
EXODUS 32:1 When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron, and said to him, "Come, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we don't know what has become of him."

The Israelites, finding that Moses delayed his return, desire Aaron to make them gods to go before them, Exo 32:1. Aaron consents, and requires their ornaments, Exo 32:2. They deliver them to him, and he makes a molten calf, Exo 32:3, Exo 32:4. He builds an altar before it, Exo 32:5; and the people offer burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, Exo 32:6. The Lord commands Moses to go down, telling him that the people had corrupted themselves, Exo 32:7, Exo 32:8. The Lord is angry, and threatens to destroy them, Exo 32:9, Exo 32:10. Moses intercedes for them, Exo 32:11-13; and the Lord promises to spare them, Exo 32:14. Moses goes down with the tables in his hands, Exo 32:15, Exo 32:16. Joshua, hearing the noise they made at their festival, makes some remarks on it, Exo 32:17, Exo 32:18. Moses, coming to the camp, and seeing their idolatrous worship, is greatly distressed, throws down and breaks the two tables, Exo 32:19. Takes the calf, reduces it to powder, strews it upon the water, and causes them to drink it, Exo 32:20. Moses expostulates with Aaron, Exo 32:21. Aaron vindicates himself, Exo 32:22-24. Moses orders the Levites to slay the transgressors, Exo 32:25-27. They do so, and 3,000 fall, Exo 32:28, Exo 32:29. Moses returns to the Lord on the mount, and makes supplication for the people, Exo 32:30-32. God threatens and yet spares, Exo 32:33. Commands Moses to lead the people, and promises him the direction of an angel, Exo 32:34. The people are plagued because of their sin, Exo 32:35.

Verse 1

When the people saw that Moses delayed - How long this was before the expiration of the forty days, we cannot tell; but it certainly must have been some considerable time, as the ornaments must be collected, and the calf or ox, after having been founded, must require a considerable time to fashion it with the graving tool; and certainly not more than two or three persons could work on it at once. This work therefore, must have required several days.

The people gathered themselves together - They came in a tumultuous and seditious manner, insisting on having an object of religious worship made for them, as they intended under its direction to return to Egypt. See Act 7:39, Act 7:40.

As for this Moses, the man that brought us up - This seems to be the language of great contempt, and by it we may see the truth of the character given them by Aaron, Exo 32:22, they were set on mischief. It is likely they might have supposed that Moses had perished in the fire, which they saw had invested the top of the mountain into which he went.

EXODUS 32:2 Aaron said to them, "Take off the golden rings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them to me."

Verse 2

Golden ear-rings - Both men and women wore these ornaments, and we may suppose that these were a part of the spoils which they brought out of Egypt. How strange, that the very things which were granted them by an especial influence and providence of God, should be now abused to the basest idolatrous purposes! But it is frequently the case that the gifts of God become desecrated by being employed in the service of sin; I will curse your blessings, saith the Lord, Mal 2:2.

EXODUS 32:3 All the people took off the golden rings which were in their ears, and brought them to Aaron.

Verse 3

And all the people brake off the golden ear-rings - The human being is naturally fond of dress, though this has been improperly attributed to the female sex alone, and those are most fond of it who have the shallowest capacities; but on this occasion the bent of the people to idolatry was greater than even their love of dress, so that they readily stripped themselves of their ornaments in order to get a molten god. They made some compensation for this afterwards; see Exo 36:22, and See Clarke's note on Exo 38:9.

EXODUS 32:4 He received what they handed him, and fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made it a molten calf; and they said, "These are your gods, Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt."

Verse 4

Fashioned it with a graving tool - There has been much controversy about the meaning of the word טַרְחָה *cheret* in the text: some make it a mould, others a garment, cloth, or apron; some a purse or bag, and others a graver. It is likely that some mould was made on this occasion, that the gold when fused was cast into it, and that afterwards it was brought into form and symmetry by the action of the chisel and graver.

