepage.com/powell.vavasor.b.encyclo.html>

strives for himself, the more will the great God strive for him.” Unjust enemies who are false witnesses breathing out cruelty, being with much moderation and resignation of mind, put over into the hands of the living God, find it at last a “fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb. 10:31) There are arrows on the bent bow of Providence ordained against the persecutors (whose teeth are arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword (Ps. 57:4)). None knows how soon the Holy God may let them fly, especially if their persecutors carry on their malignity with such unwearied and impetuous molestation, that while they live, a diligent servant of God can proceed little further in the doing of good in the world.

God can make you useful

At the same time, you don't know what God may do for you. Moses had not been so magnified by God if Aaron and Miriam had not abused him and abased him. (Nu. 12) Something may fall out that shall more signalize you and magnify you among the People of God than anything that has befallen you.

God is to be adored in such things; but though I make the briefest mention of them that is possible, I would not have mentioned them at all, if the things had not been of so frequent occurrence as to be worth your observation. And at the same time, I know you will desire concerning most of them that they may not occur in your own experience. You had rather see God saving of your personal enemies, than for your sake smiting of them. And, if you saw the uplifted hand of God ready to discharge thunderbolts upon them, you would beg for them, Lord, spare them, spare them.

Pray!

I will conclude with this advice.

PRAYER, PRAYER, which has heretofore doubtless been the breath of your life, ought now more than ever to be so. The best resolution that you can take up is that of the Psalmist, “For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful are opened against me: they have spoken against me with a lying tongue.” (Psalm 109:2) But I give myself to prayer.

Know the Scripture

If the storm of obloquy upon you be more than ordinary, it looks as if the Lord called you unto something more of retirement; silence alone for a while and keeping silence and putting your mouth into the dust; while you give your cheek to him that smites you, and you are filled full of reproach. How many Psalms will you in this retirement and religion of the closet find prepared for you, to direct you, to support you, to supply your supplications? Especially the third, the thirteenth, the seventeenth, the twenty-seventh, the thirty-first, the thirty-eighth, the forty-first,

the fifty-fourth, the fifty-sixth, the eighty-sixth, the ninety-first, the hundred and ninth, the hundred and thirty-eighth, the hundred and forty-second, the hundred and forty third.

The worst of dragons have been charmed by such Psalms as these.

My friend, the foot-steps of God, even when his is treading on you, will drop fatness [blessing] into your soul. If you are brought unto such employments and being thus fruitful (though in a low valley) you may shout & also sing for joy. Even when thrown into a dung cart, you may be (as the martyr in that case expressed it), as a sweet odor to God yea, and unto his faithful people, too.

Be concerned thus to glorify the Name of your Holy Lord and fear not. He will take a sufficient care of your name.

And at the very time when your name is trod into the dirt, among men on earth, it will be written in heaven be precious among the angles of heaven, to whom you and your bringing forth fruit with patience are made a spectacle. And where a crown of glory is ready waiting for you.

Having brought you thither, I cannot break off anywhere more agreeably but there (whither my friend all you present sufferings are carrying you!). There, I leave you.

POSTSCRIPT

Thus, you have seen the true way of shaking off a viper. When the viper coiled about the hand of the servant of Christ (for Bochart¹³⁵ will allow him to do no more; not consenting to [agreeing with] who will have the teeth of the viper struck into him), it was, as one wittily says, *Non laedert, sed ut ornaret; not an injury, but an ornament unto him*. The ancients had indeed a sort of bracelet called a “wrist serpent” mentioned in Atheneaus and Hesychius and others. Our defamers will adorn more than they annoy us, if we take this method with them, which we have now agreed upon.

When Paul shook off the beast into the fire (Acts 28:1-6), some ingenious men and Arator¹³⁶ among the rest make it a type of our great adversary Satan cast into hell for assaulting the faithful people of God.

But oh! Let us lift-up our hands to heaven with fervent cries to the God of all grace that he would bring all our human defamers (though we were ever so inhumanely treated by them) thither even to Heaven; there to share with us in happiness, to which even they have promoted our arrival.

PSALM XCI. 13

Thou shall victorious tread on the black serpent, and the asp; the dragon and the great dragon thou shalt trample under foot.

Melius responderi non potest calumniatorum maledicentiae quam non respondendo¹³⁷.

Melc. Adam. in Vita Beza.

A Speech of the Martyr Vineditirus.

Rage and do the worst, that Malignity can set thee at work to do;
Thou shalt see the Spirit of GOD strengthen the Sufferer,
more than the Devil can do the Inflicter.

FINIS.

¹³⁵ Samuel Bochart (30 May 1599 – 16 May 1667) was a French Protestant biblical scholar. For his works see, http://www.prdl.org/author_view.php?a_id=150

¹³⁶ A commentator I have been unable to identify.

¹³⁷ There can be no better answer to the curse of the slanderers than by not answering.