

A man wearing a wide-brimmed cowboy hat, a brown jacket, and dark trousers stands with his back to the camera. He is looking out over a vast, flat, and severely cracked landscape, likely a dry lake bed or a parched field. The ground is a mix of brown and tan, with deep, irregular cracks forming a complex pattern. In the distance, a few small, sparse trees are visible against a pale, overcast sky. The overall mood is one of desolation and contemplation.

Monergism

**THE MONSTER
OF SINFUL
SELF-SEEKING
ANATOMISED**

TOGETHER WITH A DESCRIPTION OF THE
HEAVENLY AND BLESSED SELF-SEEKING

EDMUND CALAMY

A man wearing a wide-brimmed cowboy hat, a brown jacket, and dark trousers stands with his back to the camera. He is standing on a path of cracked, dry earth that stretches into the distance. The background shows a flat, open landscape with a few small trees and a fence line under a cloudy sky.

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TOGETHER WITH A DESCRIPTION OF
THE
HEAVENLY AND BLESSED SELF-
SEEKING.**

In a SERMON Preached at St. Paul's on the 10th of December, 1654.

By EDMUND CALAMY, B. D., and Pastor of Aldermanbury, London.

1 CORINTHIANS 10:24

Let no one seek his own, but every man another's wealth.

1 CORINTHIANS 13:5

Charity seeks not her own.

ROMANS 15:2, 3

Let everyone please his neighbor, for his good to edification: For even Christ pleased not himself.

"He who neglects the care of his neighbor is truly a lover of himself to such an extent that he does not genuinely love even himself; for just as in the body, the injury of one part affects the other parts as well,

and in buildings, the collapse of one part extends to others, so in the Church, the one who neglects his brother seeks only his own benefit and is also harmed against his will. For when he sees his brother in need of necessary things and does not extend a helping hand, he is cast into hell with greater loss than the affliction his brother suffered, etc." - Theophylact.

LONDON, Printed by J. G. for NATHANIEL WEBB and WILLIAM GRANTHAM, at the Bear in St. Paul's Churchyard, near the little North door, 1655.

PACKE, Mayor.

A special Court held on Tuesday, the 19th day of December, 1654.

Ordered that Mr. Calamy be requested by this Court to print his last Sermon at St. Paul's.

SADLER.

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TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE CHRISTOPHER PACK,

LORD MAYOR, AND THE RIGHT WORSHIPFUL ALDERMEN OF
THE FAMOUS CITY OF LONDON.

RIGHT HONOURABLE,

This ensuing Sermon was ordered by you to be printed. It has been delayed for some time due to a multitude of intervening impediments. Finally, it has come into the world and is humbly presented to you as an expression of the respect and service I acknowledge to be due and shall always be ready to offer. The subject matter of this sermon is to reveal and analyze the ugly and deformed

monster of sinful self-seeking and to demonstrate its sinfulness and cursedness.

As Augustine said, there are two cities: The City of God and the City of the Devil. The City of God is founded and built upon the love of God, growing to the point of hating ourselves. In contrast, the City of the Devil begins with the love of ourselves and grows to the point of hating God through the contempt of our brethren. For he who hates and despises his brother will soon hate and despise God. It cannot be denied, even by one filled with charity, that there are many citizens of this City of the Devil. Many, instead of loving God to the neglect of themselves, love themselves to the neglect of God. Many seek their own interests and not the things of Jesus Christ. Or, which is just as bad, if not worse, they seek their own interests under the hypocritical pretence of seeking the things of Christ.

It is told of Cnidius, a great architect who built an elaborate watchtower for the King of Egypt to detect dangerous rocks at night for his mariners. Cnidius had his own name engraved in large letters on a stone in the wall, covered it with lime and mortar, and on the outside inscribed the name of the King of Egypt in golden characters, pretending that everything was done for his glory and honour. However, his cunning lay in knowing that the water would eventually erode the plastering, as it did, leaving his name and memory for future generations. In this nation, there are many who, in their outward words and actions, pretend to seek only the glory of God, the good of His Church, and the well-being of the state. Yet, if we had a window into their hearts, we would find nothing but self-love and self-seeking.

In the following discourse, my aim has been to emphasize the magnitude and gravity of this sin and how destructive it is to both

the Church and the Commonwealth. In addition to what has been mentioned, allow me to add:

1. That it is one of the greatest curses under heaven for God to abandon a person to their own heart's lust, to do whatever seems right in their own eyes, to make themselves the principle, rule, and purpose of all their actions. It is better to be given over to the Devil than to ourselves. I have read of one being handed over to Satan for their salvation, but I have never heard of anyone being handed over to themselves except for their ruin and destruction.
2. This sinful self-seeking is not only a sin that makes the times perilous but also renders our condition damnable. It unequivocally bars the guilty individual from entering Heaven. When such a person passes away, their epitaph may read:

"Here lies a man-pleaser and a self-pleaser but not a God-pleaser. He sought himself while he lived and lost himself when he died. He loved himself for a moment and hated himself for all eternity."

Or thus,

Here lies a man who lived in ease while he lived, and now lives in easeless torments: Who, by over-pampering his body, destroyed his soul: Who lived undesired and died unlamented, who lived to himself, and thereby undid himself.

The Lord preserve you from this sin and make you true Commonwealth (not private-wealth) men. It becomes him, (says a wise heathen) who would be a great man to love neither himself nor anything that is his, but just things, whether done by himself or by another.

I have taken the liberty to add a few lines to that discourse which I had before you concerning the blessed and heavenly self-seeking, wherein I show that a self-denying, self-examining, self-judging Christian is the truest self-seeker. That he who values the preservation of a good conscience more than the preservation of his estate or life, and the well-being of Church and State over his own good, is a blessed self-seeker. He who loves God and not himself, loves himself, and he who loves God and not himself, loves himself. According to that excellent saying of Augustine, "I know not by what inexplicable way, but I am sure of this truth, that he who loves himself and not God loves not himself, and he who loves God and not himself loves himself. For he who cannot live of himself dies by loving himself. But when he is loved from whom and by whom we live, in not loving himself, he loves himself more, because he loves not himself in order to love Him by whom he lives."

May the Lord make you such self-seekers. Such was Nehemiah, of whom it is said that he sought not his own but the welfare of the people of God. Such another was David, who esteemed Jerusalem above his chief joy. Such were Old Eli, Ezra, Jeremiah, Daniel, and others. Such you ought to be.

