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# The Throne Of Grace

By Ebenezer Erskine<sup>1</sup>

*“Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne.”—Psalm 89:14*

**T**his psalm elegantly describes God’s covenant of grace made with Christ, and his spiritual seed in him, under the picture of God’s covenant of royalty with David and his posterity; as is plain from many passages of the psalm, where are too sublime and lofty to be restrained to David’s temporary reign, or to that of his posterity, over the tribes of Israel, which quite expired in the revolution of a few centuries.

The words read are a description of the nature of the Messiah’s kingdom and administration: *Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne.*

Where we may notice, 1. The royal person who is the subject—matter of my text, and of the greatest part of the psalm: he is pointed at in the pronoun *thy*. This is not other than Christ, the true David, who was to reign the latter days; and in whom David’s family and kingdom shall be perpetuated for ever. This is the king who rules in righteousness, and whose seed is to be established for ever, whose throne shall be built up to all generations, ver. 4.

2. We have a badge of royal majesty and sovereignty ascribed to him; a *throne*. We frequently read in scripture of Christ’s throne, Psal. 45:6, compared with Heb. 1:8: “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.” God’s throne is threefold. (1.) His throne of glory; by which I understand the essential glory and majesty of the divine nature. This throne is inaccessible by finite creatures; hence 1 Tim. 6:16, he is said to “dwell in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, nor can see.” The light of glory that breaks forth from this throne of essential glory, is too bright and overwhelming either for men or angels immediately to behold. Hence the Seraphims, Isa. 6, are represented as

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<sup>1</sup> Sermon taken from: “The Whole Works of the Rev. Ebenezer Erskine: Consisting of Sermons and Discourses. To which is Added, an enlarged memoir of the Author, by the Rev. D. Fraser,” Volume 1 (of 3). Philadelphia: Wm. S. & A. Young, 1836. Pages 239-272.

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covering their faces with their wings, to veil their eyes from that dazzling glory of divine holiness shining forth from his glorious throne, which is high and lifted up. —O who of Adam’s fallen posterity “shall stand in his holy place!” (2.) There is his throne of justice, where he judges sinners according to the tenor of the law or broken covenant of works. At this par, every unbeliever is *condemned already*; from this throne, their final and irreversible doom will pass at the last day; “Depart from me, ye cursed,” &c. Before this throne, no living flesh can be justified: “If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? Psal. 120:3. (3.) We read of the throne of grace, Heb. 4:16: “Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” And this is the throne intended in my text, as is plain from the close of the verse, and what follows, “Mercy and truth go before the face” of him that sits on it; a “joyful sound” of peace, pardon, and salvation, issues forth from it to perishing sinners. They walk in the light of the King’s countenance, rejoice in his name, and are exalted in “his righteousness, &c. Terror and amazement, death and ruin, are the fruits of God’s appearing to sinners from a throne of glory, or justice; and therefore, I say, it must be a throne of grace that is here intended.

3. In the words we have the firm foundation upon which this throne of grace stands; its *habitation*, or (as in the margin) *establishment*, is *justice and judgment*: the firmest foundation upon which any throne can be settled. The thrones of many earthly potentates are reared and built up with violence and oppression; but the throne of God’s kingdom of grace is established in righteousness. The Son of God, as the Surety of sinners, submitter to satisfy *justice*, and to undergo the *judgment* and the condemnation of the broken law, by which he brings in everlasting righteousness; and upon this bottom or foundation the throne of grace is established, and upon this *basis* (as Pool reads it) will it stand for ever.

The doctrine I design to prosecute from the words is this: —

DOCTRINE — “That God’s administration of grace is founded upon the complete satisfaction of justice by his eternal Son as our Surety.” Or take it thus: “That justice satisfied and judgment executed upon Christ as our Surety, is the basis and foundation of a throne of grace. Justice and judgment are the habitations of thy throne.”

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I only name two other places of holy writ for confirmation of the doctrine. The one we have, Rom. 3:24-26, where the apostle tells us, "We are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past; —"to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Where it is plain, that the grace of God in pardoning and justifying the ungodly sinner, is founded upon the propitiatory sacrifice of the death of Christ; and grace's administration being built upon this ground, God is just in pardoning the sinner that believes in Jesus. Another clear text to the same purpose we have, Rom. 5:21; where *grace* is said to "reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." The government of grace is founded on righteousness; that is, upon the righteousness of Christ, by which justice was satisfied in the execution of judgment upon the Surety.

In handling this doctrine, I shall, through divine assistance, observe the following method: —

- I. I shall speak a little of this throne.
- II. Of the basis or foundation of this throne.
- III. Notice some pillars with which the throne is surrounded and supported.
- IV. Inquire why God will have justice and judgment for the foundation of his throne of grace.
- V. Apply the whole.

1. I say, I would *take a view of the throne*. Where again I shall, 1. Show what this throne is, and why so called. 2. Inquire what comfortable views of God a guilty sinner may have from this throne. 3. Offer a few scriptural remarks concerning it.

*First*, What is this throne, and why so called? In one word, then, By this throne of grace we are just to understand God manifesting himself in our own nature, and dealing with sinners through Christ according to the grace of the gospel. I take that word of the apostle, 2 Cor. 5:19, 20, to be a just account of what is intended by a throne of grace; "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;" issuing forth a word of peace and reconciliation, that sinners might no more continue in their

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enmity, by dreading God as an implacable judge, or inexorable enemy, but might return to him as a reconciled God and Father. The reason of all which is subjoined, ver. 21: “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

Now, God’s administration of grace toward guilty sinners through Christ, may be called a throne, either,

1. With allusion to the mercy-seat in the typical temple of Jerusalem. Israel was a theocracy; the Holy one of Israel was their King, and the mercy-seat was his throne. It was an important type of Christ, and the most solemn and sacred thing in all that typical administration. God is said to “dwell between the cherubims: Shine forth, O thou that dwelleth between the cherubims:” so God dwelleth in Christ; yea, “in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” And through him God dwelleth with man upon earth in a way of grace: through him we have entrance into the holiest, as Israel entered in the person of their high priest: in him we make atonement for our sins; and through him we receive the oracles of God, the revelations of the divine will: in him God meets and communes with us, as he did from the mercy-seat in the material temple, Exod. 25:17, 22. Or,

2. It may be called a throne, because of the glorious greatness of the royal majesty of God that shines in this administration of grace through Christ. A throne, you know, is a seat of majesty, peculiar to sovereigns. Let none imagine, that the glory of God is any thing lessened by his sitting upon a throne of grace, or that less reverence is due to him here, than upon a throne of glory or justice. Indeed, the boldness of faith is both allowed and commanded in our approaches to this throne; but this does not diminish, but increase the soul’s reverence and holy fear; Psal. 99:1: “The Lord reigneth, let the people tremble: he sitteth between the cherubims, let the earth be moved.” Every thing in and about God’s throne of grace appears great. “For the beauty of his throne, he hath set it in majesty.” For instance, take these few particulars

*1st*, There is royal majesty in the very name of him that sits on the throne. What is his name? O happy they that know it, and by the eye of faith can read it written on his thigh and vesture, “The King of kings, and Lord of lords,” Rev. 19:16. His name is “Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of peace.”

*2dly*, There is majesty in his looks: “Honour and majesty are before his face. His countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars; yea, as the sun shining in his strength.” There is such a majestic sweetness in the looks of his

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reconciled face, as “turns the shadow of death into the morning,” and puts more gladness in the heart, than when corn, wine, and oil doth abound.

*3dly*, There is majesty in his words and voice; and every one that knows it will be ready to say, as in the words following my text, “Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound.” “The voice of the Lord,” even from a throne of grace, “is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty.” This voice is “the power of God unto salvation.” God’s voice in the thunder makes the hinds to calve; but his voice from a throne of grace makes the dead to live, the dumb to sing, the lame man to leap like a hart: and no wonder, for his words are “spirit and life,” yea, “words of eternal life.” Christ speaks but a word to Mary, calls her by her name, *Mary*; and immediately her heart flutters with joy, and she cries out, “Rabboni, My Master.” Cant. 2:8: “The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh,” &c.

