

The Mute Christian under the Smarting Rod

Part I

By [Thomas Brooks](#)

The 'Mute Christian' was originally published in 1659. A '2d' edition—though not so designated—was immediately called for, and appeared in 1660. Thereafter few books were more in demand, being next to the 'Precious Remedies.' The earlier portion of the title (as in above two editions) was 'The Silent Soul with Sovereign Antidotes,' &c Our text is taken from 'the eighth edition, corrected,' collated with the original and subsequent intervening editions. Its title-page is given below.

The Mute Christian under the Smarting Rod: with Sovereign Antidotes against the Most Miserable Exigents: or,

A Christian with an Olive Leaf in his mouth, when he is under the greatest afflictions, the sharpest and sorest trials and troubles, the saddest and darkest Providences and Changes, with Answers to divers Questions and Objections that are of greatest importance: all tending to win and work Souls to be still, quiet, calm and silent under all changes that have, or may pass upon them in this World, &c.

The Eighth Edition, Corrected.

By Thomas Brooks, late Preacher of the Word at St. Margaret New-Fish-Street, London.

The Lord is in his Holy Temple: Let all the Earth keep silence before him, Hab. 2.20.

London, Printed for John Hancock, and are to be sold at the Three Bibles, over against the Royal Exchange in Cornhill. 1684.

The Epistle Dedicatory

To all afflicted and distressed, dissatisfied, disquieted, and discomposed Christians throughout the world.

Dear Hearts,—The choicest saints are 'born to troubles as the sparks fly upwards', Job v. 7. 'Many are the troubles of the righteous;' if they were many, and not troubles, then, as it is in the proverb, the more the merrier; or if they were troubles and not many, then the fewer the better cheer. But God, who is infinite in wisdom and matchless in goodness, hath ordered troubles, yea, many troubles to come trooping in upon us on every side. As our mercies, so our crosses seldom come single; they usually come

treading one upon the heels of another; they are like April showers, no sooner is one over but another comes. And yet, Christians, it is mercy, it is rich mercy, that every affliction is not an execution, that every correction is not a damnation. The higher the waters rise, the nearer Noah's ark was lifted up to heaven; the more thy afflictions are increased, the more thy heart shall be raised heavenward.

Because I would not hold you too long in the porch, I shall only endeavour two things: first, to give you the reasons of my appearing once more in print; and secondly, a little counsel and direction that the following tract may turn to your soul's advantage, which is the white that I have in my eye. The true reasons of my sending this piece into the world, such as it is, are these:

I. *First*, The afflicting hand of God hath been hard upon myself, and upon my dearest relations in this world, and upon many of my precious Christian friends, whom I much love and honour in the Lord, which put me upon studying of the mind of God in that scripture that I have made the subject-matter of this following discourse. Luther could not understand some Psalms till he was afflicted; the Christ-cross is no letter in the book, and yet, saith he, it hath taught one more than all the letters in the book. Afflictions are a golden key by which the Lord opens the rich treasure of his word to his people's souls; and this in some measure, through grace, my soul hath experienced. When Samson had found honey, he gave some to his father and mother to eat, Judges xiv, 9, 10; some honey I have found in my following text; and therefore I may not, I cannot be such a churl as not to give them some of my honey to taste, who have drunk deep of my gall and wormwood. Austin observes on that, Ps. lxxvi. 16, 'Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul.' 'He doth not call them', saith he, 'to acquaint them with speculations, how wide the earth is, how far the heavens are stretched out, what the number of the stars is, or what is the course of the sun; but come and I will tell you the wonders of his grace, the faithfulness of his promises, the riches of his mercy to my soul'. Gracious experiences are to be communicated. *Lilmod lelammed*, we therefore learn that we may teach, is a proverb among the Rabbins. And I do therefore 'lay in and lay up,' saith the heathen, that I may draw forth again and lay out for the good of many. When God hath dealt bountifully with us, others should reap some noble good by us. The family, the town, the city, the country, where a man lives, should fare the better for his faring well. Our mercies and experiences should be as a running spring at our doors, which is not only for our own use, but also for our neighbours', yea, and for strangers too.

Secondly, What is written is permanent; *litera scriptsa manet*, and spreads itself further by far, for time, place, and persons, than the voice can reach. The pen is an artificial tongue; it speaks as well to absent as to present friends; it speaks to them afar off as well as those that are near; it speaks to many thousands at once; it speaks not only to the present age but also to succeeding ages. The pen is a kind of image of eternity; it will make a man live when he is dead, Heb. xi. 1. Though 'the prophets do not live for ever', yet their labours may, Zech. i. 6. A man's writings may preach when he cannot, when he may not, and when by reason of bodily distempers, he dares not; yea, and that which is more, when he is not.