It is not long since you observed a fast to humble yourselves before the Lord, in reference to the many sad, lamentable, and unusual fires kindled among us. Now it should be your care (as the true fruit of this fast) not only in your personal capacities to abstain from, but as you are public magistrates of this city, to endeavor (so far as your power will reach) to suppress all those sins for which God has threatened this great judgment. This is a divine, blessed, and most heavenly self-seeking. God has threatened to destroy a nation by fire:

1. For Sabbath breaking, Jer. 17:27.

2. For despising and misusing the godly ministry, 2 Chron. 36:16, 19.
3. For assuming the office of the ministry without a lawful call, Numb. 16:16, 17, 18, 35.
4. For worshipping God in a false manner, Lev. 10:1, 2.
5. For breaking the brotherly covenant, Amos 1:9, 10.
6. For pride, idleness, fullness of bread, uncharitableness, for giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, which were the sins of Sodom (Ezek. 16:49, compared with Jude 7), and for which God rained fire and brimstone from heaven for their destruction.

May the Lord clothe you with zeal as with a garment and enable you to be instrumental in quenching the burnings which these sins have kindled, and make this famous city a habitation of justice and a mountain of holiness (Jer. 31:23). May its name, from this day onward, be "The Lord is there" (Ezek. 48:35). So prays

Your servant in the work of the Lord,

Edmund Calamy.

The Monster of Sinful Self-Seeking

"For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's."

- PHILIPPIANS 2:21

These words may very fittingly be called Paul's complaint, or a severe indictment drawn up against the times in which he lived.

There are four things that make this complaint very remarkable:

1. Because it is not made out of passion, faction, or any private discontent; but by a holy man of God, as he was guided by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, it is a true and most just complaint.
2. It is not spoken of the heathens, who knew not Christ (for it is no wonder for them, not knowing Christ, to not seek the things of Christ), nor of apostate Christians who had totally forsaken Christ. As Calvin and Estius observe, it is spoken of brethren and fellow laborers, of such Christians who were not only baptized into the name of Christ but also professed a great deal of outward love for Christ and His cause. Yet it is said even of those that they sought their own and not the things of Jesus Christ. Therefore, it is not only a true and just but also a great, most sad, and heavy charge.
3. It is not drawn up by way of prediction regarding what should happen in the last and worst times of the world. Instead, it is a declaration of what was practiced in the Apostles' days when the Church of Christ was in its infancy, flourishing in all its beauty and glory, while the blood of Christ was still warm, and Christians were united in love and unity through this warm blood. It was the golden age of the Church, even in the Apostles' days when "all men sought their own, and not the things of Jesus Christ." Had these words been a prophecy of our times, which are considered the last and worst times, the iron age of the Church when it has splintered into numerous factions, it would have been less surprising. However, to charge this behavior upon the early Apostolic times, when Christianity was in its infancy, and claim that all men sought their own interests

instead of the things of Christ, makes this complaint not only very true and grave but also very unusual and astonishing.

4. The nature of the charge itself is more severe than any other in all of Saint Paul's Epistles. If I am not mistaken, I can rightly call it the most serious indictment ever drawn up against the pure, primitive Apostolic age. To better understand it, we must consider:

- The gravity of the offense.
- The number of individuals committing the offense.

1. The offense is both affirmative and negative: Affirmatively, "All men seek their own." They seek their own honour and advancement, not the honour of Christ but their own; their own personal gain and advantage, not the benefit of religion but their own; their own pleasures and recreations, not the advancement of the Gospel but their own ease; their own safety and security, not the safety of the Gospel but their own safety; their own desires, lusts, and worldly contentments. They do not aim to please Christ and do His will but to fulfill their own desires and please themselves. In the language of our times, it is their own private, worldly, and self-interest.

Quest: But why are these things called their own?

Ans: Not because they are so properly, for there is nothing truly ours but our sins. Our health, wealth, riches, and honours are not ours but God's (Haggai 2:8, "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine," etc.; Hosea 2:9, "My wood and my flax," etc.). We are but stewards of these things, stewards at the will and pleasure of the Lord. That is properly called our own, which we may keep as long as we please and do with it what we please. But we cannot do so with our health,

riches, and honours, etc. For riches have wings and fly away from us whether we will or not, and so have honours and health. Therefore, they cannot be said to be our own properly, and we may not use them as we please, but only as God has prescribed. Therefore, they are called another man's and not our own (Luke 16:12). We ourselves are not our own, much less are these bodily comforts our own. But they are here so called because people have a civil title to them, and in the opinion of the world, they are considered their own.

This is the positive and affirmative part of the offence, and it is of a high nature. For a Christian who believes in the immortality of his soul to seek his own bodily promotion and interest while neglecting the profit and comfort of his eternal soul, is a sin of the superlative degree.

And it will appear even greater if we consider:

2. The negative branch of the offence, "And not the things of Jesus Christ." The things of Jesus Christ are the things of the Church of Christ, which are therefore called the things of Christ for three reasons:
3. Because Christ is the Husband of the Church, and the things of the wife are the things of her husband.
4. Because Christ has purchased them for us by His Death and Passion.
5. Because of the great love that Christ has for His Church, which is so great that the Church's interest is His interest, and her injuries are His injuries (Acts 9:4). They that neglect the things of the Church, neglect the things of Christ.

Q: But what are the things of Jesus Christ?

A: In general, they are nothing else but the preservation and propagation of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, the building up of the Church of Christ in truth, purity, and unity.

But more specifically, the things of Christ include:

1. The pure worship of Jesus Christ, the preaching of the Word, and the administration of the Sacraments in Christ's way.
2. The precious truths of the Gospel.
3. The government of the Church according to the pattern of Scripture.
4. The day of Christ.
5. The godly ambassadors of Christ.
6. The reformation of the Church when it is corrupted in doctrine, worship, and discipline.

Now, the charge is that Christians in the primitive times, both ministers and others, sought their own interests and not the interests of Jesus Christ. They aimed to build their own houses instead of the houses of God and to monopolise a kingdom for themselves rather than propagating Christ's Kingdom.

Q: Did these Primitive Christians not seek the things of Christ at all?

A: This word "not" is not to be taken in an absolute sense, but, as Calvin said, comparatively. We should not assume that church officers and church members completely abandoned all care for Christ and the Churches of Christ. Instead, the meaning is that they did not sincerely, zealously, and primarily seek the things of Christ. They placed them in the least important position and in the last place. They pretended to seek the things of Christ but, in reality,

sought their own interests under the pretext of seeking the things of Christ. Therefore, they are said not to seek them at all.