*4thly*, There is majesty in his vesture. He is “clothed with a garment down to the foot;” a robe of righteousness, a garment of salvation. His whole mystic body, and every the least member is covered with it. When he sits on his throne, “his train,” or, as in the margin, Isa. 6:1, “the skirts” thereof, filleth the temple. “All” his “garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia; out of the ivory palaces, whereby” the attendants of his throne are “made glad.”

*5thly*, There is majesty in his sceptre. We read of the sceptre of Christ’s kingdom, Psal. 45. called “the rod of his strength,” Psal. 110:2; by which we are to understand the gospel accompanied with the efficacy of his Spirit. There is such a majesty in this sceptre, when he sways it from a throne of grace, that it makes a “willing people” come in to him in the day of his armies.

*6thly*, There is majesty in the acts that are passed at a throne of grace; they are suitable to the nature of the throne. Acts of grace only pass at a throne of grace; acts of mercy at a mercy-seat. What an air of infinite majesty does God display from his throne of grace, when, beyond the expectation of men and angels, he issues forth that royal act of grace declaring rebels exempt from penalty! “I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins!” Isa. 43:25.

*7thly*, The majesty of this throne appears from the heralds that are employed to announce and proclaim the acts of grace that pass at it. Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, and all the ministers of Christ, what are they but so many heralds ordained by the King, who sits upon this throne, to intimate and proclaim his will of grace to a lost world? “Go ye into all the world,” says he, “and preach the gospel to every creature.” As if he had said, ‘Go publish the acts of grace that are passed in favour of lost sinners at a throne of grace.’

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*8thly*, There is majesty in the tributes and revenues of this throne. God's administration of grace in Christ brings in a large revenue of glory and praise to the crown of Heaven. Christ's kingdom of grace is wide and large. By his Father's grant "the heathen, and uttermost parts of the earth are given to him for a possession." Psal. 2. And in all corners of his extended inheritance there is a tribute of glory and praise levied to him: Isa. 24:16: "From the uttermost part," or wing, "of the earth have we heard songs, even glory to the righteous;" that is, glory to "Jesus Christ the righteous." The church militant will be paying this tribute while the world stands. "Men are blessed in him;" and therefore "all nations," and all generations, "shall call him blessed," saying, "Blessed be his glorious name for ever; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory." Psal. 72:17, 19. The church triumphant in heaven will be paying this tribute of praise to a throne of grace through an endless eternity: Rev. 4:10: "They cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power," &c. Rev. 5:8, 12.

*9thly*, There is majesty in the gifts and distributions which are made from this throne, and in the manner of his giving them. The gifts are worthy of the giver who sits on the throne. He gives himself, saying, "I will be their God." He gives his Son, John 3:16. He gives his Spirit, Luke 11:13. He gives grace and glory, Psal. 84:11. In a word, he gives all the sure mercies of David. Whatever comes from a throne of grace, must needs come in a way of gift, otherwise it would not suit the nature of the throne. It is below the majesty of the great King, whose name is *gracious*, to receive money or price from us. What he gives, he gives freely, without regard to any qualifications in us, Isa. 55:1; Rev. 22:17.

*Secondly*, I come to inquire what comfortable views of God are to be had by a guilty trembling sinner from this throne of grace. In general, every view of God here is inviting and encouraging. Unbelief is said to turn us away from the living God, Heb. 3:12. And the way that it turns us away from him is either by viewing him as upon a throne of absolute mercy; and so it turns us into a presumptuous confidence of safety, in a way of sin; or else it views him as upon a throne of inexorable justice; and so it turns us into the way of despair and makes us fly and shun his presence as a destroying enemy. But faith views God as upon a throne of grace; and there it sees every perfection of the divine nature looking toward the sinner with an encouraging smile. More particularly,

1. God upon a throne of grace is to be seen as "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," Eph. 1:3. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Pet. 1:3. This is the great New Testament title of God; and O! What amazing grace and sweetness is in it! Christ is "our Lord, our Jesus, our Christ;"

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for “unto us” this “child is born, unto us” this “son is given:” he is our *Goel* or “kinsman,” our Elder Brother; and he being so near of kin to us, our blood relation, his relation to God descends to us through him, insomuch that his God is our God and his Father is our Father. Hence, Christ directs Mary, John 20:17, to go to his “brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.” O what can be more encouraging! He is “your Father,” because he is “my Father;” and “your God,” because he is “my God.” There is a rich mine of grace here, which angels desire to pry into. And it is some view of God in this relation to Christ, and to us through Christ, that first influences the sinner to turn to God. “I will arise,” says the prodigal, and go to my Father,” Luke 15:18. “Behold we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God,” Jer. 3:22. And a law-condemned sinner can never view him as his God and Father, but only as he is upon a throne of grace, or as he reveals himself in Christ.

2. From a throne of grace, God is to be seen as a God of love: yea, as love itself: 1 John 4:16: “God is love.” Ver. 10: “herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” So John 3:16: “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son,” &c. This love of God to lost sinners lay hid under a veil of wrath and justice, till the veil was rent by the satisfaction of Christ; and then indeed the love and kindness of God toward man appeared, venting itself in a most glorious and triumphant manner. O how encouraging is this view of God, to come to his throne, with the confidence of faith, for grace and mercy to help! It was this view that made David to cry, Psal. 36:7, “How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings.”

3. From a throne of grace, a guilty sinner may view him as a God of peace: Heb. 13:20: “Now, the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus,” &c. God’s anger and fury began to burn against Adam, and all his descendants, immediately after the fall; and if a stop had not been put to it, it had consumed the earth with its increase, and burnt into the lowest hell: but no sooner did he receive the atonement, either in the promise, or actual payment of it, from our blessed Surety, but the flaming sword of justice is put up in its scabbard, and a gracious declaration issued forth, that “*fury is not in him.*” Indeed, if sinners will still deal with him as upon a throne of justice or according to the terms of the law-covenant, they will find him to be “a *consuming fire,*” But, oh! Who will be so mad as to set briers and thorns in battle against devouring flames? If they do, he “will go through them, and consume them together.” Shall we not rather turn toward him as upon a throne of grace, where we shall hear him saying to the



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rebellious sinner, “Or let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me?” Isa. 27:4,5.

4. From a throne of grace God is to be seen as a God with us: Matth. 1:23, compared with Isa. 7:14: “Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel, which, being interpreted, is God with us.” In Christ he is God with us, to avenge our quarrel upon the serpent, by bruising his head. “The day of vengeance is in mine heart.” With us, to save from law, justice, the world, and all them that would condemn our souls, Psal. 109:31. With us, to strengthen, help, and uphold us in all difficulties and dangers, with the right hand of his righteousness. And, oh! “if God be with us, who can be against us?” Hence is that triumphant song of the church, Psal. 46. “The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea,” &c.

5. Again, let us view him from a throne of grace, and we shall see him to be a promising God. The absolute God is to a sinner a threatening God. Nothing is to be heard from a throne of justice, but curses against every one that continues not in all things written in the book of the law to do them. But, O sirs, come to a throne of grace, to God in Christ, and you shall see a promising God. 2 Cor. 1:20, we are told, “all the promises of God are in Christ, and in him yea and amen.” Wherever we meet with any promise of God in the scriptures of truth, be it a promise of pardon, of peace, of counsel, of grace, or glory, for this life, or that which is to come; we should still remember, that they come from a God in Christ reconciling the world to himself. Christ, having fulfilled the proper condition of the promise by his obedience unto death, all the promises are his in the first instance; he is the first heir of them all: and in him, and through him, they are given out to us in the word as the immediate ground and foundation of our faith, with that intimation and advertisement, “The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as” lie within the compass of the gospel call, Acts 2:39. O sirs, here is good news from a throne of grace, if you can but receive and credit it, with application to your own souls. As all threatenings of the word are spoken to the sinner in particular from a throne of justice, as if he were spoken to by name and surname; so all the promises of the word are directed to you in particular from a throne of grace, as though you were expressed in them by name. There is not a son of Adam, but has as much concern with that promise, Gen. 3:15: “The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpents head,” as Adam himself had, in whose hearing it was uttered. Thus, I say, God from a throne of grace is to be seen as a promising God.