Thirdly, Few men, if any, have iron memories. How soon is a sermon preached forgotten, when a sermon written remains! Augustine writing to Volusian, saith, 'That which is written is always at hand to be read, when the reader is at leisure.' Men do not easily forget their own names, nor their father's house, nor the wives of their bosoms, nor the fruit of their loins, nor to eat their daily bread; and yet, ah! how easily do they forget that word of grace, that should be dearer to them than all! Most men's memories, especially in the great concernments of their souls, are like a sieve or boulder, where the good corn and fine flour goes through, but the light chaff and coarse bran remain behind; or like a strainer, where the sweet liquor is strained out, but the dregs left behind; or like a grate that lets the pure water run away, but if there be any straws, sticks, mud, or filth, that it holds, as it were, with iron hands. Most men's memories are very treacherous, especially in good things; few men's memories are a holy ark, a heavenly storehouse or magazine for their souls, and therefore they stand in the more need passed upon us. But,

Fourthly, Its marvellous suitableness and usefulness under these great turns and changes that have passed upon us. As every wise husbandman observes the fittest seasons to sow his seed—some he sows in the autumn and fall of the leaf, some in the spring of the year, some in a dry season and some in a wet, some in a moist clay and some in a sandy dry ground, Isa. xxviii. 25,—so every spiritual husbandman must observe the fittest times to sow his spiritual seed in. He hath heavenly seed by him for all occasions and seasons, for spring and fall; for all grounds, heads, and hearts. Now whether the seed sown in the following treatise be not suitable to the times and seasons wherein we are cast, is left to the judgment of the prudent reader to determine; if the author had thought otherwise, this babe had been stifled in the womb.

Fifthly, The good acceptance that my other weak labours have found. God hath blessed them, not only to the conviction, the edification, confirmation, and consolation of many, but also to the conversion of many, Rom. xv. 21.' God is a free agent to work by what hand he pleases; and sometimes he takes pleasure to do great things by weak means, that 'no flesh may glory in his presence.' God will not 'despise the day of small things;' and who or what art thou, that darrest despise that day? The Spirit breathes upon whose preaching and writing he pleases, and all prospers according as that wind blows, John iii. 8.

Sixthly, That all afflicted and distressed Christians may have a proper salve for every sore, a proper remedy against every disease, at hand. As every good man, so every good book is not fit to be the afflicted man's companion; but this is. Here he may see his face, his head, his land, his heart, his ways, his works; here he may see all his diseases discovered, and proper remedies proposed and applied; here he may find arguments to silence him, and means to quiet him, when it is at worst with him; in every storm here he may find a tree to shelter him; and in every danger, here he may find a city of refuge to secure him; and in every difficulty, here he may have a light to guide him; and in every peril, here he may find a buckler to defend him; and in every distress, here he may find a cordial to strengthen him; and in every trouble, here he may find a staff to support

him.

Seventhly, To satisfy some bosom friends, some faithful friends. Man is made to be a friend, and apt for friendly offices. He that in not friendly is not worthy to have a friend, and he that hath a friend, and doth not shew himself friendly, is not worthy to be accounted a man. Friendship is a kind of life, without which there is no comfort of a man's life. Christian friendship ties such a knot that great Alexander cannot cut. Summer friends I value not, but winter friends are worth their weight in gold; and who can deny such anything, especially in these days, wherein real, faithful, constant friends are so rare to be found? I Sam. xxii. 1-3. The friendship of most men in these days is like Jonah's gourd, now very promising and flourishing, and anon fading and withering; it is like some plants in the water, which have broad leaves on the surface of the water, but scarce any root at all; their friendship is like melons, cold within, hot without; their expressions are high, but their affections are low; they speak much, but do little. As drums, and trumpets, and ensigns in a battle make a great noise and a fine show, but act nothing, so these friends will compliment highly, but handsomely, speak plausibly, and promise lustily, and yet have neither a hand nor heart to act anything cordially or faithfully. From such friends it is a mercy to be delivered, and therefore king Antigonus was wont to pray to God that he would protect him from his friends; and when one of his council asked him why he prayed so, he returned this answer, Every man will shun and defend himself against his professed enemies, but from our professed or pretended friends, of whom few are faithful, none can safe-guard himself, but hath need of protection from heaven. But for all this, there are some that are real friends, faithful friends, active friends, winter friends, bosom friends, fast friends; and for their sakes, especially those among them that have been long, very long, under the smarting rod, and in the fiery furnace, and that have been often poured from vessel to vessel, have I once more appeared in print to the world.