The charge will become even more significant when we consider:

2. The number of people who committed the offence. The text states, "All men."

Q: Was there no man in the Apostles' days that sought the good of the Church of Christ? A: The word "All" is not to be taken collectively but distributively. It does not mean everyone of all kinds but people of all kinds. It does not refer to all men in the strictest sense but to many, as it is used in 1 Corinthians 10:23, or to most men, as in 2 Timothy 4:16, "All men forsake me," meaning most men. Thus, as Calvin said, "Quod omnes dicit, non urgenda est particula universalis, ne nullam exceptionem admittas, erant enim alii quoque qualis Epaphroditus, sed pauci: Verum omnibus tribuit quod passim erat vulgare."

The full meaning of the text is this: Even in the Apostles' days, in that golden age when all virtues flourished, there were many, indeed very many, church members and church officers who outwardly professed great love for Christ and His Church. Nevertheless, they sought their own ease, peace, honour, and profit more than the preservation and propagation of the Kingdom of Christ. They prioritised their own private gain and interests over and above the interests of Jesus Christ.

When we interpret the words in this manner, they offer a perfect representation of the times in which we now live. I can hardly see a person in a position of power without seeing it written on their forehead in bold letters: "This person seeks himself and not the things of Jesus Christ." If I had a window to peer into the hearts of all

those present here, I fear I would find many who are self-seekers but few who seek Christ, so this text may aptly be called "England's looking glass," where we can behold:

1. The great sin of England, which I can truly say is the sin that is the parent of all other sins, the source of all sin, and that is seeking our own things rather than the things of Jesus Christ.
2. The primary cause of all the miseries and calamities that have befallen this nation, the origin and root of all our unhappiness, because everyone seeks themselves and no one seeks the things of Christ.
3. The sole way and remedy to free ourselves from all our miseries and afflictions, which is by acting in direct opposition to the text, by seeking the things of Jesus Christ before our own things and more than our own things, and by doing so earnestly, completely, zealously, and sincerely. This is the only remedy to heal England's wounds, the only mercy that can preserve England. For these three purposes, I have chosen this text. The doctrine I shall expound is:

Doctrine: Among the multitude of Christians who profess love for Christ and His Church, there are many self-seekers but few Christ-seekers. Or, stated differently:

It is an ancient, widespread, grievous, and concealed iniquity for a Christian professing love for Christ to be a self-seeker rather than a Christ-seeker.

1. It is an old and ancient sin, dating back 1,600 years.

2. It is a common and pervasive sin, affecting people of all kinds, including ministers, magistrates, masters, and parents. It is an epidemic disease.
3. It is a serious and grievous sin, one that destroys souls and undermines the Church and the state.
4. It is a hidden and concealed sin, one that most are guilty of, yet few will admit their guilt. There is no sin with more fig leaves, excuses, and cloaks to conceal it.

To better uncover and expose this great transgression, I shall briefly address these four questions:

Question 1: Is all self-seeking in direct opposition to seeking Christ? Can a person be a Christ-seeker and still a self-seeker?

Answer: In response to this, you must understand that it is not simply and absolutely unlawful for a person to seek themselves, just as it is not wrong to love oneself. Religion does not eliminate natural affections but rather regulates and sanctifies them. As Aquinas said, "Grace does not extinguish but orders affections. It does not remove but elevates nature." Religion does not uproot but rather cultivates the garden of human nature. Just as musicians, when their instruments are out of tune, do not break them but tune them, religion does not abolish self-seeking but tunes and directs it in the right way.

Therefore, you will find in Scripture many arguments drawn from self-love and self-seeking to persuade us to holiness and dissuade us from sin. The Scripture permits us to love ourselves and seek ourselves, as long as it is done in the right manner. Moses did not sin by having an eye on the recompense of reward. Neither did the

martyrs, who could not accept deliverance to obtain a better resurrection (Heb. 11:35) or those who joyfully endured the spoiling of their goods, knowing they had a better and enduring substance in Heaven (Heb. 10:34). It is even said of Christ Himself that, "For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross and despised the shame" (Heb. 12:2). There is a significant difference between mercenary love, which serves God solely for reward, and the love of the reward itself. Mercenary love is sinful, but making the hope of reward one motive for service is not only lawful but necessary. It is our duty to use all of God's motives, just as we use all of God's ordinances. Just as it is sinful for anyone to claim they have no need for Gospel ordinances, it is also wrong to claim they have no need for Gospel motives, among which, the hope of reward is one of the chiefest.

Know, therefore, that there are three distinct forms of self-seeking:

1. There exists a lawful and permissible form of self-seeking.
2. Beyond this, there is not only a lawful but a heavenly and blessed form of self-seeking.
3. Lastly, there is a sinful, cursed, and diabolical self-seeking.
 - To elaborate further on the first, lawful self-seeking occurs when a Christian seeks their own private gain and honour as a secondary and lesser priority, placing the things of Christ foremost. It happens when a Christian seeks their own interests, but does so in a way that is subordinate to the pursuit of the things of Christ. In essence, lawful self-seeking involves seeking one's own interests in a proper order and proportion, such that

it does not hinder but rather aids in the pursuit of the things of Christ.

- Moving beyond this, there is not just a lawful form but also a most divine, angelic, heavenly, and blessed form of self-seeking. Here, I shall present a paradox rooted in Scripture: No one can genuinely be considered a seeker of themselves unless they are actively seeking the things of Christ. The more one seeks the things of Christ, the more they are truly seeking themselves. Conversely, he who neglects the things of Christ is not seeking himself but is, in fact, leading himself towards destruction. Therefore, a seeker of Christ and a true seeker of self are interchangeable terms.

Let me explain this heavenly and blessed form of self-seeking, for it is of great importance to understand it. The more we grasp the concept of divine self-seeking, the more we will despise and reject sinful self-seeking. Allow me to present my thoughts on this matter in the following propositions. They are not separate headings, but rather various aspects of a divine and elevated form of self-seeking, many of which converge towards the same goal:

A person who prioritises the well-being of their soul over their body seeks themselves in a divine manner. The human body is the lesser part of a person, often referred to as the shell or casing. The soul is the true essence of a person, and he who strives to adorn his soul with grace, becoming a reflection of Christ and a genuine member of His body, is truly seeking himself. Conversely, one who seeks the good of their body at the expense of their soul does not seek themselves, but brings ruin upon themselves. The happiness of the body is contingent upon the happiness of the soul. If the soul descends to hell after death, the body will follow at the great resurrection. Therefore, those who discipline their bodies, making

them obedient servants to their souls, enduring hardships as good soldiers of Christ, and exerting their bodies in God's service, truly practice heavenly and blessed self-seeking.