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6. View God upon his throne, and you shall see him to be a God matching with our family. There is a twofold match that the great Jehovah makes with the family of Adam. (1.) He matches with our nature, joining it to himself by a hypostatical union in the person of his eternal Son; and thus, by marrying our nature into a personal union; he becomes related to the whole family of Adam, Jew and gentile. And this is “good tidings of great joy unto all people, that unto us,” not to fallen angels, “is born in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord,” Luke 2:10,11. (2.) God; having married our nature, and, as it were, come upon a level with us, that the inequality of the parties might be no stop, he proclaims his purpose of marriage with our very persons in the dispensation of the gospel. This proposal and proclamation of marriage coming forth from the throne of grace, is made to all without exception in the call of the gospel, Matth. 22:4. Yea, all the members of the visible church are in some sense married to the Son of God, Jer. 3:14. And if it were not so, they could not be charged with adultery, or playing the harlot with other lovers as they are, ver. 1. But besides all this, in a day of power he determines the poor soul whom he hath loved with an everlasting love, to give its hearty assent and consent to the promise and proposal of marriage made by Christ in the gospel, saying, “I am the Lord’s,” Isa. 44:5.

Thus he fulfils his promise, chap. 54:5: “Thy Maker is thine Husband, (the Lord of hosts is his name;) and thy Redeemer the holy One of Israel, the God of the whole earth shall he be called.” See also Hos. 2:19, 20: “I will betroth thee unto me for ever.”

7. God from a throne of grace is to be viewed as a pardoning God, issuing forth indemnities to guilty rebels, who have violated his laws, and trampled upon his authority. From a throne of justice he can only be viewed as a condemning God, pronouncing and executing the righteous sentence of a broken law upon sinners who have transgressed it; and when the holiest of saints that ever breathed come to deal with God upon this footing, they are made to cry out, “O Lord, who shall stand?” Nothing but “tribulation and anguish, indignation and wrath, to every soul of man that doeth evil.”

But O glory to God in the highest, that by the reign of grace, through the righteousness of Christ, he appears in quite another view, namely, as a “God forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin;” yea, glorying in it as his prerogative, Isa. 43:25; offering and bestowing his pardons upon the guiltiest of criminals, Isa. 1:18: “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow: though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

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8. From a throne of grace God appears to us as a God of infinite bounty and liberality. And O what a pleasant view is this to the poor and needy! Jam. 1:5: “If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.” From a throne of grace he “gives,” and gives “liberally,” and gives “without upbraiding.” O sirs, grace is not for holding in, but for giving out; grace could not be grace if it were otherwise. Never was there a throne like this throne of grace, which has its very nature and standing by liberality. How soon would it spend the substance of the greatest and richest kings upon earth, to give to every one that had a mind to ask! If they kept open doors and open treasures for all, and made every one welcome to come and take whatever they pleased, how soon would their treasuries be emptied. But, the treasuries of this throne are not only inexhaustible, but they are not in the least impaired by giving out: however much grace has been given out from this throne to the sons of men, (and the distributions already have been very large,) yet there is as much grace behind as ever. Yea, the very glory, riches, and splendour of this throne, lie in the large, free, and liberal distributions that are made to poor and needy sinners, who come to it for grace and mercy; and the King makes all welcome without exception: Isa. 55:1: “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters,” &c.

9. He is to be viewed from a throne of grace as a prayer-hearing God: Psal. 65:2: “O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.” He sits upon this throne encouraging all who have any business with him to come forward with boldness, and present their petitions to him, assuring them that their bills of request shall not be cast over bar: Matth. 7:7: “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” The prayer of faith is the stated means of God’s appointment for drawing forth promised mercy and grace: Ezek. 36:37: “Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.” So open-hearted is the King, that his heart opens his ear to hear, and his hand to give. When we have asked great things of him, he chides us, because we have not asked more and greater things: and bids us ask, and we shall “receive, that our joy may be full.” The voice of prayer makes a sweet and melodious sound at this throne: Cant. 2:14: “Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice: for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.”

10. *Lastly*, View him upon a throne of grace and you shall see him as your own God. Wherever we find God in all the word appearing from a throne of grace to sinners, we shall still find him asserting himself to be *their God* in Christ. Upon this throne he appears to Abraham: and what says he to him? Gen. 17:7: “I will

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establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant; to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.” When this covenant was renewed, or of new published at Mount Sinai, he says, “I am the Lord thy God.” This is the ordinary style of the covenant of grace which issues from a throne of grace; “I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” Now, what can be God’s design in appearing to us sinners after such a manner, but that we, who had forfeited all claim to him by the breach of the first covenant may claim him as our God, even our own God, upon the footing of free grace. There is so much sweetness, grace, mercy, love, and salvation in God manifesting himself from a throne of grace, that the soul, whenever it views him by faith, is laid under an invincible (though sweet) necessity, to claim him as its own God in Christ, saying with Thomas, “My Lord, and my God.” He that is my God, is the God of salvation; and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death. And faith having once fixed the soul’s claim to God in Christ upon the covenant ground and grant, it will maintain its claim to him upon the same ground, even when clouds and darkness are round about him; as the church does, Isa. 49:14: “The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me.” Thus you see what amiable views of the divine Majesty are to be had from a throne of grace, or from God manifesting himself in the flesh, dealing with sinners according to gospel-grace.

I come, in the *third* place, to offer a few scriptural remarks respecting this throne.

1. I remark, that this throne is called “the throne of God, and of the Lamb,” Rev. 22:1. By which expression we are taught, that both Father and Son are equally glorified in this administration of grace; there is no disjoining of them, either as to their essence, interests, glory, or administration. “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work,” says Christ. As they act by a joint power in the kingdom of providence; so they act in the same manner in the kingdom of grace. And it is the will of God “that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father; and every tongue must confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” If the throne were only called, “The throne of God,” it were enough to scare a guilty sinner from ever looking towards it: but when it is called, “The throne of God, and of the Lamb,” this furnishes our souls with a more amiable view of the divine Majesty, and declares him to be a God of peace, and that he is like a meek lamb to every soul that comes to him in the way of his own ordination: his terror needs not make us afraid.

2. I remark, that “a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeds out of” this throne, Rev. 22:1. By which I know some (and I was once of their mind)

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understand only those “rivers of pleasures,” and that “fulness of joy,” which the saints in glory are possessed of in the immediate vision and fruition of God for evermore: I do not exclude this meaning. But to me it is clear, from the 17th verse of the same chapter, that the river of water of life, spoken of in the 1st verse, has a respect even to the church militant here upon earth; because, ver. 17, there is an invitation by the Spirit and the bride given to all to come, and take of these waters of life freely, which proceed, ver. 1, from the throne of God, and of the Lamb; and therefore I do think that, by this river issuing from the throne of God and of the Lamb, we are to understand the Holy Spirit of God, which proceeds from the Father and the Son, with his quickening, cleansing, and comforting influences. This is compared frequently to a river or flood in scripture, Isa. 35:6, 7, and 44:3. Not a rivulet or brook, but a river, to signify the plentiful, free, and liberal communications of the Spirit and grace of God that should follow upon Christ’s exaltation to the throne in our nature. And this is not a muddy pool, but a “pure” river: the Spirit of Christ is a Holy Spirit, and purifies the soul from the filth of sin. It is a river of “water of life,” because he has life in himself, and quickens the soul that is dead in trespasses and sins. It is said to be “clear as crystal,” because he is a Spirit of wisdom and revelation, and opens the eye-sight of the blinded understanding to know the things that are freely given us of God.”