Eighthly and lastly, There hath not any authors or author come to my hand, that hath handled this subject as I have done; and therefore I do not know but it may be the more grateful and acceptable to the world; and if by this essay others that are more able shaall be provoked to do more worthily upon this subject, I shall therein rejoice, 1 Thess. i. 7, 8, 1 Cor. ix. 1, 2. I shall only add, that though much of the following matter was preached upon the Lord's visitation of my dear yoke-fellow, myself, and some other friends, yet there are many things of special concernment in the following tract, that yet I have not upon any accounts communicated to the world. And thus I have given you a true and faithful account of the reasons that have prevailed with me to publish this treatise to the work, and to dedicate it to yourselves.

II. Secondly, The second thing promised was, the giving of you a little good counsel, that you may so read the following discourse, as that it may turn much to your soul's advantage; for, as many fish and catch nothing, Luke v. 5, so many read good books and get nothing, because they read them over cursorily, slightly, superficially; but he that would read to profit, must then,

First, Read and look up for a blessing: ' Paul may plant, and Apollos may water,' but all

will be to no purpose, except 'the Lord give the increase,' 1 Cor. iii. 6, 7. God must do the deed, when all is done, or else all that is done will do you no good. If you would have this work successful and effectual, you must look off from man and look up to God, who alone can make it a blessing to you. As without a blessing from heaven, thy clothes cannot warm thee, nor thy food nourish thee, nor physic cure thee, nor friends comfort thee, Micah vi. 14; so without a blessing from heaven, without the precious breathings and influences of the Spirit, what here is done will do you no good, it will not turn to your account in the day of Christ; and therefore cast an eye heavenwards, Haggai i. 6. It is Seneca's observation, that the husbandmen in Egypt never look up to heaven for rain in the time of drought, but look after the overflowing of the banks of Nile, as the only cause of their plenty. Ah, how many are there in these days, who, when they go to read a book, never look up, never look after the rain of God's blessing, but only look to the river Nile; they only look to the wit, the learning, the arts, the parts, the eloquence, &c., of the author, they never look so high as heaven; and hence it comes to pass, that though these read much, yet they profit little.

Secondly, He that would read to profit must read and meditate. Meditation is the food of your souls, it is the very stomach and natural heat whereby spiritual truths are digested. A man shall as soon live without his heart, as he shall be able to get good by what he reads, without meditation. Prayer, saith Bernard, without meditation, is dry and formal, and reading without meditation is useless and unprofitable. He that would be a wise, a prudent, and an able experienced statesman, must not hastily ramble and run over many cities, countries, customs, laws, and manners of people, without serious musing and pondering upon such things as may make him an expert statesman; so he that would get good by reading, that would complete his knowledge, and perfect his experience in spiritual things, must not slightly and hastily ramble and run over this book or that, but ponder upon what he reads, as Mary pondered the saying of the angel in her heart. Lord! saith Austin, the more I meditate on thee, the sweeter thou art to me; so the more you shall meditate on the following matter, the sweeter it will be to you. They usually thrive best who meditate most. Meditation is a soul-fattening duty; it is a grace-strengthening duty, it is a duty-crowning duty. Person calls meditation the nurse of prayer; Jerome calls it his paradise; Basil calls it the treasury where all the graces are locked up; Theophylact calls it the very gate and portal by which we enter into glory; and Aristotle, though a heathen, placeth felicity in the contemplation of the mind. You may read much and hear much, yet without meditation you will never be excellent, you still never be eminent Christians.

Thirdly, Read, and try what thou readest; take nothing upon trust, but all upon trial, as those 'noble Bereans' did, Acts xvii. to, 11. You will try and tells and weigh gold, though it be handed to you by your fathers; and so should you all those heavenly truths that are handed to you by your spiritual fathers. I hope upon trial you will find nothing, but what will hold weight in the balance of the sanctuary; and though all be not gold that glitters, yet I judge that you will find nothing here to blister, that will not be found upon trial to be true gold.