Someone who seeks their eternal good more than their temporal good, aiming for everlasting happiness, genuinely seeks themselves in a divine manner. Pursuing happiness for a few years in this earthly life, while neglecting eternal happiness in the hereafter, is futile. What profit is there in gaining temporary comfort and pleasure in this life if it leads to eternal misery in hell? A person who lives for the pleasures and comforts of this world but fails to prepare for happiness in the afterlife ultimately despises themselves for all eternity. This individual stores up treasures on earth but none in heaven, considering themselves rich in this fleeting world but impoverished in the eternal realm. Thus, those who strive to live holy lives now, with a view to eternal happiness, practice divine self-seeking.

He who denies his sinful self most earnestly seeks himself. By hating the corruption brought about by Adam's fall and seeking the complete eradication of the old Adam within, one truly loves themselves. This is divine self-seeking – to mortify one's sins so that they do not destroy the soul. Just as Zipporah saved her husband's life by circumcising their child, the way to save one's soul is to circumcise and cut away all haughty excess. The more one hates their profitable and pleasurable sins, the more they love themselves. As a person with dropsy benefits from denying themselves drink, as it curbs the disease, so too, those who deny their corrupt selves enhance their self-love. The more one denies their corrupt self, the more they eliminate spiritual ailments, weaken the devil's influence within, and diminish the flesh's opposition to the spirit. He who loves his sins hates his own soul, as Proverbs 8:36 and Galatians 6:8

attest. Sowing sin reaps hell, and providing for the flesh stokes the fires of hell. Nourishing the old Adam within nurtures the soul's greatest enemy, as it sullies holy acts, inclines towards evil, and pollutes the soul's purity. Such an individual delights in that which was Paul's greatest misery, as he cried, "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Romans 7:24). Therefore, I can truthfully declare that the greatest self-denier is the greatest self-seeker.

The person who seeks to serve God most effectively in their generation and seeks their own glory by pursuing God's glory is a divine self-seeker. This is because the perfection of everything lies in achieving its intended purpose. Just as meat's perfection is in being consumed, hoarding it leads to its destruction. God created humanity to serve Him, glorify Him in this world, and enjoy Him in the hereafter. Therefore, the more we serve God, the more we seek His glory, attain the purpose of our creation, and consequently, become happier. Those who love themselves solely for their own ends destroy themselves because God created us to serve Him, not ourselves. When all the currents of self-love flow into the vast ocean of God's love, this is divine self-love. It would be ideal if people worked to love and seek themselves in this way, viewing themselves as servants and instruments of God and His glory. They should ask, "Lord, how can I advance myself by exalting Your name? How can I glorify myself by glorifying You? How can I seek myself by pursuing Your praise and perfecting myself by dedicating my understanding, memory, will, heart, affections, and actions to You and Your glory?"

The more a person serves God out of pure love without any thought of self, the more they seek themselves. It is a certain truth that the less we seek ourselves and our own interests in holy duties, the more we seek God and His glory. And the more we seek God and His glory,

the greater our reward will be. Those who do not seek rewards for their deeds will receive even greater rewards. Thus, the Papists, who teach that good works can merit heaven (assuming their doctrine is true), lose all the rewards of their good works. One who serves God to merit salvation cannot actually merit salvation. The more one focuses on earning merit, the less merit they actually gain. Those who serve God for their own ends do not truly serve God but themselves. On the other hand, those who serve God for His sake will be rewarded by God. The less we consider ourselves in any duty, the greater our reward will be, and therefore, the more we seek ourselves.

A person who values the glory and honour of God above their own glory and honour is a divine self-seeker. This is because a person's happiness is found more in God than in themselves. Just as a member's happiness is found in unity with the body, so is a person's happiness in conjunction with God, their greatest good. Those who seek union with God most earnestly seek themselves. Just as the beam's safety is more in the sun than in itself and the stream's safety is more in the fountain than in itself, the safety, comfort, and happiness of every Christian are more in God than in themselves. Therefore, someone who values God's glory and honour more than their own is engaging in heavenly and blessed self-seeking.

A person who loves the public good more than their own private good, seeking the prosperity of Zion, Jerusalem, the Church, and the State more than their own, is a divine self-seeker. Oh, that this concept were embraced with faith! Just as a person in danger of having their head cut off willingly lifts their arm to be cut off to save their head, one does so out of self-love because their life is more in their head than their arm. Similarly, our safety is more tied to the public welfare than our private welfare. Therefore, those who

prioritise the public good over the private good are the truest self-seekers. This is exemplified in the actions of individuals like Old Eli, who mourned more for the loss of the Ark than for his two sons. Similarly, David preferred Jerusalem above his chief joy (Psalm 137:6). In a storm at sea, one who seeks to preserve the ship is ultimately seeking the preservation of their own cargo, for if the ship sinks, the cargo cannot be saved. The truth is that if the Church and true religion are destroyed, the life of a godly person loses its purpose. Titus Vespasian once said that when the soldiers destroyed the Temple of Jerusalem, they should kill the surviving priests because their work was finished. When religion is destroyed, what use is there for a godly person to live? Therefore, those who seek the good of the Church more than their own good are blessed self-seekers.

The person who would rather lose their spouse, children, estate, and even their life than sin against God is a divine self-seeker. This is because their happiness lies more in maintaining a good conscience than in preserving their estate or saving their life. The holy martyrs, who loved not their lives unto death, were the greatest self-seekers. It is a most blessed form of self-seeking to endure the fire of martyrdom to avoid the fires of Hell, to forfeit earthly possessions in exchange for eternal honours. Therefore, Christ's words in Matthew 16:25, "For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it," are true. Similarly, in Mark 10:29-30, those who leave houses and lands for Christ's sake will receive a hundredfold in return. The ancient martyrs exemplified this in Hebrews 10:34 and Hebrews 11:35. Those who lose all for Christ will find more than they have lost in Christ.