3. I remark, that the Lamb is said to be “in the midst of the throne,” Rev. 5:6, and 7:17; which not only signifies the glory of his exalted state, having all power in heaven and in earth, but more especially I judge this expression designed for the encouragement of faith, that we may “come with boldness to the throne, for grace and mercy to help in time of need.” Why, the meek and mild Lamb is “in the midst of the throne,” ready to take us by the hand, to hear and plead our cause. He is a ready and diligent Advocate; he is never out of the way, or absent when our cause is brought forward for consideration, as other advocates and friends many times are, when we have most need of them, and of their mediation and interest. “We have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God.” We have him as our Advocate with the Father, continually appearing in the presence of God for us.

4. I remark, that “the seven Spirits are before the throne,” Rev. 1: 4. So Rev. 5:6: “The seven Spirits are sent forth from the Lamb as it were slain, in the midst of the throne, into all the earth.” By which is signified the particular office of the Holy Ghost in the application of the redemption purchased by Christ; called “seven,” because of the variety of his influences and operations. These are said to be “before the *throne*” to show how ready the Spirit of God is to execute all the acts of grace that are emitted from the throne of grace, and to make them effectual

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by his infinite energy and power. And these seven *spirits* of God are said to be “sent forth from the Lamb as it were slain,” to let us know, that the sending, or down-pouring of the Spirit, and of his influences, is the fruit and effect of the atoning sacrifice of Christ’s death, and of his prevalent intercession, grounded upon his propitiation.

5. I remark, that this throne “standeth on mount Zion,” Rev. 14:1. The Lamb stands there, and where the Lamb stands, there must the throne stand also, for he is always in the midst of it. By “mount Zion,” which is an Old Testament expression, I understand the church of God, which is partly militant on earth, and partly triumphant in heaven. They are all surrounding the same throne; like Jacob’s ladder, the foot of it stood in Bethel upon earth, but the top of it reached the heavens. So this throne of grace stands upon the earth in Bethel, the house of the living God, though indeed the top of it is high and lifted up above the height of the highest heavens: and all believers are come to it, whether they be in heaven or earth, though some be a step higher than others, the glory of saints militant and triumphant differing only in degrees. Let a believer be in what part of the world he will, still he will by faith make his way to a throne of grace, that is, to a reconciled God in Christ, who is every where present, and a very present help in the time of need.

6. I remark, that this throne is surrounded with a “rainbow:” Rev. 4:3: “There was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.” Which I pass at present, because I intend a discourse upon it apart.

7. I remark, that this throne is crowded with innumerable attendants in the church militant and triumphant, who are all paying the tribute of worship and homage to him that sits upon it: Rev. 5:11-13: “And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature, which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I, saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.” Where you see all the saints in heaven and earth are surrounding this glorious throne of which we now speak. O blessed are they whom he chooses and causes to approach to him among this numerous company.

8. I remark, that the basis and foundation of this throne is “the righteousness of Christ.” It is laid in justice satisfied, and judgment executed upon

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the Son of God. “Justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne.” But this leads to,

II. The *second* thing proposed in the method, which is to *speak of the foundation of this throne*, and that is *justice and judgment*.

For clearing of this, 1. Take a few propositions. 2. A few properties of this foundation.

*First*, Take a few propositions.

1. When God had created man, he entered into a covenant of life with him, upon condition of perfect obedience; forbidding him to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, upon the pain of death.

2. Man, by the breach of this covenant, has incurred the penalty thereof, ‘whereby all mankind have lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all the miseries in this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell for ever.’

3. God, in his amazing grace and love both admitted of a Surety, and provided one, even his eternal Son, who voluntarily undertook our redemption, and was actually substituted in our room. *He laid on him the iniquity of us all*.

4. The Son of God, in consequence of his undertaking as our Surety, having assumed our nature, and put himself in our law-place, a cry was made in heaven by justice, ‘*Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow: smite the shepherd, make thyself drunk with his royal blood; do not spare him, exact the debt of him to the utmost farthing.*’ He endured the curse in our room, *being made a curse for us*.

5. Whatever justice demanded of the Surety, it was executed upon the Lord Jesus Christ. Did justice demand that the one standing in our place should be of one common nature with the sinner? This accordingly is executed; for “the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us;” he was made of a woman, and took part of the children’s flesh; he became our kinsman, that the right of redemption might belong to him. Did justice demand that the honour of the holy law should be repaired by a perfect obedience? This accordingly is executed by the Surety; for he “fulfilled all righteousness, he magnified the law, and made it honourable.” Did justice demand that the curse and penalty of the law should be endured? This is accordingly executed; for he “was made a curse for us,” that he might “redeem us from the curse of the law.” Did justice demand that the head of the old serpent

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should be bruised, and that vengeance should be executed upon the grand enemy of God's glory, and of man's good and happiness? This accordingly is done; for he "spoiled principalities and powers, and triumphed over them in his cross." Did justice demand that sin, the first-born of the devil, should be put out of the way? This accordingly is done; for he "finished transgression, and made an end of sin: he condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us."

6. Justice being satisfied, and the law magnified, and the Lord well pleased for the righteousness sake of the glorious Surety, God thereupon rears up a throne of grace, and proclaims himself to be "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and sin," &c.; and accordingly passes acts of grace from this throne, saying, "I will be their God, and they shall be my people: I will be merciful to their unrighteousness: I will sprinkle them with clean water;" and the like. And thus you see upon what basis or foundation the throne of grace is reared.

*Secondly*, I shall give you a few qualities or properties of the foundation of this throne, where grace reigns through righteousness.

1. It is an *ancient* foundation; for Christ was "set up from everlasting, or ever the earth was;" he is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." And upon the credit of his promise to satisfy justice in the fulness of time, all the Old Testament saints were saved.

2. It is a foundation of God's own laying; "Behold, I lay in Zion a foundation." He had pleasure in laying it. When he laid it decretively from all eternity, he did it with pleasure: "I have found a ransom:" he speaks of it with a kind of glorying and boasting: "I have laid help upon one that is mighty: I have found David my servant." When he laid it actually in his incarnation, he did it with pleasure: "it pleased the Lord to bruise him." When he laid this foundation doctrinally in Zion, he did it with pleasure, Isa. 28:16, he proclaims to the world, declaring, that "whosoever builds upon it, shall not be ashamed."

3. It is a firm foundation upon which God has built his throne of grace; it is the surest foundation on which a throne can be built. The throne of iniquity, or the throne that is founded upon injustice, shall surely be overturned: but here is a throne built upon justice and judgment. Christ is called a *rock*, "Upon this rock I will build my church;" and the church and the throne of grace have the same bottom.



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4. It is a *tried* foundation. Justice tested it, and found it firm and stable; when mountains of wrath and vengeance were rolled upon it, it bore up under all. The powers of hell tried to overturn this foundation; but their kingdom and power was broken in pieces in the enterprise; the little stone cut out of the mountain, broke the head of the great Goliah. The saints have all tried this foundation, and proclaim it sufficient to bear their weight; yea, it is sufficient to bear the weight of all mankind, yea, of millions of worlds, if they existed, and would venture upon it; “He is able to save to the uttermost, all that come unto God by him.”

5. It is a *precious* foundation: “We are not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” The gold and silver cannot equal it; the topaz of Ethiopia is not to be named in one day with it; it is more glorious and excellent by far than all the mountains of prey.

6. It is a most *beautiful* foundation. What God says of his church, Isa. 54:11, is much more true of the throne of grace, “Behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires.” There is such a beauty in this foundation of the throne of grace, that it reflects a beauty upon every one that approaches it; so that they come away from it “like the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.”