Fourthly, Read and do, read and practise what you read, or else all your reading will do

you no good. He that hath a good book in his hand, but not a lesson of it in his heart or life, is like that ass that carrieth burdens, and feeds upon thistles. In divine account, a man knows no more than he doth. Profession without practice will but make a man twice told a child of darkness; to speak well is to sound like a cymbal, but to do well is to act like an angel [Isidore]. He that practises what he reads and understands, God will help him to understand what he understands not. There is no fear of knowing too much, though there is much fear in practising too little; the most doing man shall be the most knowing man; the mightiest man in practice will in the end prove the mightiest man in Scripture, John vii. 16, 17, Ps. cxix. 98-100. Theory is the guide of practice, and practice is the life of theory. Salvian relates how the heathen did reproach some Christians, who by their lewd lives made the gospel of Christ to be a reproach. 'Where,' said they, 'is that good law which they do believe? Where are those rules of godliness which they do learn? They read the holy gospel, and yet are unclean; they read the apostles' writings, and yet live in drunkenness; they follow Christ, and yet disobey Christ; they profess a holy law, and yet do lead impure lives.' Ah! how many many preachers take up sad complaints against many readers in these days! They read our works, and yet in their lives they deny our works; they praise our works, and yet in their conversations they reproach our works; they cry up our labours in their discourses, and yet they cry them down in their practices: yet I hope better things of you into whose hands this treatise shall fall. The Samaritan woman did not fill her pitcher with water, that she might talk of it, but that she might use it, John iv. 7; and Rachel did not desire the mandrakes to hold in her hand, but that she might thereby be the more apt to bring forth, Gen. xxx. 15. The application is easy. But,

Fifthly, Read and apply. Reading is but the drawing of the bow, application is the hitting of the white. The choicest truths will no further profit you than they are applied by you; you were as good not to read, as not to apply what you read. No man attains to health by reading of Galen, or knowing Hippocrates, his aphorisms, but by the practical application of them; all the reading in the world will never make for the health of your souls except you apply what you read. The true reason why many read so much and profit so little is because they do not apply and bring home what they read to their own souls. But,

Sixthly, and lastly, Read and pray. He that makes not conscience of praying over what he reads, will find little sweetness or profit in his reading. No man makes such earnings of his reading, as he that prays over what he reads. Luther professeth that he profited more in the knowledge of the Scriptures by prayer, in a short space, than by study in a longer. As John by weeping got the sealed book open, so certainly men would gain much more than they do by reading good men's works, if they would but pray more over what they read. Ah, Christians! pray before you read, and pray after you read, that all may be blessed and sanctified to you; when you have done reading, usually close up thus:—

So let me live, so let me die,
That I may live eternally.

And when you are in the mount for yourselves, bear him upon your hearts, who is willing to 'spend and be spend' for your sakes, for your souls, 2 Cor. xii. 15. Oh! pray for me, that I may more and more be under the rich influences and glorious pourings out of the Spirit; that I may 'be an able minister of the New Testament, not of the letter, but of the Spirit,' 2 Cor. iii 6; that I may always find an everlasting spring and an overflowing fountain within me, which may always make me faithful, constant, and abundant in the work of the Lord; and that I may live daily under those inward teachings of the Spirit, that may enable me to speak from the heart to the heart, from the conscience to the conscience, and from experience to experience; that I may be a 'burning and a shining, light,' that everlasting arms may be still under me; that whilst I live, I may be serviceable to his glory and his people's good; that no discouragements may discourage one in my work; and that when my work is done, I may give up my account with joy and not with grief. I shall follow these poor labours with my weak prayers, that they may contribute much to your internal and eternal welfare,. and so rest,

Your soul's servant in our dearest Lord,
Thomas Brooks.

The Mute Christian Under The Smarting Rod

I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou dust it.—Ps. xxxix. 9.

Not to trouble you with a tedious preface, wherein usually is a flood of words, and but a drop of matter,

This psalm consists of two parts, the first exegetical or narrative, the second eutical or precative. Narration and prayer take up the whole. In the former, you have the prophet's disease discovered; and in the latter, the remedy applied. My text falls in the latter part, where you have the way of David's cure, or the means by which his soul was reduced to a still and quiet temper. I shall give a little light into the words, and then come to the point that I intend to stand upon.

'I was dumb.' The Hebrew word 'ne-elamtee" from 'alam', signifies to be mute, tongue-tied, or dumb. The Hebrew word signifies also to bind, as well as to be mute and dumb, because they that are dumb are as it were tongue-tied; they have their lips stitched and bound up. Ah! the sight of God's hand in the afflictions that was upon him, makes him lay a law of silence upon his heart and tongue.

'I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it.' He looks through all secondary causes to the first cause, and is silent: he sees a hand of God in all, and so sits mute and quiet. The sight of God in an affliction is of an irresistible efficacy to silence the heart, and to stop the mouth of a gracious man. In the words you may observe three things:

1. *The person speaking*, and that is, David; David a king, David a saint, David 'a man after God's own heart,' David a Christian; and here we are to look upon David, not as a

king, but as a Christian, as a man whose heart was right with God.

2. *The action and carriage of David under the hand of God*, in these words, 'I was dumb, and opened not my mouth.'