From all that I have mentioned concerning this blessed self-seeking, I draw these three conclusions:

1. No one is a true self-seeker if they are not a true Christ-seeker.
2. True religion and conscientious adherence to its principles are based on right reason. Therefore, no one can be considered a rational individual if they are not religious. The more religious a person is, the more they seek their own happiness and well-being. Conversely, the more irreligious someone is, the more they harm and destroy themselves.
3. If anyone wishes to love and seek themselves correctly, they must strive to seek the things of Jesus Christ. I hope to persuade you to engage in this blessed self-seeking – to seek your own gain and honour by seeking the honour of God and the well-being of the Church and State.

Now, moving on to the third point, aside from lawful and heavenly self-seeking, there exists a sinful, accursed, and diabolical self-seeking. This form of self-seeking is what the text condemns, as it is incompatible with true Christ-seeking and is the root cause of all the miseries that have befallen our nation. It is a great destroyer of the Church, the State, and the soul. This brings us to the second question.

Question 2: What is that self-seeking which is inconsistent with Christ-seeking?

Answer: It is a spiritual monster with six heads:

1. When a Christian seeks his own things separately from the things of Christ. When he cares only about his own well-being, safety, and interests, without regard for what happens to Jesus Christ and His cause. When he exalts himself and makes himself the central principle, rule, and end of all his actions, acting

according to his own desires and selfish motives. When a person worships themselves and does everything for their own carnal desires, serving their own interests in committees, the army, parliament, ministry, and cares not about the fate of religion and reformation. This is the first head of the monster. Such a self-seeker was Gallio the Deputy, who cared not about the fate of religion in Acts 18:17. He would have heard a matter if it concerned wrongdoing, but since it pertained to religion, he cared for none of those things. The people of Meroz were also such self-seekers, and the Israelites were commanded to curse them in Judges 5:23.

2. When a Christian seeks his own things and the things of Christ but prioritizes his own interests before Christ's. When he first seeks his own things and then the things of Christ. This was the situation the Prophet Haggai lamented in Haggai 1:2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11. The people believed it was not the right time to build God's house but considered it the right time to build their own houses. As a result, the heavens above them were like brass, and the earth withheld its fruit.
3. When a man seeks his own things and the things of Christ but values and loves his own interests more than Christ's. When he values his own profit, advancement, praise, and glory more than the profit, praise, and honor of Christ and His gospel. Such were the Gadarenes, who valued their swine more than Christ. Also, the merchants and farmers in Matthew 21:3 made light of Christ's call and prioritized their farms and merchandise over Christ and His gospel. Demas, who abandoned Paul for the present world, and the Pharisees who loved the praise of men more than the praise of God in John 12:43, were also such self-seekers.

4. When a Christian seeks his own things while pretending to seek the things of Christ, yet his true intention is to seek himself under the guise of seeking Christ's things. Such was the case with Jehu, who pretended to have great zeal for the Lord of Hosts but was driven by a desire to secure the kingdom for himself. Balaam also pretended not to go beyond God's command for any amount of gold and silver, but in reality, he loved the wages of iniquity. Demetrius the Silversmith pretended zeal for the goddess Diana, causing an uproar against Paul to defend her. Still, his main motive was the profit he gained from making shrines for Diana, making his pretense a means to serve himself.
5. When a man seeks his own things in competition with and opposition to the things of Christ. When the situation comes to a point where he must choose between parting with his estate, liberty, and life or parting with Christ and a good conscience, and he chooses to forsake Christ and a good conscience to preserve his worldly possessions, this is wicked self-seeking. The young man in the Gospel who abandoned Christ rather than parting with his great possessions was such a self-seeker. Spyra, who placed his wife, children, liberty, estate, and life on one side of the balance, and God, Christ, the Gospel, and a good conscience on the other, forsook the latter to preserve the former, falls into this category.
6. The last head of this monster is when a Christian seeks the well-being of his body to the detriment of his soul. When he devotes all his time, energy, and effort to provide for his perishable body while neglecting to care for his eternal soul. When he accumulates all his treasures on earth but lays up nothing in heaven. When he anxiously ensures a comfortable life in this

world but neglects to secure a happy life in the next world, this is sinful, accursed, and diabolical self-seeking.

This addresses the second question.

The third question is: How is it possible that there are so many men who profess to be Christians and, at least in words, claim to love Christ and His cause, yet still seek their own interests before and more than the interests of Christ?

Answer: This soul-destroying and church-destroying self-seeking arises from six sinful and cursed roots:

1. From a lack of true and genuine love for Jesus Christ and His cause. Love is an incredibly powerful emotion, the masterwheel that carries the entire soul with it. As Augustine said, "Amor meus pondus meum," which means, "My love is my weight; wherever I am carried, I am carried by it." Just as the prime mover in the heavens carries all the other spheres with it, love carries the whole person along. Love is as strong as death, and many waters cannot quench it, nor can floods drown it (Song of Solomon 8:6, 7). If we truly loved the Lord Jesus and His Gospel, we would willingly part with liberty, estate, life, and all our possessions rather than lose the things of Christ, just as the blessed martyrs did. However, because there are few who genuinely love Jesus Christ, most people seek their own interests rather than the interests of Christ.
2. This self-seeking also arises from the cursed self-love inherent in all people by nature. In 2 Timothy 3:2, 3, 4, 5, self-love is prominently placed as the cause and root of various other sins listed there. Self-love is like a great tree, and eighteen sins are like eighteen branches sprouting from this root. Since people are

lovers of themselves, they become covetous, proud, unthankful, unholy, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God, and so on. Sinful self-seeking stems from this self-love, just as Christ-seeking stems from the love of Christ.

3. It also arises from the immoderate and excessive love of worldly things that is present in all people by nature. By nature, we love the created things more than the Creator, pleasures more than God, and the praise of men more than the praise of God. By nature, we love our own gain, safety, and comfort more than the things of Christ. Therefore, we seek our own interests rather than the things of Christ.