7. To crown all, it is a *perpetual, durable, and everlasting* foundation: and hence comes the perpetuity of the throne itself, Psal. 89:4: “Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations.” So Psal. 72:17: “His name shall endure for ever; his name shall be continued as long as the sun.” The priesthood of Christ is the foundation of the throne of grace; and this priesthood is to continue, by the oath of God: Psal. 60:4: “The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.” I proceed now to,

III. The *third* general head in the method. Having viewed the foundation, let us next take a view of some pillars with which this throne, this royal administration of grace, is supported, and which contribute not a little to its stability. And, not to enlarge upon particulars, the foundation of this throne being laid in the satisfaction of justice, all the other perfections, or attributes of the divine nature, fall in for the support of the reign and administration of grace. “Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace kiss each other;” they sweetly join hands in promoting this glorious design, as you see in the context. O, says infinite wisdom, all my immense treasures shall dwell bodily in the man

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Christ Jesus, he shall be “the wisdom of God in a mystery,” that so he may be in a capacity to hold the reins, and manage all things in heaven and earth, for the advancement of the glory of free grace, reigning through righteousness to eternal life. O, says infinite power, “with him my hand shall be established: mine arm also shall strengthen him” in his undertaking. “I will beat down his foes before his face, and greatly plague them that hate him.” O, says holiness, although I be “of purer eyes than to behold iniquity,” yet I plainly see, that justice being satisfied for the guilt of sin in the death of the Son of God, the filth of it shall be hid out of my sight, and his blood shall be a laver to wash it away, that I be not offended: and therefore I am so far from hindering this administration of grace through Christ, that I lay myself in pledge to promote and carry on the glorious design: “Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David.” O, says mercy, I am so related to grace, that I cannot shun to give my vote, that the throne of grace should go on apace,” My mercy will I keep for him for evermore. My mercy shall be with him: and in my name shall his horn be exalted.” O, says the faithfulness and veracity of God, whatever promises grace has made, in a covenant of grace, I bind and oblige myself to make them good: “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but one jot or tittle” of God’s word of grace shall never fall to the ground. “I will not take my love from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.” And thus I have given you a short view of these glorious pillars which contribute to the establishment of the throne of grace, upon the foundation of justice and judgment.

IV. *The fourth thing is, to inquire how it is God will have justice satisfied, and judgment executed upon the Surety, to be the foundation of his throne of grace?*

I shall not multiply reasons for this, but shall only touch upon one for all, which the apostle gives, Rom. 5:31; namely, “That grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.” So that, if it be asked, Why will God have it so, that justice satisfied, and judgment executed on the Surety, should be the foundation of the throne of grace? The answer is, “That grace might reign through righteousness;” that the glory of grace might be displayed in consistency with the honour of divine justice.

Here a question arises, How does grace reign, or how is the glory of grace displayed in and by the righteousness of a surety?

*Ans.* 1. Grace reigns and is displayed in the arrangement of this righteousness according to God’s plan; for it is the plan of infinite wisdom,

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animated and inspired by free grace. When man had fallen under the sentence of the law, justice was ready to execute judgment upon him: but grace cries, Stop, and stay thy hand, for “I have found a ransom.” 2 Sam. 14:14: “God doth devise means, that his banished be not expelled.” Our first parents provoked God to drive them out of Paradise, and accordingly they were actually driven out of his presence; but infinite wisdom, actuated and animated by the bowels of mercy, contrives a way in which banished man may be brought home again in consistency with justice, and that is by the righteousness of the Messiah.

2. Grace reigns and is displayed in the acceptance of this righteousness. What but infinite love and grace could prevail with inexorable justice, so far to dispense with the rigour of the law, as to admit of a surety’s righteousness in the room of the sinner! But this I touched upon already. And therefore,

3. Grace reigns in the impetration of this righteousness; for “God,” in his amazing grace, “sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law.” That righteousness by which we are justified, is the very righteousness of God in our nature; he wrought it by his doing and dying. O, how does grace reign here! Faith’s views of this may fill us all with wonder, and make us cry with the church, Isa. 63:1, “Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength?”

4. Grace reigns in the revelation of this righteousness. Grace was not content to contrive and bring about this righteousness, but the news of it must be published and proclaimed to a lost world, as it were by sound of trumpet. Hence the apostle, Rom. 1:17, when he would give us an account of the sum and substance of the gospel, does it in one word, “The gospel is the power of God unto salvation; for therein is revealed the righteousness of God.” O how eager was the grace of God, to have the proclamation respecting the satisfaction of justice by a surety issued out? Adam had scarce sinned, till grace announces the plot to him in the first promise; “The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent.” The Messiah is scarce born in Bethlehem, till an angel is dispatched from heaven to notify it to the shepherds; “Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”

5. Grace reigns and is displayed in the approach, or the bringing near of this righteousness to the sinner in a preached gospel. Not only does grace reveal the righteousness of God, but it brings it near to the sinner, in order to be accepted and received: Isa. 46:12, 13: “Hearken unto me, ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness. I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off;” &c. It is

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brought near to the sinner, just as the manna was brought near to Israel, when it fell about their tent-doors; they had not far to go for it.

6. Grace reigns and is displayed in the imputation of this righteousness. And, indeed, there is a great mystery of grace here, that cannot be expressed in words; how a guilty sinner, that has violated the law, and is obnoxious to justice, comes to be sustained in the sight of God as though he had fulfilled the law, and satisfied justice in his own person, and to be put in a condition to say, “Who shall lay any thing to *my* charge? It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth?”

7. Grace reigns in the soul’s acceptance of this righteousness by faith. There is nothing in all the world that runs so cross to proud nature, as to renounce all its own righteousness, its obedience, duties, endeavours, its own grace and holiness, in point of acceptance, and to submit to the righteousness of another, and to be obliged to the doing and dying of the Son of God alone. This was a stone of stumbling to the Jews; they could never imagine any other way of justification before God, but “by the works of the law;” and therefore they “went about to establish a righteousness of their own, and would not submit unto the righteousness of God.” Now, I say, to dislodge a sinner from this legal foundation, to bring down these towering imaginations of a righteousness in ourselves, to cast down the “refuge of lies,” and to bring the proud conceited sinner that length, as to own and acknowledge, that his own righteousness is but “as filthy rags,” saying, “Surely in the Lord only have I righteousness and strength; in him will I be justified, and in him alone will I glory.” I say, grace reigns, and is wonderfully displayed in all this.

8. Grace reigns through righteousness, inasmuch as that it is by the revelation of this justice-satisfying righteousness that grace conquers and powerfully subdues sinners, brings them under its own government and dominion. The apostle, speaking of believers, Rom. 6:14, says. “Ye are not under the law, but under grace;” that is, ye are brought in under the government and administration of grace. But what way is it that grace conquers them? What is the great power made use of for this end? It is just the revelation of the righteousness of Christ in the gospel, Rom. 1:15: “The gospel is the power of God unto salvation.” What way? Mark the expression, ver. 17: “For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith.” From which it is plain, that the preaching of an imputed righteousness, as the alone ground of a sinner’s acceptance, is the very pith and marrow of the gospel. Some, now-a-days, have got a way of preaching, which, I believe, will never convert a soul; they deliver fine elegant harangues of morality, adorning them with all the flowers of rhetoric; but, in the mean time, they do but stink in the nostrils of a solid Christian. Why?

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Because though they preach up a moral righteousness, yet they have little or nothing of the righteousness of Christ, which is the very basis and foundation of a throne of grace: and when that is wanting, they want the true Shibboleth of the gospel; for the gospel is a revelation of the righteousness of God;” and this makes it to be “the power of God unto salvation.”

Here I judge it not amiss, to subjoin a quotation from the great and judicious Owen to this purpose, in his commentary on the Hebrews, chap. 5:7: ‘Some are of the mind,’ says he, ‘that the whole business of ministers is to be conversant in and about morality. For this fountain and spring of grace, (the righteousness and satisfaction of Christ); this basis of eternal glory; this evidence and demonstration of divine wisdom, holiness, righteousness, and love, this great revealing of the purity of the law, and vileness of sin; this first, great, principal subject of the gospel, and motive of faith and obedience; this root and cause of all peace with God, all sincere and uncorrupted love toward him, and all joy and consolation from him, they think it scarcely deserves a place in the objects of their contemplation, and are ready to guess, that what men write and talk about it, is but *phrases, canting, and fanatical*. But such as are admitted into the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ, will not so easily part with their immortal interest and concern therein. Yea, I fear not to say, that he is likely to be the best, the most humble, the most holy and fruitful Christian, who is most sedulous and diligent in spiritual inquiries into this great mystery, of the reconciliation of God unto sinners by the blood of the cross, and in the exercise of faith about it. Nor is there any such powerful means of preserving the soul in a constant abhorrence of sin, and watchfulness against it, as a due apprehension of what it cost to make atonement for it.’