3. *The reason of this humble and sweet carriage of his*, in these words, 'because thou didst it.' The proposition is this:

Doct. That it is the great duty and concernment of gracious souls to be mute and silent under the greatest afflictions, the saddest providences, and sharpest trials that they meet with in this world.

For the opening and clearing up of this great and useful truth, I shall inquire,

First, What this silence is that is here pointed at in the proposition.

Secondly, What a gracious, a holy, silence doth include.

Thirdly, What this holy silence doth not include.

Fourthly, The reasons of the point; and then bring home all by way of application to our own souls.

I. For the first, *What is the silence here meant?* I answer, There is a sevenfold silence.

First, There is a stoical silence. The stoics of old thought it altogether below a man that hath reason or understanding either to rejoice in any good, or to mourn for any evil; but this stoical silence is such a sinful insensibleness as is very provoking to a holy God, Isa. xxvi. 10,11. God will make the most insensible sinner sensible either of his hand here, or of his wrath in hell. It is a heathenish and a horrid sin to be without natural affections, Rom. i. 31. And of this sin Quintus Fabius Maximus seems to be foully guilty who, when he heard that his mother and wife, whom he dearly loved, were slain by the fall of an house, and that his younger son, a brave, hopeful young man, died at the same time in Umbria, he never changed his countenance, but went on with the affairs of the commonwealth as if no such calamity had befallen him. This carriage of his spoke out more stupidity than patience, Job xxv. 13.

And so Harpalus was not at all appalled when he saw two of his sons laid ready dressed in a charger, when Astyages had bid him to supper. This was a sottish insensibleness. Certainly if the loss of a child in the house be no more to thee than the loss of a chick in the yard, thy heart is base and sordid, and thou mayest well expect some sore awakening judgment. This age is full of such monsters, who think it below the greatness and magnanimity of their spirits to be moved, affected, or afflicted with any afflictions that befall them. I know none so ripe and ready for hell as these.

Aristotle speaks of fishes, that though they have spears thrust into their sides, yet they

awake not. God thrusts many a sharp spear through many a sinner's heart, and yet he feels nothing, he complains of nothing. These men's souls will bleed to death. Seneca, Epist. x., reports of Senecio Cornelius, who minded his body more than his soul, and his money more than heaven; when he had all the day long waited on his dying friend, and his friend was dead, he returns to his house, sups merrily, comforts himself quickly, goes to bed cheerfully. His sorrows were ended, and the time of his mourning expired before his deceased friend was interred. Such stupidity is a curse that many a man lies under. But this stoical silence, which is but a sinful sullenness, is not the silence here meant.

Secondly, There is a politic silence. Many are silent out of policy. Should they not be silent, they should lay themselves more open either to the rage and fury of men, or else to the plots and designs of men: to prevent which they are silent, and will lay their hands upon their mouths, that others might not lay their hands upon their estates, lives, or liberties: 'And Saul also went home to Gibeah, and there went with him a band of men, whose hearts God had touched. But the children of Belial said, How shall this man save us? and they despised him, and brought him no presents; but he held his peace,' or was as though he had been deaf, 1 Sam. x. 26, 27. This new king being but newly entered upon his kingly government, and observing his condition to be but mean and low, his friends but few, and his enemies many and potent, sons of Belial, i.e. men without yoke, as the word signifies, men that were desperately wicked, that were marked out for hell, that were even incarnate devils, who would neither submit to reason nor religion, nor be governed by the laws of nature nor of nations, nor yet by the laws of God: now this young prince, to prevent sedition and rebellion, blood and destruction, prudently and politically chooses rather to lay his hand upon his mouth than to take a wolf by the ear or a lion by the beard; wanted neither wit nor will to be mute; he turns a deaf ear to all they say, his unsettled condition requiring silence.

Henry the Sixth, emperor of Germany, used to say, *Qui nescit tacere, nescit loqui*, He that knows not how to be silent, knows not how to speak. Saul knew this was a time for silence; he knew his work was rather to be an auditor than an orator. But this is not the silence the proposition speaks of.

Thirdly, There is a foolish silence. Some fools there be that can neither do well nor speak well, and because they cannot word it neither as they would nor as they should, they are so wise as to be mute: Prov. xvii 28, 'Even a fool, when he holds his peace, is counted wise, and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding.' As he cannot be wise that speaks much, so he cannot be known for a fool that says nothing. There are many wise fools in the world; there are many silly fools, who, by holding their tongues, gain the credit and honour of being discreet men. He that doth not discover his want of wisdom by foolish babbling, is accounted wise, though he may be otherwise. Silence is so rare a virtue, where wisdom doth regulate it, that it is accounted a virtue where folly doth impose it. Silence was so highly honoured among the old Romans, that they erected altars to it. That man shall pass for a man of understanding, who so far understands himself as to hold his tongue. For though it be a great misery to be a fool, yet it is a greater that a man cannot be a fool but he must needs shew it. But this foolish

silence is not the silence here meant.