4. Another root of this sinful self-seeking is the hypocrisy, insincerity, and deceitfulness of the heart that exists in all people by nature. This is why people may pretend to seek Jesus Christ but truly intend to pursue their own private interests because their hearts are hypocritical and deceitful. For example, the Pharisees, who were hypocrites, made long prayers under the pretense of piety but had the intent to exploit widows' houses (Matthew 23:14). Herod pretended to worship Christ when his real intention was to harm Him (Matthew 2:8). Jezebel proclaimed a fast and feigned religiosity but only intended to have Naboth killed and seize his vineyard. Absalom covered his rebellion with a veneer of religion (2 Samuel 15:7). Two things are present in all people by nature:

- To make a show of religion.
- To conceal all forms of wickedness beneath the guise of religion; Ungodliness is so detestable that if it were to appear in its true colors, everyone would abhor it. Therefore, just as the Devil never reveals his true form but always appears in some

attractive guise, sometimes donning Samuel's cloak or transforming into an angel of light, so sin and iniquity always present themselves as godliness. The Apostle tells us in 2 Timothy 3:5 that in the last days, there will be people who are lovers of themselves, treacherous, headstrong, arrogant, lacking natural affection, etc., having a form of godliness. These last words should be understood to relate to all the preceding sins. They will be covenant-breakers, having a form of godliness; covetous, false accusers, blasphemers, and self-lovers, having a form of godliness. Through their hypocrisy, they will conceal all their sins under the mask of a form of godliness.

- This sinful self-seeking arises from the spiritual ignorance and blindness inherent in all people by nature. No wicked person truly understands what it means to seek themselves. They think that seeking to gratify their corrupt selves constitutes seeking themselves. They believe that if they seek the good of their bodies while neglecting their souls, they are seeking themselves. They assume that seeking their own comfort, gain, safety, and advancement without considering the things of Christ constitutes seeking themselves. This is how the rich Fool in Luke 12, who built larger barns and said, "Soul, take your ease," reasoned; he believed that he was pursuing his own happiness in doing so. Similarly, the rich Glutton, who clothed himself in purple and dined sumptuously every day, had a similar mindset. However, if a wicked person genuinely understood that this self-seeking is self-hating and self-destroying, they would not sinfully seek themselves. Therefore, this sinful self-seeking stems from the spiritual ignorance and blindness inherent in all people by nature.
- Lastly, it arises from the spiritual self-deceit and self-delusion that is present in all people by nature. Every person by nature is like Narcissus, in love with themselves, blinded to their own

cause, and prone to believe that they are seeking the things of Christ when they are not. They may also believe that they are not seeking their own interests in opposition to, competition with, or comparison to the things of Christ. Just as the philosopher who could not be convinced that snow was white or the mad Athenian who believed that all the ships arriving in Athens were his own. Similarly, there are many Christians who imagine that they are seeking the things of Christ, even when it is evident to others that they are not. This self-deceit leads them into Hell. Thus, you can see the cursed roots from which this sinful self-seeking arises.

The fourth and final question is: wherein does the grievousness and harmfulness of this sinful self-seeking consist? Answer: It is a sin of the highest magnitude. Although it is an inward and invisible sin, and therefore not as scandalous in the eyes of people as some other sins, it is very odious and abominable in the sight of God. Though it may be less notorious, it is of greater guilt. For the following reasons:

1. It is a sin against the explicit words of Scripture. The Apostle says in 1 Corinthians 10:24, "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth." The sinful self-seeker contradicts this verse; they seek their own wealth and not the wealth of others.
2. It is a sin against the dictates of natural reason. Nature itself teaches us that no one is born for themselves but for the good of the community in which they live. Even the pagans abhor a self-seeker.
3. It is a sin against the example that Christ has set for us. He came into the world not to do His own will but the will of Him who sent Him. He did not seek His own pleasure. He made Himself of no reputation, humbled Himself, and became obedient even

to death on the Cross. He denied Himself to the extent of being made sin for us, even though He knew no sin, so that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. It is a well-established maxim that he who does not follow the example of Christ's life will not benefit from the merits of His death. Christ is a merit to only those to whom He is an example.

4. It is a sin against the royal law of charity. Charity is a noble grace, the queen of all graces, and as necessary as it is excellent. Even if we give away all our possessions to feed the poor or offer our bodies to be burned, if we lack charity, it profits us nothing. However, a self-seeker is entirely devoid of charity.
5. They have no love for Jesus Christ and His interests, and there are two curses pronounced against those who do not love the Lord Jesus (1 Corinthians 16:22).
6. They have no love for their neighbors, but only love them for their own gain. It is a love of desire or friendship, not genuine love; it is more like a business transaction.
7. They have no love for the Church or the State. All their love is directed towards themselves. They are entirely composed of self-love and creature love, which is a composition detested by God.
8. It is a sin that renders all our holy duties detestable in the sight of God. Even if our actions are extremely holy, if we undertake them for political purposes or with a focus on ourselves, the Lord abhors us and everything we do. This is evident in the Pharisees, who performed acts of charity, prayers, and fasting to be seen by others, and as a result, God detested all their actions. Self-centered motives defile and corrupt all holy actions.

9. It is a sin of appalling hypocrisy. It involves using religion as a ladder to climb to one's ambitions and covetous interests, and then discarding the ladder. It is like setting up God as an accomplice to our ambitious and covetous desires, which is a form of hypocrisy that should be abhorred. This is using God to advance ourselves, which is a significant transgression.
10. It is a form of idolatry at its highest level; it is self-worship. It involves making ourselves and our own interests the root, rule, and purpose of all our undertakings, effectively turning ourselves into idols and usurping God's throne. It is idolatry in violation of the first commandment, which is more significant than idolatry in violation of the second commandment, as the heart is superior to the knee.
11. It is a sin that springs from six cursed roots (as previously explained) and is the root of many other sinful fruits. It is the plague of all vices, a sin that devours the Church and undermines the State, a sin that is Church-destroying and State-destroying. To provide a few examples.

What is the reason that the government of the Church, which began so well, is now obstructed and almost entirely broken down? Is it not because all people seek their own interests and not the things of Christ?

Why is it that the house of God lies in ruins while everyone is busy building their own houses?

Why do people complain about taxes and lack of trade, but no one complains that the House of God is neglected, pure ordinances are despised, and godly ministers are undervalued? Is it not because all people seek their own interests and not the things of Jesus Christ?

What is the reason that the truths of Christ are trampled underfoot, and people are allowed to deny the divinity of Christ and the authority of the Scriptures, while no one speaks out against it? But if someone speaks against human laws, they are severely punished. Is this not because all people seek their own interests and not the things of Jesus Christ?

Why do so few gentlemen, citizens, and ministers stand up for the things of Christ? Why do many remain silent and allow religion to be nearly lost, yet dare not speak up for it? Why are our religious lectures poorly attended in most places? Why do many think nothing is too much to give to their pleasures but consider anything too much for their minister? Why do masters closely supervise their servants' work on weekdays but allow them to do as they please on Sundays? Is it not because all people seek their own interests and not the things of Jesus Christ?