These be thy gods, O Israel - The whole of this is a most strange and unaccountable transaction. Was it possible that the people could have so soon lost sight of the wonderful manifestations of God upon the mount? Was it possible that Aaron could have imagined that he could make any god that could help them? And yet it does not appear that he ever remonstrated with the people! Possibly he only intended to make them some symbolical representation of the Divine power and energy, that might be as evident to them as the pillar of cloud and fire had been, and to which God might attach an always present energy and influence; or in requiring them to sacrifice their ornaments, he might have supposed they would have desisted from urging their request: but all this is mere conjecture, with very little probability to support it. It must however be granted that Aaron does not appear to have even designed a worship that should supersede the worship of The Most High; hence we find him making proclamation, Tomorrow is a feast to the Lord, (יְהוָה); and we find farther that some of the proper rites of the true worship were observed on this occasion, for they brought burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, Exo 32:6, Exo 32:7 : hence it is evident he intended that the true God should be the object of their worship, though he permitted and even encouraged them to offer this worship through an idolatrous medium, the molten calf. It has been supposed that this was an exact

resemblance of the famous Egyptian god Apis who was worshipped under the form of an ox, which worship the Israelites no doubt saw often practiced in Egypt. Some however think that this worship of Apis was not then established; but we have already had sufficient proof that different animals were sacred among the Egyptians, nor have we any account of any worship in Egypt earlier than that offered to Apis, under the figure of an Ox.

EXODUS 32:5 When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made a proclamation, and said, "Tomorrow shall be a feast to the LORD."

Verse 5

To-morrow is a feast to the Lord - In Bengal the officiating Brahmin, or an appointed person proclaims, "To-morrow, or on - day of - , such a ceremony will be performed!"

EXODUS 32:6 They rose up early on the next day, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.

Verse 6

The people sat down to eat and to drink - The burnt-offerings were wholly consumed; the peace-offerings, when the blood had been poured out, became the food of the priests, etc. When therefore the strictly religious part of these ceremonies was finished, the people sat down to eat of the peace-offerings, and this they did merely as the idolaters, eating and drinking to excess. And it appears they went much farther, for it is said they rose up to play, לִצְחָק *letsachek*, a word of ominous import, which seems to imply here fornicating and adulterous intercourse; and in some countries the verb to play is still used precisely in this sense. In this sense the original is evidently used, Gen 39:14.

EXODUS 32:7 The LORD spoke to Moses, "Go, get down; for your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves!

Verse 7

Thy people - have corrupted themselves - They had not only got into the spirit of idolatry, but they had become abominable in their conduct, so that God disowns them to be his: Thy people have broken the covenant, and are no longer entitled to my protection and love.

This is one pretense that the Roman Catholics have for the idolatry in their image worship. Their high priest, the pope, collects the ornaments of the people, and makes an image, a crucifix, a madonna, etc. The people worship it; but the pope says it is only to keep God in remembrance. But of the whole God says, Thy people have corrupted themselves; and thus as they continue in their idolatry, they have forfeited the blessings of the Lord's covenant. They are not God's people, they are the pope's people, and he is called "our holy father the pope."

EXODUS 32:8 They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them. They have made themselves a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed to it, and said, 'These are your gods, Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt.'"

EXODUS 32:9 The LORD said to Moses, "I have seen these people, and behold, they are a stiff-necked people.

Verse 9

A stiff-necked people - Probably an allusion to the stiff-necked ox, the object of their worship.

EXODUS 32:10 Now therefore leave me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them, and that I may consume them; and I will make of you a great nation."

Verse 10

Now therefore let me alone - Moses had already begun to plead with God in the behalf of this rebellious and ungrateful people; and so powerful was his intercession that even the Omnipotent represents himself as incapable of doing any thing in the way of judgment, unless his creature desisted from praying for mercy! See an instance of the prevalence of fervent intercession in the case of Abraham, Gen 18:23-33, from the model of which the intercession of Moses seems to have been formed.

EXODUS 32:11 Moses begged the LORD his God, and said, "The LORD, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, that you have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand?

EXODUS 32:12 Why should the Egyptians speak, saying, 'He brought them out for evil, to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the surface of the earth?' Turn from your fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against your people.

EXODUS 32:13 Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, to whom you swore by your own self, and said to them, 'I will multiply your seed as the stars of the sky, and all this land that I have spoken of I will give to your seed, and they shall inherit it forever.'"