Fourthly, There is a sullen silence. Many, to gratify an humour, a lust, are sullenly silent; these are troubled with a dumb devil, which was the worst devil of all the devils you read of in the Scripture, Mark ix. 17-28. Pliny, in his Natural History, maketh mention of a certain people in the Indies, upon the river Ganges, called *Astomy*, that have no mouth, but do only feed upon the smell of herbs and flowers. Certainly there is a generation amongst us, who, when they are under the afflicting hand of God, have no mouths to plead with God, no lips to praise God, nor no tongues to justify God. These are possessed with a dumb devil; and this dumb devil had possessed Ahab for a time: 1 Kings xxi. 4, 'And Ahab came into his house, heavy and displeased, and laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread.' Ahab's ambitious humour, his covetous humour, being crossed, he is resolved to starve himself, and to die of the sullenness. A sullen silence is both a sin and a punishment. No devil frets and vexes, wears and wastes the spirits of a man, like this dumb devil, like this sullen silence.

Some write of a certain devil, whom they call *Hudgin*, who will not, they say, hurt anybody, except he be wronged. I cannot speak so favourably of a sullen silence, for that wrongs many at once, God and Christ, bodies and soul. But this is not the silence here meant.

Fifthly, There is a forced silence. Many are silent per force. He that is under the power of his enemy, though he suffer many hard things, yet he is silent under his sufferings, because he knows he is liable to worse; he that hath taken away his liberty, may take away his life; he that hath taken away his money, may take off his head; he that hath let him bleed in the foot, may let him bleed in the throat if he will not be still and quiet: and this works silence per force. So, when many are under the afflicting hand of God, conscience tells them that now they are under the hand of an enemy, and the power of that God whom they have dishonoured, whose Son they have crucified, whose Spirit they have grieved, whose righteous laws they have transgressed, whose ordinances they have despised, and whose people they have abused and opposed; and that he that hath taken away one child, may take away every child; and he that hath taken away the wife, might have taken away the husband; and he that hath taken away some part of the estate, might have taken away all the estate; and that he who hath inflicted some distempers upon the body, might have cast both body and soul into hellfire for ever; and he that hath shut him up in his chamber, may shut him out of heaven at pleasure. The thoughts and sense of these things makes many a sinner silent under the band of God; but this is but a forced silence! And such was the silence of Philip the Second, king of Spain, who, when his invincible Armada, that had been three years a-fitting, was lost, he gave command that all over Spain they should give thanks to God and the saints that it was no more grievous. As the cudgel forces the dog to be quiet and still, and the rod forces the child to be silent and mute, so the apprehensions of what God hath done, and of what God may do, forces many a soul to be silent, Jer. iii. 10, 1 Kings xiv. 5-18. But this is not the silence here meant: a forced silence is no silence in the eye of God.

Sixthly, There is a despairing silence. A despairing soul is *Magor-missabib*, a terror to himself; he hath a hell in his heart, and horror in his conscience. He looks upwards, and there he beholds God frowning, and Christ bleeding; he looks inwards, and there he finds conscience accusing and condemning of him; he looks on the one side of him, and there he hears all his sins crying out, We are thine, and we will follow thee; we will to the grave with thee, we will to judgment with thee, and from judgment we will to hell with thee; he looks on the other side of him, and there he sees infernal fiends in fearful shapes, amazing and terrifying of him, and waiting to receive his despairing soul as soon as she shall take her leave of his wretched body; he looks above him, and there he sees the gates of heaven shut against him; he looks beneath him, and there he sees hell gaping for him; and under these sad sights, he is full of secret conclusions against his own soul. There is mercy for others, saith the despairing soul, but none for me; grace and favour for others, but none for me; pardon and peace for others, but none for me; blessedness and happiness for others, but none for me: there is no help, there is no help, no, Jer. ii. 25, xviii. 12. This seems to be his case who died with this desperate saying in his mouth, *Spes et fortuna Delete*, farewell, life and hope together. Now, under these dismal apprehensions and sad conclusions about its present and future condition, the despairing soul sits silent, being filled with amazement and astonishment: Ps. lxxvii. 1, 'I am so troubled that I cannot speak.' But this is not the silence here meant. But,

Seventhly and lastly, There is a prudent silence, a holy, a gracious silence; a silence that springs from prudent principles, from holy principles, and from gracious causes and considerations; and this is the silence here meant. And this I shall fully discover in my answers to the second question, which is this:

II. *Quest, 2. What doth a prudent, a gracious, a holy silence include?*

Ans 2. It includes and takes in these eight things:

First, It includes a sight of God, and an acknowledgement of God as the author of all the afflictions that come upon its. And this you have plain in the text: 'I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it.' The psalmist looks through secondary causes to the first cause, and so sits mute before the Lord. There is no sickness so little, but God hath a finger in it; though it be but the aching of the little finger. As the scribe is more eyed and properly said to write, than the pen; and he that maketh and keepeth the clock, is more properly said to make it go and strike, than the wheels and weights that hang upon it; and as every workman is more eyed and properly said to eject his works, rather than the tools which he useth as his instruments. So the Lord, who is the chief agent and mover in all actions, and who hath the greatest hand in all our afflictions, is more to be eyed and owned than any inferior or subordinate causes whatsoever; so Job, he beheld God in all: Job i. 21, 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away.' Had he not seen God in the affliction, he would have cried out: Oh these wretched Chaldeans, they have plundered and spoiled me; these wicked Sabeans, they have robbed and wronged me! Job discerns God's commission in the Chaldeans' and the Sabeans' hands, and then lays his own hand upon his mouth. So Aaron, beholding the hand of God in the untimely death of his two sons, holds his peace, Lev. x. 3. The sight

of God in this sad stroke is a bridle both to his mind and mouth, he neither mutters nor murmurs. So Joseph saw the hand of God in his brethren's selling of him into Egypt, Gen. xiv. 8, and that silences him.

Men that see not God in an affliction, are easily cast into a feverish fit, they will quickly be in a flame, and when their passions are up, and their hearts on fire, they will begin to be saucy, and make no bones of telling God to his teeth, that they do well to be angry, Jonah iv. 8, 9. Such as will not acknowledge God to be the author of all their afflictions, will be ready enough to fall in with that mad principle of the Manichees, who maintained the devil to be the author of all calamities; as if there could be any evil of affliction in the city, and the Lord have no hand in it, Amos iii. 6. Such as can see the ordering hand of God in all their afflictions, will, with David, lay their hands upon their mouths, when the rod of God is upon their backs, 2 Sam. xvi. 11, 12. If God's hand be not seen in the affliction, the heart will do nothing but fret and rage under affliction.

Secondly, It includes and takes in *some holy, gracious apprehensions of the majesty, sovereignty, authority, and presence of that God under whose acting hand we are*: Hab ii. 20, 'But the Lord is in his holy temple: let all the earth be silent', or as the Hebrew reads it, 'Be silent, all the earth, before his face.' When God would have all the people of the earth to be bushed, quiet, and silent before him, he would have them to behold him in his temple, where he sits in state, in majesty, and glory: Zeph. i. 'Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord God.' Chat not, murmur not, repine not, quarrel not; whist, stand mute, be silent, lay thy hand on thy mouth, when his hand is upon thy back, who is *totus oculus*, all eye to see, as well as all hand to punish. As the eyes of a well-drawn picture are fastened on thee which way soever thou turnest, so are the eyes of the Lord; and therefore thou hast cause to stand mute before him.

Thus Aaron had an eye to the sovereignty of God, and that silences him. And Job had an eye upon the majesty of God, and that stills him. And Eli had an eye upon the authority and presence of God, and that quiets him. A man never comes to humble himself, nor to be silent under the hand of God, until he comes to see the hand of God to be a mighty hand: 1 Pet. v. 6, 'Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God.' When men look upon the hand of God as a weak hand, a feeble hand, a low hand, a mean hand, their hearts rise against his hand. 'Who is the Lord,' saith Pharaoh, 'that I should obey his voice?' Exod. v. 2. And until Pharaoh came to see the hand of God, as a mighty hand, and to feel it as a mighty hand, he would not let Israel go. When Tiribazus, a noble Persian, was arrested, at first he drew out his sword and defended himself; but when they charged him in the king's name, and informed him that they came from the king, and were commanded to bring him to the king, he yielded willingly. So when afflictions arrest us, we shall murmur and grumble, and struggle, and strive even to the death, before we shall yield to that God that strikes, until we come to see his majesty and authority, until we come to see him as the king of kings, and Lord of lords, Isa. xxvi. 11, 12. It is such a sight of God as this, that makes the heart to stoop under his almighty hand, Rev. i. 5. The Thracians being ignorant of the dignity and majesty of God; when it thundered and lightened, used to express their madness and folly in shooting their arrows against heaven threatening-wise. As a sight of his grace cheers