V. The *fifth* thing was the *application* of the doctrine. And the *first* use shall be of *information*, in the following particulars:—

1. Is it so that justice satisfied, and judgment executed upon the ever-blessed Surety, is the foundation of a throne of grace? then, hence we may see what an expensive piece of work a throne of grace is. Why, the foundation of it is laid in the death and blood of the Son of God. When God is about to erect a throne of glory for himself, as the great Creator and Governor of the world, he makes little or no ceremony about it; he only says, *Let it be*, and immediately heaven, which is his throne, and the earth, which is his footstool, springs out of nothing in wonderful order; but when the throne of grace is to be reared, justice must be satisfied, and judgment executed upon the Son of God; he must “become sin for

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us, and a curse for us, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, and we made the righteousness of God in him.”

2. See from this doctrine, the glory of a gospel-dispensation. We read sometimes of *the glorious gospel of the blessed God*; why, here is the reason of the denomination, the royal majesty of the grace of God reigning through the righteousness of his eternal Son, is here displayed and manifested. God has erected a glorious high throne for the place of his sanctuary; and “for the beauty of his ornament, he hath set it in majesty,” Ezek. 7:20. There was much of the divine glory manifested in the delivery of the law on mount Sinai, and in the typical dispensation of the Old Testament: but, O! All that glory vanished, like a shadow, at the greater glory that is manifested in the actual erection of a throne of grace, by the incarnation, obedience, death, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the manifestation of him that is made by the word now under the New Testament: 2 Cor. 3:7-11. “But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses, for the glory of his countenance, which glory was to be done away; how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious, had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.” O let us prize our mercy, who live under the New Testament dispensation, in which “all we with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, may be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

3. If it be so that justice satisfied, and judgment executed upon Christ, is the foundation of a throne of grace; then, see hence, that the salvation of a lost sinner by grace is very consistent with the honour of divine justice; why, justice and judgment are the very habitation of this throne. Some poor souls, when they fall under the challenges and awakenings of conscience, are ready to think and say, O it is needless for me ever to think that God will extend his grace and mercy to me: why, my sins are of such a bloody hue, of such an aggravated nature, that I cannot think that ever it will stand with the justice of God to pity and pardon, or save the like of me. But, O sirs, will you consider, that God has already taken care for the satisfaction of his justice, in the death and blood of his eternal Son, and laid the foundation of his throne of grace upon that. And therefore, you are not to think or imagine, that justice will be your enemy in coming for grace and mercy to a throne of grace: no, no; God is just and righteous in saving the sinner that comes to this throne, as well as in damning the sinner that will not come. Yea, let me tell

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you, that the justice of God gets more glory in saving of sinners through the blood and satisfaction of Jesus, than in the damnation and ruin of all the reprobates and unbelievers in the world; for the believing sinner takes the ransom that God has found, and presents that to justice, and the Lord is well pleased with this; he smells a sweet savour in this propitiatory sacrifice.

4. See hence, the excellency and infinite value of the blood of Jesus, and how much we owe to it; why, by this blood justice is satisfied, and thereby a foundation laid for a throne of grace, to which we are called to come with boldness: Heb. 10:19: "Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." There are these two things effected by the blood of Jesus, from which our obligations to it will especially appear. (1.) By this blood sprinkled upon the tribunal of justice, the tribunal itself is turned into a mercy-seat: an angry God is reconciled and pacified, and invites the guilty sinner to come for grace and mercy to help him. (2.) By this blood the curse of the law is abolished. The curse of a broken law stands as an insuperable bar in the way of our access to God; but now, by the blood of Jesus, this hand-writing that was against us is cancelled, being nailed to the cross. And whenever this blood is applied by faith, the sentence goes forth from a throne of grace. There is no more condemnation for the man, for he is in Christ, under the covert of blood. It is God that justifieth him; who is he that dare condemn him? God, the great Lawgiver, justifieth; and what has any other to say against him, if the Law-giver acquit him?

5. Has God erected a throne of grace at the expense of the death and satisfaction of his eternal Son? Then I would have you consider, whether you be courtiers about this throne. Wast thou ever at a throne of grace, man, woman? Perhaps you may think this a very strange question. 'Why,' say you, 'have you so little charity as to think that we never prayed? Blessed be God, we are at a throne of grace every morning and evening; we read, hear, pray, communicate, and yet will you ask, if ever we were at a throne of grace?' I answer, A man may do all that, and never yet really come to this throne, that has judgment and justice for its foundation and habitation. What, then, is it to come to a throne of grace?

*Ans.* It is to come out of yourself to a God in Christ, as your only hope and help; it is to receive Christ and rest on him; for all those ends and uses for which he is revealed and offered in the glorious gospel. In one word, to come to a throne of grace, is, by faith in the blood of Jesus, to enter into the presence of a holy God. 'How shall I know if ever I thus came to this throne?'

*Ans.* There are a few things in the context which follows my text, which may be improved as marks for your trial. As,

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1st, If ever you have come to a throne of grace, you have seen mercy and truth going before the face of him that sits on the throne. *Justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne*; and what follows? *Mercy and truth shall go before his face*: that is, not only mercy in the abstract, but mercy connected with, and conveyed in a word of truth. I think it very remarkable, that these two, mercy and truth, are commonly linked together in scripture, Psal. 85:10: "Mercy and truth are met together." John 1:17: "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ;" and ver. 14: Christ is said to be *full of grace and truth*. Why are these joined together? The plain reason is, because all the mercy that is in the heart of God, is conveyed in a true and faithful word of promise: so that whatever mercy we want from God, we must always look for it in a promise or word of truth: "What God has joined, no man must put asunder." Some have a way of grasping at the mercy of God absolutely considered, never viewing it as it is in Christ, or as it is in the covenant and word of truth. But, sirs, the mercy of God in this view never saved a sinner: they who really came to a throne of grace, and view God as he is in Christ, see mercy, and truth coupled together, and they dare not claim mercy, but upon the ground of the promise or Covenant established in Christ; and *this is all their salvation*.

2dly, If ever you were really at the throne, you have heard the joyful sound that issues out from the throne: ver. 15: "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound," namely, the joyful sound of the King's voice that sits on the throne of grace. The voice of God in Christ has a certain characteristic intimacy with it, by which the believer knows it from the voice of a stranger: "My sheep," says Christ, "know my voice." Cant. 2:8, no sooner does Christ speak, but immediately the spouse cries, "It is the voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh." O, sirs, you are all hearing the sound of a man's voice; but I ask, Do you hear the voice of Christ coming forth from a throne of grace? His words are *spirit*, and they are *life*. They have such a divine majesty and melody in them, that they make an echo of praise to rebound back to heaven: hence we read, that, upon the publication of the gospel among the gentiles, songs are heard ascending upward, Isa. 24:16.

3dly, If ever you came to this throne, and saw the King upon the throne, you will highly value the light of his countenance; you will put such a value upon his smiles, that you cannot think of living without them. His countenance will make your day lightsome; and when he withdraws, all the stars of created comforts cannot supply his place.

4thly, The King's name will be like "ointment poured forth:" ver. 16: "In thy name shall they rejoice all the day." His name will be a strong tower to you, to which you will flee for safety; and there will be such a savour in it to thy soul, that

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thou wilt be ambitious to cause his name to be remembered to all generations, that the people may praise him for ever and ever.

*5thly*, If ever you were at this throne, and dignified with his acceptance and approval, you will look upon his righteousness as the only ground of your promotion and advancement: ver. 16: “In thy righteousness shall they be exalted.” ‘O,’ will the poor soul say, ‘it was not my goodness, my holiness, my righteousness, that brought me to this honour: no, it was the obedience and death of my Surety, the righteousness that he brought in: “In him have I righteousness; and I count all things but loss and dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through faith” in him.’