EXODUS 32:14 The LORD repented of the evil which he said he would do to his people.

Verse 14

And the Lord repented of the evil - This is spoken merely after the manner of men who, having formed a purpose, permit themselves to be diverted from it by strong and forcible reasons, and so change their minds relative to their former intentions.

EXODUS 32:15 Moses turned, and went down from the mountain, with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand; tablets that were written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other they were written.

Verse 15

The tables were written on both their sides - If we take this literally, it was certainly a very unusual thing; for in ancient times the two sides of the same substance were never written over. However, some rabbins suppose that by the writing on both sides is meant the letters were cut through the tables, so that they might be read on both sides, though on one side they would appear reversed. Supposing this to be correct, if the letters were the same with those called Hebrew now in common use, the O samech, which occurs twice, and the final D mem which occurs twenty-three times in the ten commandments, both of these being close letters, could not be cut through on both sides without falling out, unless, as some of the Jews have imagined, they were held in by miracle; but if this ancient character were the same with the Samaritan, this through cutting might have been quite practicable, as there is not one close letter in the whole Samaritan alphabet. On this transaction there are the three following opinions:

1. We may conceive the tables of stone to have been thin slabs or a kind of slate, and the writing on the back side to have been a continuation of that on the front, the first not being sufficient to contain the whole.
 2. Or the writing on the back side was probably the precepts that accompanied the ten commandments; the latter were written by the Lord, the former by Moses; see Clarke's note on Exo 34:1. See Clarke's note on Exo 34:27.
 3. Or the same words were written on both sides, so that when held up, two parties might read at the same time.
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EXODUS 32:16 The tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, engraved on the tables.

Verse 16

The tables were the work of God - Because such a law could proceed from none but himself; God alone is the fountain and author of Law, of what is right, just, holy, and good. See the meaning of the word Law, Exo 12:49 (note).

The writing was the writing of God - For as he is the sole author of law and justice, so he alone can write them on the heart of man. This is agreeable to the spirit of the new covenant which God had promised to make with men in the latter days: I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel - I will Put My Laws In Their Minds, And Write Them In Their Hearts, Jer 31:33; Heb 8:10; 2Cor 3:3. That the writing of these tables was the writing of God, see proved at the conclusion of the last chapter.

EXODUS 32:17 When Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said to Moses, "There is the noise of war in the camp."

 Verse 17

Joshua - said - There is a noise of war in the camp - How natural was this thought to the mind of a military man! Hearing a confused noise he supposed that the Israelitish camp had been attacked by some of the neighboring tribes.

EXODUS 32:18 He said, "It isn't the voice of those who shout for victory, neither is it the voice of those who cry for being overcome; but the noise of those who sing that I hear."

 Verse 18

And he said - That is, Moses returned this answer to the observations of Joshua.

EXODUS 32:19 As soon as he came near to the camp, he saw the calf and the dancing. Then Moses' anger grew hot, and he threw the tablets out of his hands, and broke them beneath the mountain.

 Verse 19

He saw the calf, and the dancing - Dancing before the idol takes place in almost every Hindoo idolatrous feast - Ward.

He cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them - He might have done this through distress and anguish of spirit, on beholding their abominable idolatry and dissolute conduct; or he probably did it emblematically, intimating thereby that, as by this act of his the tables were broken in pieces, on which the law of God was written; so they, by their present conduct, had made a breach in the covenant, and broken the laws of their Maker. But we must not excuse this act; it was rash and irreverent; God's writing should not have been treated in this way.

EXODUS 32:20 He took the calf which they had made, and burnt it with fire, ground it to powder, and scattered it on the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it.

 Verse 20

He took the calf - and burnt - and ground it to powder, etc. - How truly contemptible must the object of their idolatry appear when they were obliged to drink their god, reduced to powder and strewed on the water! "But," says an objector, "how could gold, the most ductile of all metals, and the most ponderous, be stamped into dust and strewed on water?" In Deu 9:21, this matter is fully explained. I took, says Moses, your sin, the calf which ye had made, and burnt it with fire, that is, melted it down, probably into ingots, or gross plates, and stamped it, that is, beat into thin laminae, something like our gold leaf, and ground it very small, even until it was as small as dust, which might be very easily done by the action of the hands, when beat into thin plates or leaves, as the original words אָפָה and דָּק imply. And I cast the dust thereof into the brook, and being thus

lighter than the water, it would readily float, so that they could easily see, in this reduced and useless state, the idol to which they had been lately offering Divine honors, and from which they were vainly expecting protection and defense. No mode of argumentation could have served so forcibly to demonstrate the folly of their conduct, as this method pursued by Moses.