What is the reason that the affairs of the Church progress so slowly, like Egyptian chariots with their wheels removed? Why is there so much oppression and injustice in our courts? Why is there so much deceit and dishonesty in our business dealings with each other? In short, what is the cause of all our troubles, both in the Church and the State? Is it not because all people seek their own interests and not the things of Jesus Christ? Thus, you have seen the magnitude and harmfulness of this sinful self-seeking. Now, let's move on to the application.

If it is true that among the multitude of Christians who profess love for Christ and His cause, there are many, even very many, who seek their own interests rather than the things of Christ, then let us (I beseech you) consider the sinfulness and wretchedness of the times in which we live. If the Apostle could complain about his times,

which were the first and best times, the golden age, the primitive, apostolic, virgin Church when the saints of God met together with one accord, how much more can we complain about our times, which are the last and worst, the iron age, where the Church of Christ is woefully divided and has greatly apostatized? How justly (I say) can we raise this lamentation against our times: "All people seek their own interests, not the things of Jesus Christ."

However, I dare not say "all people collectively." I believe there are a few individuals even in England who have not defiled their garments and have not bowed their knees to Baal. There are some magistrates, gentlemen, ministers, and citizens who remain faithful and seek the things of Jesus Christ more than their own interests, even at the cost of their own welfare. There are some Ezras, Nehemiahs, and Daniels who are deeply concerned about the desolations of the Church and are more troubled about the Ark of God than their own private affairs. But these are few in comparison. It is certain that most people of all ranks are guilty of this sinful self-seeking, including most magistrates, gentlemen, ministers, and citizens. Therefore, let us examine ourselves to see if we are among this multitude. To motivate you to do so,

1. This sin is both a New and an Old Testament sin. It prevailed not only in Paul's time but also in the time of Deborah and Barak. They tell us that because of the divisions of Reuben, there were great searchings of heart, as he remained among the sheepfolds and did not care about the welfare of the Church of God (Judges 5:15-16).
2. It is a common and ordinary sin, and few are free from it.
3. It is a great and crying abomination, as you have heard.

4. It is a great and hidden iniquity, an inward, invisible, and spiritual sin that consumes England like a moth, not like a lion. It is threatened in Hosea 5:12, 14, where God compares Himself to both a moth and a lion. While murder, adultery, sodomy, injustice, etc., may devour England like a lion, self-love and self-seeking destroy it like a moth secretly but certainly. Let us, therefore, be very serious in the work of self-examination.

There are three categories of people whom I accuse of being guilty of this sinful and cursed self-seeking.

1. Those who seek their own interests and not at all the things of Christ.
2. Those who seek their own interests before and more than the things of Christ.
3. Those who pretend to seek the things of Christ but actually seek their own interests under the guise of seeking the things of Christ.
4. Those who seek their own credit, profit, preferment, ease, and safety and not at all the things of Christ. It is reported of Agrippina, the mother of Nero, that when she was told her son would put her to death if he became Emperor, she replied, "Let me perish as long as he becomes Emperor." There are many like her who, in their hearts, say, "Let religion perish as long as I gain wealth and rise to prominence in the world. It doesn't matter what happens to Religion and Reformation."

Quest. Are there any Christians of this mind?

Answ. There are many who are called Christians in name only and have the name of Christians, but they carry this name like Uriah carried his letters to Joab, not for salvation but for damnation. You shall know them by this characteristic.

Let men like these continue their trade as usual, enjoy outward prosperity, and be exempt from taxes, and they will consider themselves sufficiently happy. It makes no difference to them whether all religions are tolerated or none at all. These men say, "Let God take care of religion; all our concern is for our material wealth." They are the ones who make money their god, who are focused on earthly matters, and their end is damnation. I can say of them what Christ said of Judas: "Better they had never been born."

2. Such as seek their own things before and more than the things of Christ, who pursue their own interests more sincerely, industriously, and vigorously than the cause of religion. This is how the Gadarenes acted, as you have heard, and this is how most Christians behave.

Quest. How can I determine whether I prioritize my own material interests over the interests of Christ and the Gospel in my judgment, affections, or conduct?

Answ. 1. If the pursuit of your own material interests occupies most of your time, strength, and energy, if you make them your primary focus and top priority, considering them the first and most necessary things, while treating the things of Christ as secondary or trivial, then it's a sign that you overvalue and excessively desire your own interests while undervaluing and disregarding the things of Christ.

2. If you grieve more over your personal misfortunes than over the desolation of the Church, it's a sign that you prioritize your own

concerns more than the things of Christ. This frame of spirit is entirely contrary to true saintliness. Ezra, Nehemiah, David, Daniel, and Jeremiah were more deeply affected by the Church's miseries than their own.

3. If the pursuit of your own interests weakens your resolve for Christ and His cause, causing you to come to Christ secretly, as Nicodemus did, and the more worldly possessions you have, the less willing you are to stand up for Christ and His Gospel, even becoming more fearful; if preserving your own interests leads you to betray the cause of Christ through sinful silence or base cowardice, then it's a sign that you prioritize your own interests over Christ's.
4. If seeking your own interests leads you to seek excuses and vain pretexts to avoid standing up for Christ, then it's a sign, etc. I read in Luke 14:18, when the servant was sent to invite guests to the great Gospel feast, they all began to make excuses with one consent, etc. The times we live in are filled with sin and danger; the truths and ministry of Christ are trampled upon, and religion and reformation are neglected. God calls upon you through us, His messengers, to stand up for His truths, His Gospel ministry, and Gospel ordinances. I can imagine hearing the nobleman say, "I have a great estate to lose; please excuse me." I hear the wealthy citizen say, "I will be ruined in my trade; please excuse me." I hear the indulgent epicure say, "I have married a wife; please excuse me." Consider this as a definite rule: If the pursuit of these worldly things leads you to make excuses, you seek them sinfully. If you examine the aforementioned text, you will find that the excuses made there were

1. Lying and false; they claim they cannot come, whereas the truth is they would not come. "Non posse" is pretended, but "nolle" is the cause.
2. Poor and frivolous; what is a farm compared to Heaven? Marrying a wife compared to being married to Jesus Christ?
3. Vain and unprofitable; notwithstanding the excuses they made, it is said in verse 24 that none of these men who were invited shall taste of my supper.
4. Unreasonable and unconscionable; they made those things snares and impediments to hinder them from coming to Christ, which could have been motives and encouragements to bring them to Christ.
5. Lastly, if when your own interests and the things of Christ come into conflict, and you must choose to part with one or the other, if you choose, as Spira did and as the young man in the Gospel did, to part with Christ and His Gospel rather than with your profit and advancement, this is a clear sign that you prioritize your own interests before and more than the things of Christ. I read of Tiberius, Emperor of Rome, that he sent to the Senate to include Christ among their gods, but they refused because receiving Him would require them to reject their other gods. They chose to renounce Jesus Christ rather than to receive Him and part with their other false deities. If you renounce and reject the Lord Christ and His Truths because you don't want to lose your worldly pleasures, you are a sinful self-seeker of the highest order.