*6thly*, He will be “the glory of your strength,” and his strength will be your glory, ver. 17. When you are helped to the exercise of any grace, to do or suffer any thing for him, you will ascribe the glory of it to him alone: “Not I, but the grace of God in me: Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be the glory.”

*7thly*, If ever you were at this throne of grace, you will be much taken up in admiring the freedom of his grace and love reigning through imputed righteousness; you will see grace written in capital letters on every step of the throne of grace, and in every step of your salvation: ver. 17: “In thy favour our horn shall be exalted.” Was I elected from eternity? My election is of grace. Was I redeemed by the blood of Jesus? This is “according to the riches of his grace.” Am I justified, sanctified, adopted, or effectually called? — It is grace, grace that has done all; “by the grace of God I am what I am.”

*8thly*. If you be acquainted with a throne of grace, a God of grace will be your only sanctuary, ver. 18: “The Lord is our defence;” and what time you are afraid, you will trust in him. He will be to you “a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land; for he is the strength of the poor, and of the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall.” When you are pursued by sin, by Satan, by the law, by conscience; when you are surrounded with trouble from without, or from within, you will turn to him as your “strong hold,” as it is said of the “prisoners of hope.”

*9thly*, if you be acquainted with a throne of grace, the King that sits upon the throne will be your only Lord and Sovereign: ver. 18: “The holy One of Israel is our King.” You will renounce allegiance to other lords, and make mention of his name, saying, “The Lord is my judge, the Lord is my lawgiver, the Lord is my

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king; he will save me.” And you will love your King so well, that you will love his law, and approve of it as “holy, just, and good,” because it is a transcript of the holiness of his nature; you will say, with David, “I esteem all his precepts concerning all things to be right: His yoke is easy, and his burden is light.” Now, try yourselves by these things, whether you be courtiers at this throne of grace, which hath justice satisfied, and judgment executed on the Surety, for its basis or foundation. You may easily remember these marks, because they are all in the text, and the three following verses.

6. Is it so, that God has erected a throne of grace at the expense of the satisfaction of his justice? O then, sirs, I would invite you all to come to this throne. People usually need little entreaty to come to the thrones of earthly princes; everybody is ambitious to be near the throne. Well, I invite, I call, beseech, and entreat you to draw near to the throne of the Prince of the kings of the earth, the King of kings, and Lord of lords. Now, that I may carry home the exhortation the more effectually upon your souls, I shall endeavour to answer and preclude a few practical questions, which will readily arise in your minds upon such a call or exhortation.

*Quest.* 1. Who is it that calls us? We hear you that are ministers calling us to come to the throne of grace; that is not enough to us, we would know if the King himself would make us welcome. I answer, It is not we, but the King himself that calls you to come to his throne. We that are ministers are only the heralds sent forth to intimate and proclaim the King’s pleasure; and if you ask for our instructions or commission, we shall very readily produce them, that you may read them with your own eyes under the King’s hand. 2 Cor. 5:19-21: “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;” (there is the throne of grace, to wit, “God reconciling the world to himself;” our commission follows in the close of the 19th, and in the 20th verses;) “and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you, in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” Now, there is our commission, the word of reconciliation is committed to us, that is, the publication of this gospel of the grace of God; and when we invite you to come to a reconciled God in Christ, we speak in the name of God, and we are in the very room of Christ. What would you think, if Christ were standing in my place speaking to you, summoning and inviting you to come to his throne for grace and mercy? Well, the case is the very same, when we act by commission from him. So, then, it is God that calls you by us.

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*Quest. 2.* Whom does he call? Does God call every body to come to his throne of grace? That is not an ordinary thing; all the subjects are not allowed to come near the throne, but only some peculiar favourites. *Ans.* It is true, it is so among earthly princes; it is only some peculiar favourites whom they allow to approach the throne or seat of majesty, otherwise their thrones would be too much crowded.

But it is otherwise in the court of the great King, who has justice and judgment for the habitation of his throne; for all and every one that hears the joyful sound of the gospel, which issues out of this throne, are invited and called to come to the throne of grace. And this will appear if you consider,

1. The extensiveness of the commission which God has given to ministers; Mark 16:15: “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature;” that is, to Jews and gentiles barbarians, Scythians, bond, or free, noble, and common. Every rational soul you shall meet with, sprung of Adam, go preach the gospel to them; that is, tell them in the name of a God of grace this good news, that God’s throne is now accessible, and every one who has a mind may come to it for grace and mercy to help in time of need.

2. The command of God enjoining you to come to a throne of grace is unto all: 1 John 3:23: “This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ;” which is all one with coming to the throne of grace. The law of believing extends to all mankind that hear this gospel. And remember that, for disobedience to this law, you are “condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on you.”

3. As the command of believing is to all, so the promise of welcome to a throne of grace is to all and every one, for their encouragement to come. “Him that cometh to me,” says Christ, “I will in no wise cast out. Whosoever believeth, shall not perish, but have everlasting life.” Do not think that the promise in the exhibition belongs only to the elect, or to believers: no, no; “the promise is unto you, and to your seed, and to all that are afar off” Thus, I say, all that live under the joyful sound of the gospel are called to come to a throne of grace.

*Quest. 3.* You bid us come to a throne of grace; but where is it? We do not know where to find it. I answer, Wherever you have access to God in any of the duties of his worship, there you may find the throne of grace. Indeed, under the Old Testament, when the centre of worship was confined to the temple of Jerusalem, the poor gentiles were at a loss where to come to a throne of grace; but now, under the New Testament, the centre of worship is removed from them, and placed among us Gentiles; so that whatever part of the earth you be upon, if the

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heavens be above your head, you need not be at a loss where to find a throne of grace: though you were shut up in a prison or dungeon, though you were driven to the utmost part of the earth, from friend, kin and ally, yet you cannot be driven away from a throne of grace. In a word, there is no place on this side of hell but you may find this throne, a God in Christ being a God every where present; “he is not far from every one of us.” So much seems to be intimated by Christ to the woman of Samaria, John 4:21-23: “Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.”

*Quest.* 4. What is the way we are to take to reach this throne of grace?

*Answ.* In all the world I know of no way but one, and that is Christ: John 14:6: “I am the way, and the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” As Christ, or God in Christ, is the throne, so he is also the way to the throne. An incarnate Deity is the sinner’s way to God, as well as God’s way to the sinner: Heb. 10:19, 20: “We have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;” The human nature of Christ assumed to the personality of the Son of God, is the portal or gate by which we enter into the throne of grace: John 10:9: “I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.” This door of the human nature of Christ was broken into shivers by the hammer of God’s wrath, that so our way might be patent to a throne of grace, to a reconciled God: hence we read of the rending of the veil of the temple from top to bottom at the death of Christ. This, then, is “the gate of God,” and by it the sinner may, and the saint doth, “enter into the court” of the “great King,” and “come to his seat.” Some folk have a mistaken notion, as if they actually came to a throne of grace every time they give their bodily presence at the ordinances of God’s appointment, such as prayer, hearing the word, communicating, or the like. I claim, indeed, that these external duties are the outer gates and porches by which we come to the throne, therefore called *the gates of Zion*, especially public ordinances are intended by that denomination: but, O sirs, many a man comes to these gates that never comes to the throne; of such the Lord complains, saying, “This people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me.” True coming or drawing near to a throne of grace, is an inward thing; it is done by an act of the heart; for “with the heart man believeth unto righteousness.” When the heart goes into God in Christ, for grace and mercy to help in time of need, that is coming to a

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throne of grace. So then, I say, Christ is the only way to the throne, as he is the throne itself.

*Quest.* 5. After what manner should we come to this throne?

*Answ.* 1. If you would come aright, you would come with an empty hand. Do not bring money or price with you; for when we come to a throne of grace, we come to get, but not to give any thing to the Lord. You that make a price of your prayers, communicating, and other good deeds and qualifications, you cannot come successfully at the throne of grace. —Remember that it is a “throne of grace,” and therefore nothing is to be gotten there in a way of debt.