EXODUS 32:21 Moses said to Aaron, "What did these people do to you, that you have brought a great sin on them?"

Verse 21

What did this people do to thee - It seems if Aaron had been firm, this evil might have been prevented.

EXODUS 32:22 Aaron said, "Don't let the anger of my lord grow hot. You know the people, that they are set on evil.

Verse 22

Thou knowest the people - He excuses himself by the wicked and seditious spirit of the people, intimating that he was obliged to accede to their desires.

EXODUS 32:23 For they said to me, 'Make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we don't know what has become of him.'

EXODUS 32:24 I said to them, 'Whoever has any gold, let them take it off:' so they gave it to me; and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf."

Verse 24

I cast it into the fire and there came out this calf - What a silly and ridiculous subterfuge! He seems to insinuate that he only threw the metal into the fire, and that the calf came unexpectedly out by mere accident. The Targum of Jonathan ben Uzziel makes a similar excuse for him: "And I said unto them, Whosoever hath gold, let him break it off and give it to me; and I cast it into the fire, and Satan entered into it, and it came out in the form of this calf!" Just like the popish legend of the falling of the shrine of our Lady of Loretta out of heaven! These legends come from the same quarter. Satan can provide more when necessary for his purpose.

EXODUS 32:25 When Moses saw that the people had broken loose, (for Aaron had let them loose for a derision among their enemies),

Verse 25

Moses saw that the people were naked - They were stripped, says the Targum, of the holy crown that was upon their heads, on which the great and precious name Jehovah was engraved. But it is more likely that the word פָּרַע parua implies that they were reduced to the most helpless and wretched state, being abandoned by God in the midst of their enemies. This is exactly similar to that expression, 2Chr 28:19 : For the Lord brought Judah low, because of Ahaz king of Israel: for he made Judah Naked, הפְּרִיעַ hiphria, and transgressed sore against the Lord. Their nakedness, therefore, though in the first sense it may imply that several of them were despoiled of their ornaments, yet it may also express their defenceless and abandoned state, in consequence of their sin. That they could not literally have all been despoiled of their ornaments, appears evident from their offerings. See Exo 36:21, etc.

EXODUS 32:26 then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, "Whoever is on the LORD's side, come to me!" All the sons of Levi gathered themselves together to him.

Verse 26

Who is on the Lord's side? - That is, Who among you is free from this transgression? And all the sons of Levi, etc. - It seems they had no part in this idolatrous business.

EXODUS 32:27 He said to them, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Every man put his sword on his thigh, and go back and forth from gate to gate throughout the camp, and every man kill his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour.'"

Verse 27

From gate to gate - It is probable that there was an enclosed or entrenched camp, in which the chief rulers and heads of the people were, and that this camp had two gates or outlets; and the Levites were commanded to pass from one to the other, slaying as many of the transgressors as they could find.

EXODUS 32:28 The sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men.

Verse 28

There fell about three thousand men - These were no doubt the chief transgressors; having broken the covenant by having other gods besides Jehovah, they lost the Divine protection, and then the justice of God laid hold on and slew them. Moses doubtless had positive orders from God for this act of justice, (see Exo 32:27); for though, through his intercession, the people were spared so as not to be exterminated as a nation, yet the principal transgressors, those who were set on mischief, Exo 32:22, were to be put to death.

EXODUS 32:29 Moses said, "Consecrate yourselves today to the LORD, yes, every man against his son, and against his brother; that he may bestow on you a blessing this day."

Verse 29

For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves - Fill your hands to the Lord. See the reason of this form of speech in the note on Exo 29:19 (note).