the soul so a sight of his greatness and glory silences the soul. But,

Thirdly, A gracious, a prudent silence, takes in a holy quietness and calmness of mind and spirit, under the afflicting hand of God. A gracious silence shuts out all inward heats, murmurings, frettings, quarrellings, wranglings, and boilings of heart: Ps. lxii. 1, 'Truly my soul keepeth silence unto God, or is silent or still;' that is, my soul is quiet and submissive to God; all murmurings and repinings, passions and turbulent affections, being allayed, tamed, and subdued. This also is clear in the text; and in the former instances of Aaron, Eli, and Job. They saw that it was a Father that put those bitter cups in their hands, and love that laid those heavy crosses upon their shoulders, and grace that put those yokes about their necks; and this caused much quietness and calmness in their spirits. Darius bit in his pain when the surgeon cut off his leg. Some men, when God cuts off this mercy and that mercy from them, they bite in their pain, they hide and conceal their grief and trouble; but could you but look into their hearts, you will find all in an uproar, all out of order, all in a flame; and however they may seem to be cold without, yet they are all in a hot burning fever within. Such a feverish fit David was once in, Ps. xxxix. 3. But certainly a holy silence allays all tumults in the mind, and makes a man 'in patience to possess his own soul,' which, next to his possession of God, is the choicest and sweetest possession in all the world, Luke xxi. 19. The law of silence is as well upon that man's heart and mind as it is upon his tongue, who is truly and divinely silent under the rebuking hand of God. As tongue-service abstracted from heart-service is no service in the account of God; so tongue-silence abstracted from heart-silence is no silence in the esteem of God. A man is then graciously silent when all is quiet within and without, Isa xxix. 13, Mat. xv. 8, 9.

Terpander, a harper and a poet, was one that, by the sweetness of his verse and music, could allay the tumultuous motions of men's minds, as David by his harp did Saul's. When God's people are under the rod, he makes by his Spirit and word such sweet music in their souls as allays all tumultuous motions, passions, and perturbations, Ps. xciv. 17-19, Ps. cxix. 49, 50, so that they sit, Noah-like, quiet and still; and in peace possess their own souls.

Fourthly, A prudent, a holy silence, takes in an humble, justifying, clearing and acquitting of God of all blame, rigour and injustice, in all the afflictions he brings upon us; Ps. li. 4, 'That thou mayest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest,' that is, when thou correctest. God's judging his people is God's correcting or chastening of his people: 1 Cor. xi. 32, 'When we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord.' David's great care, when he was under the afflicting hand of God, was to clear the Lord of injustice. 'Ah! Lord, saith he, there is not the least show, spot, stain, blemish, or mixture of injustice, in all the afflictions thou hast brought upon me; I desire to take shame to myself, and to set to my seal, that the Lord is righteous, and that there is no injustice, no cruelty, nor no extremity in all that the Lord hath brought upon me.' And so in that Psalm cxix. 75, 137, he sweetly and readily subscribes unto the righteousness of God in those sharp and smart afflictions that God exercised him with. 'I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me. Righteous art thou, O Lord, and righteous are thy judgments.' God's judgments are always just; he

never afflicts but in faithfulness. His will is the rule of justice; and therefore a gracious soul dares not cavil nor question his proceedings. The afflicted soul knows that a righteous God can do nothing but that which is righteous; it knows that God is uncontrollable, and therefore the afflicted man puts his mouth in the dust, and keeps silence before him. Who dare say, 'Wherefore hast thou done so?' 2 Sam. xvi. 10.

The Turks, when they are cruelly lashed, are compelled to return to the judge that commanded it, to kiss his hand, give him thanks, and pay the officer that whipped them, and so clear the judge and officer of injustice. Silently to kiss the rod, and the hand that whips with it, is the noblest way of clearing the Lord of all injustice.

The Babylonish captivity was the sorest, the heaviest affliction that ever God inflicted upon any people under heaven; witness that 1 Sam. xii. and Dan. ix. 12, &c. Yet under those smart afflictions wisdom is justified of her children: Neh. ix. 33, 'Thou art just in all that is brought upon us, for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly;' Lam. i. 18, 'The Lord is righteous, for I have rebelled against him.' A holy silence shines in nothing more than in an humble justifying and clearing of God from all that which a corrupt heart is apt enough to charge God with in the day of affliction. God, in that he is good, can give nothing, nor do nothing, but that which is good; others do frequently, he cannot possibly, saith Luther, on Ps. 120th.

Fifthly, A holy silence takes in *gracious, blessed, soul-quieting conclusions about the issue and event of those afflictions that are upon us*, Lam. iii. 27-34. In this choice scripture you may observe these five soul-stilling conclusions.

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