2. Come with enlarged desires after what you come to ask; for “he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.”

3. Come with confidence, hope, and filial boldness. God would not have you to come hanging your heads, like condemned criminals coming to their judge to receive a sentence of death: no; but he would have us come to him with confidence, as children to a father, trusting in him, and looking for good things at his hand, because of his goodness, veracity, and other perfections manifested in Christ. Come, I say, with hope and expectation; for “he taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.” It is a general fault among us, that we go to God in prayer, and other ordinances, as if he were niggardly of his blessings, or were unwilling to part with his grace. But, O sirs, this is not the way to succeed. Let not that man expect to receive any thing from the Lord who comes doubting and wavering, entertaining jealousies of the love and goodness of a reconciled God.

4. Come to this throne with importunity. Follow Jacob’s practice, “I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. The effectual fervent prayer of the righteous availeth much.”

5. Make much use of the Spirit as a “Spirit of grace and supplication,” that he may help your infirmities at the throne. It is he who “fills our mouths with arguments,” and teaches us to pray “with groanings which cannot be uttered.” And he has promised his Spirit to them that ask him.

The *last* use I make of the doctrine shall be directed to believers, who are courtiers about this throne. And all I shall say to you shall be, 1. In a word of consolation; 2. Of exhortation.

*First,* A word of consolation. Know then, believer, for thy comfort, that “the holy One of Israel is thy King, and in his favour thy horn shall be exalted; mercy and truth shall go before his face,” with a special view to thy happiness in

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time and through eternity. All the grace and mercy that is in the heart of the King, is ordained for thee, and secured to thee by a well ordered covenant. The whole of his administrations, whether of grace or of providence, are calculated for thy benefit and advantage, Rom. 8:28. You are the children of the King; he has adopted thee into his family, yea, settled an inheritance upon thee, as “heirs of God, and joint heirs with himself.” You are upon the King’s secrets, and he will tell you things which he will not communicate to the rest of the world, even the secrets of his government of grace. “Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to others it is not given. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him: and he will show them his covenant.” And, to crown all, there is no case thou canst be in while in the world, but thou wilt have an act of grace suited and adapted to thy circumstances, registered in the court-book, I mean, in the scriptures of the Old and New Testament, every act sealed with the blood of the King, touched with his royal sceptre; yea, thou hast the extract of it in thy hand. O what strong ground of consolation is here to you who by faith are acquainted with this throne!

A second word is of exhortation, or counsel to believers, who have come to this throne, in the following particulars:—

1. Be often at the King’s court, especially on his court-days; I mean attend his ordinances, especially on the Sabbath, which he has sanctified and consecrated for this end.—Great men’s vassals are obliged to attend them upon their court-days; and is it not reasonable, that the subjects and vassals of the King of kings should pay this respect to him? Psal. 96:6-8: “Honour and majesty are before him: strength and beauty are in his sanctuary. Give unto the Lord, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts.” O honour your King by keeping his courts: for “one day in his courts is better than a thousand; it is better to be a doorkeeper in his house, than to dwell in the tents of sin:” and “those that be planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God.”

2. Let it not satisfy you to come to the court, unless you get access to the throne, and see the King’s face; for it is the presence of the King that makes his courts and tabernacles amiable. Absalom was not satisfied to be at Jerusalem, unless he saw the king’s face: so let it not satisfy you to attend ordinances, unless you get a visit from the God of ordinances. This was David’s disposition, Psal. 27:4: “One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.” And, if you have any acquaintance with the King,

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whose name is *gracious*, it will bring a damp upon your spirits, when you miss his presence in his courts; you will “go mourning without the sun,” crying, “O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat.”

3. When the King calls you to court, or to come near to his throne, do not refuse his order. When, by his word, or the motions of his Spirit, he says to thy soul, “Seek ye my face,” let thy soul send back a ready answer, saying, “Thy face, Lord, will I seek.” When he says, “Come,” let thy soul return the answer, “Behold, I come unto thee, for thou art the Lord my God.” O he takes it ill when any reject his call, as you see in the case of the spouse, Cant. 5. He comes to her, saying, “Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.” But she indulged carnal sloth, saying, “I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?” which provoked him to withdraw, till she is brought to regret her folly.

4. Beware of every thing that has a tendency to degrade you, or to make the King cast down his countenance upon you; for although he “hates putting away,” yet you may provoke him to cover his face, and to turn to you the back of his throne: yea, you may provoke him to carry towards you in such a way, that the very remembrance of him will be a trouble to you. Sometimes his own dearest favourites have so grieved his Spirit, that he has carried the quarrel to the gates of hell against them; as we see in the case of David, “Thine arrows stick fast in me,” says he, “and thy hand presseth me sore: this grief I have, because of my sin.” You may by insensitivity bring yourself to that pass, as to be made to cry, “The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit. Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps.” And therefore beware of every thing that may be offensive to your King. Beware of pride, for “he beholds the proud afar off;” he thrusts the proud away from him, when they venture to come near his throne. Beware of unbelief, for that is what he cannot endure. How unsuitable is it for his subjects and children to call him a liar! This is a sin which turns you away from the Lord, and turns him away from you. Do not entertain jealousies of his kindness, after he has given the tokens of it to your souls; for it is a grieving of the Spirit of God to have his love-tokens called in question. Beware of untenderness: if there be not a close walking with God in the way of holiness, you need not expect to have the King’s countenance; for “without holiness no man shall see the Lord: “it is they that have clean hands, and a pure heart, that shall stand in his holy hill, and have a place in his tabernacle.

5. Be very observant of the King’s commandments. As the acts of grace, of which I was speaking, are the measure of faith, so the law of commandments is the measure of practice. Do not think that the court of grace, or the throne of

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grace, gives any indulgence to a detestable licentiousness: they are indeed carnal-gospellers, and Antinomians with a witness, who entertain such a notion. No; the moral law of the ten commandments is supported with the authority of the King, whose name is *gracious* and *merciful*. As the law, considered as a covenant of works, issues from a throne of justice; so the same law, considered as a rule of obedience, is issued forth from a throne of grace, as is plain from the preface of the ten commandments, “I am the Lord thy God;” that is, I am unto thee a God of grace in Christ, a saving and a redeeming God: “therefore thou shalt keep all my commandments.” O sirs, the law, even as a rule of duty, is supported with the best authority in heaven or earth; and “the grace of God,” issuing from this throne, “teaches us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts.” Mic. 6:8: “He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”

6. Keep company with the loyal subjects of the King, and beware of associating yourselves, or saying, “A confederacy” with rebels against the King’s crown or government. “My delight,” says David, “is with the saints, the excellent ones of the earth.” But as for those who live in rebellion against the Lord, their company was a burden to them: “Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar. My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace.”

7. Be sure to pay the tribute that is due to this throne; do not withdraw from it its revenues. The King has imposed a tax of praise to be levied upon all his subjects; and “he who offereth praise, glorifieth him. O praise is comely for the upright.” “This people have I formed for myself, that they may show forth my praise.” Do not withhold this revenue, but let the high praises of a God of grace be continually in your mouth. And, to engage us to a cheerful payment of this tribute of praise, let us always remember the glorious liberties and privileges which we enjoy under the auspicious government and administration of grace; which are so great and many, that “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive;” which made the psalmist David to express himself, as we have it, Psal. 40:5: “Many, O Lord, my God are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.”

8. Lastly, Contend for the royalties and prerogatives of this throne, which are many ways usurped in this day. Attempts are made to rob the King of his equality with the Father, while they would strip him of his independence and self-existence. Others invade his government, by appointing ceremonies in his worship, which were never ordained in his word: others, by wresting the rights of

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his subjects from them, particularly in the free choice and election of their pastors: others, by tolerating doctrines inconsistent with the eternal truths of his word. Now, I say, it is incumbent on all the loyal subjects of this King, to contend for the dignities of the crown, and the liberties of his kingdom, against all that do invade the same; following the exhortation of the apostle, Gal. 5:1: Let us “stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free,” that we “be not entangled again with any yoke of bondage.”

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