EXODUS 32:30 On the next day, Moses said to the people, "You have sinned a great sin. Now I will go up to the LORD. Perhaps I shall make atonement for your sin."

EXODUS 32:31 Moses returned to the LORD, and said, "Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made themselves gods of gold.

Verse 31

Moses returned unto the Lord - Before he went down from the mountain God had acquainted him with the general defection of the people, whereupon he immediately, without knowing the extent of their crime, began to make intercession for them; and God, having given him a general assurance that they should not be cut off, hastened him to go down, and bring them off from their idolatry. Having descended, he finds matters much worse than he expected, and ordered three thousand of the principal delinquents to be slain; but knowing that an evil so extensive must be highly provoking in the sight of the just and holy God, he finds it highly expedient that an atonement be made for the sin: for although he had the promise of God that as a nation they should not be exterminated, yet he had reason to believe that Divine justice must continue to contend with them, and prevent them from ever entering the promised land. That he was apprehensive that this would be the case, we may see plainly from the following verse.

EXODUS 32:32 Yet now, if you will, forgive their sin—and if not, please blot me out of your book which you have written."

Verse 32

Forgive their sin - ; and if not, blot me - out of thy book - It is probable that one part of Moses' work during the forty days of his residence on the mount with God, was his regulating the muster-roll of all the tribes and families of Israel, in reference to the parts they were respectively to act in the different transactions in the wilderness, promised land, etc.; and this, being done under the immediate direction of God, is termed God's book which he had written, (such muster-rolls, or registers, called also genealogies, the Jews have had from the remotest period of their history); and it is probable that God had told him, that those who should break the covenant which he had then made with them should be blotted out of that list, and never enter into the promised land. All this Moses appears to have particularly in view, and, without entering into any detail, immediately comes to the point which he knew was fixed when this list or muster-roll was made, namely, that those who should break the covenant should be blotted out, and never have any inheritance in the

promised land: therefore he says, This people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold; thus they had broken the covenant, (see the first and second commandments), and by this had forfeited their right to Canaan. Yet now, he adds, if thou wilt forgive their sin, that they may yet attain the promised inheritance - ; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written - if thou wilt blot out their names from this register, and never suffer them to enter Canaan, blot me out also; for I cannot bear the thought of enjoying that blessedness, while my people and their posterity shall be for ever excluded. And God, in kindness to Moses, spared him the mortification of going into Canaan without taking the people with him. They had forfeited their lives, and were sentenced to die in the wilderness; and Moses' prayer was answered in mercy to him, while the people suffered under the hand of justice. But the promise of God did not fail; for, although those who sinned were blotted out of the book, yet their posterity enjoyed the inheritance.

This seems to be the simple and pure light in which this place should be viewed; and in this sense St. Paul is to be understood, Rom 9:3, where he says: For I could wish that myself were Accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh; who are Israelites, to whom pertaineth the Adoption, and the Glory, and the Covenants. Moses could not survive the destruction of his people by the neighboring nations, nor their exclusion from the promised land; and St. Paul, seeing the Jews about to be cut off by the Roman sword for their rejection of the Gospel, was willing to be deprived of every earthly blessing, and even to become a sacrifice for them, if this might contribute to the preservation and salvation of the Jewish state. Both those eminent men, engaged in the same work, influenced by a spirit of unparalleled patriotism, were willing to forfeit every blessing of a secular kind, even die for the welfare of the people. But certainly, neither of them could wish to go to eternal perdition, to save their countrymen from being cut off, the one by the sword of the Philistines, the other by that of the Romans. Even the supposition is monstrous.

On this mode of interpretation we may at once see what is implied in the book of life, and being written in or blotted out of such a book. In the public registers, all that were born of a particular tribe were entered in the list of their respective families under that tribe. This was the book of life; but when any of those died, his name might be considered as blotted out from this list. Our baptismal registers, which record the births of all the inhabitants of a particular parish or district, and which are properly our books of life; and our bills of mortality, which are properly our books of death, or the lists of those who are thus blotted out from our baptismal registers or books of life; are very significant and illustrative remains of the ancient registers, or books of life and death among the Jews, the Greeks, the Romans, and most ancient nations. It is worthy of remark, that in China the names of the persons who have been tried on criminal processes are written in two distinct books, which are called the book of life and the book of death: those who have been acquitted, or who have not been capitally convicted, are written in the former; those who have been found guilty, in the latter. These two books are presented to the emperor by his ministers, who, as sovereign, has a right to erase any name from either: to place the living among the dead, that he may die; or the dead, that is, the person condemned to death, among the living, that he may be preserved. Thus he blots out of the book of life or the book of death according to his sovereign pleasure, on the representation of his ministers, or the intercession of friends, etc. An ancient and extremely rich picture, in my own possession, representing this circumstance, painted in China, was thus interpreted to me by a native Chinese.

EXODUS 32:33 The LORD said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book.

 Verse 33

Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out - As if the Divine Being had said: "All my conduct is regulated by infinite justice and righteousness: in no case shall the innocent ever suffer for the guilty. That no man may transgress through ignorance, I have given you my law, and thus published my covenant; the people themselves have acknowledged its justice and equity, and have voluntarily ratified it. He then that sins against me, (for sin is the transgression of the law, 1Jn 3:4, and the law must be published and known that it may be binding), him will I blot out of my book." And is it not remarkable that to these conditions of the covenant God strictly adhered, so that not one soul of these transgressors ever entered into the promised rest! Here was justice. And yet, though they deserved death, they were spared! Here was mercy. Thus, as far as justice would permit, mercy extended; and as far as mercy would permit, justice proceeded. Behold, O reader, the Goodness and Severity of God! Mercy saves all that Justice can spare; and Justice destroys all that Mercy should not save.

EXODUS 32:34 Now go, lead the people to the place of which I have spoken to you. Behold, my angel shall go before you. Nevertheless in the day when I punish, I will punish them for their sin."

 Verse 34

Lead the people unto the place - The word place is not in the text, and is with great propriety omitted. For Moses never led this people into that place, they all died in the wilderness except Joshua and Caleb; but Moses led them towards the place, and thus the particle לָאֵל el here should be understood, unless we suppose that God designed to lead them to the borders of the land, but not to take them into it.

I will visit their sin - I will not destroy them, but they shall not enter into the promised land. They shall wander in the wilderness till the present generation become extinct.

EXODUS 32:35 The LORD struck the people, because they made the calf, which Aaron made.

 Verse 35

The Lord plagued the people - Every time they transgressed afterwards Divine justice seems to have remembered this transgression against them. The Jews have a metaphorical saying, apparently founded on this text: "No affliction has ever happened to Israel in which there was not some particle of the dust of the golden calf."

1. The attentive reader has seen enough in this chapter to induce him to exclaim, How soon a clear sky may be overcast! How soon may the brightest prospects be obscured! Israel had just ratified its covenant with Jehovah, and had received the most encouraging and unequivocal pledges of his protection and love. But they sinned, and provoked the Lord to depart from them, and to destroy the work of his hands. A little more faith, patience, and perseverance, and they should have been safely brought into the promised land. For want of a little more dependence upon God, how often

does an excellent beginning come to an unhappy conclusion! Many who were just on the borders of the promised land, and about to cross Jordan, have, through an act of unfaithfulness, been turned back to wander many a dreary year in the wilderness. Reader, be on thy guard. Trust in Christ, and watch unto prayer.

2. Many people have been greatly distressed on losing their baptismal register, and have been reduced in consequence to great political inconvenience. But still they had their lives, and should a living man complain? But a man may so sin as to provoke God to cut him off; or, like a fruitless tree, be cut down, because he encumbers the ground. Or he may have sinned a sin unto death, 1Jn 5:16, 1Jn 5:17, that is, a sin which God will punish with temporal death, while he extends mercy to the soul.

3. With respect to the blotting out of God's book, on which there has been so much controversy, Is it not evident that a soul could not be blotted out of a book in which it had never been written? And is it not farther evident from Exo 32:32, Exo 32:33, that, although a man be written in God's book, if he sins he may be blotted out? Let him that readeth understand; and let him that standeth take heed lest he fall. Reader, be not high-minded, but fear. See Clarke's note on Exo 32:32, and See Clarke's note on Exo 32:33.