On the contrary, if you pursue the things of Christ as your top priority, if you grieve more for the desolation of the Church than for

personal miseries, if having more wealth makes you more courageous for God and glad that you have an estate to lose for Christ's cause, if seeking your own interests does not lead you to make lying, vain, frivolous, and unconscionable excuses, if your heart resembles that of Hormisdas, a nobleman of Persia, who was stripped of all his honors because he wouldn't deny his religion but later restored and pressured again to deny Christ and His truths, yet he tore his purple robe and cast all his honors at the feet of the Emperor, saying, "If you think I will deny Christ for the sake of regaining my honors, take them all back." If this is the state of your heart, it's a certain sign that you value, love, and seek the things of Christ above and beyond your own interests.

3. The third group guilty of this sinful self-seeking are those who pretend to seek the things of Christ but, under the guise of pursuing Christ's cause, aim for their own interests. They present the preservation and propagation of religion as a facade to deceive others, as a blind to mislead the world. Their true intentions are far from promoting religion; they either seek their own gain, like Demetrius, or the acquisition of a kingdom, like Jehu, or the wages of iniquity, like Balaam. This sin of self-seeking is so repulsive to both God and humanity that it never appears in its true form but is always concealed beneath a cloak of righteousness, much like Samuel's mantle. No sin employs more fig leaves and religious pretenses to hide its true nature than this one. Consequently, the Pope of Rome has secured his triple crown through such means. Revelation 13:11 states that Antichrist would have two horns like a Lamb but would act like a Dragon, signifying that Antichrist would carry out his villainies under the guise of religion, deceiving the world in the process. Therefore, Antichristianism is referred to as a "mystery of iniquity," signifying that it involves iniquity concealed behind

the facade of godliness. The Pope has committed murders and treasons under the pretence of defending the Catholic Religion, claiming to be Peter's successor and holder of Peter's keys and chair. Witness the "holy league" in France and the Gunpowder Plot in our own history, both undertaken under the guise of religion in the name of defending the Catholic cause.

What I affirm about Papists and Jesuits, the same can be said about all the errors and heresies that have arisen in the Christian world. The Apostle tells us that the first proponents of heresies and schisms were great self-seekers, individuals who were greedy for material gain, not servants of the Lord Jesus, but slaves to their own desires. They made merchandise of people's souls, making their gain their godliness rather than godliness their gain. Although they were such, they did not openly appear as such; they presented themselves as very holy and self-denying. Christ referred to them as "wolves in sheep's clothing," outwardly resembling innocent sheep while inwardly being ravenous wolves. They sweetened the poison of their doctrines with good words and fair speeches to deceive the hearts of the naive (Romans 16:18). One such example was Pelagius, one of the greatest adversaries of the Doctrine of Grace in the history of the Church. He feigned godliness to such an extent that when Jerome initially wrote against his heresies, he had to conceal his name for fear that the people, who held him in such high regard, would reject his book.

Let me add that this is a sin with which not only Papists, Jesuits, schismatics, and heretics are tainted but also most Christians in the world. It is a very true statement that "Pauci amant Iesum propter Iesum" - few, very few, love Christ for Christ's sake. Most people follow Christ for worldly gains and use Christ to serve their own ends and interests. When a man is about to marry a wife, he may

outwardly profess that it is religion and godliness that he desires above all else. However, if you could peer into his heart, you would discover that money is his primary aim. Among all kinds of people, the great statesmen and shrewd politicians are most blatantly guilty of this sin. They often bring religion onto the stage merely to facilitate their political designs. There is a wicked maxim in Machiavelli's teachings that kings and princes should maintain the appearance of religion but not be overly concerned with its substance, as the substance would be a burden, whereas the appearance would be useful for advancing their own ends and designs. This counsel is followed by many kingdoms and commonwealths today. There was scarcely ever a state or church reformer who reformed religion for the sake of religion itself; rather, it was typically done for personal ends, whether to seek revenge against enemies, gain church revenues, or gather followers for personal power. Let me provide a few examples:

In the time of Henry VIII, the Pope's supremacy was abolished in England. But what motivated the king to do this? Was it out of love for true religion, or was it primarily to seek revenge against the Pope, who had refused to grant his divorce from his first wife?

I have read about Maximilian, the Emperor of Germany, who lived during Luther's time and professed great zeal for reformation, particularly in the removal of golden images. However, it is said that his motivation was not so much a hatred for the images as it was a love for the gold they contained.

In the history of the civil wars in France, there were instances where one faction called upon the Protestants for assistance, not out of a genuine love for religion, but in order to gain support.

The same principles apply to armies. I read about Goliath's sword hidden in a cloth behind the ephod. The sword never appears to the world with a bloody appearance but is always wrapped in a linen ephod, pretending to reform abuses in the church and state. It is worth noting that this sword originally belonged to Goliath, who defied the people of Israel and was a great enemy of religion.

In summary, throughout the history of the Church, especially during times of civil war and reformation, thousands of individuals have publicly professed a sincere desire to spread the Gospel, advance the Kingdom of Christ, and promote the pure ordinances of Christ. However, their true inward motivation has often been personal gain and advancement.

Question: How can I determine whether I am merely pretending to pursue the things of Jesus Christ or if I am using religion to serve my own interests, akin to Demetrius the Silversmith, who cared more about his gain than his goddess? Answer: To assess this truthfully, we must scrutinize our souls. Here are some guidelines to assist you:

1. If you are as zealous for the advancement of religion and reformation when it does not benefit your interests as when it does, it is a clear sign that you genuinely seek the things of Christ. Consider the example of Moses during the rebellion of Korah and his followers. Although there was a convergence of interests, with the conspiracy being against God and Moses, Moses remained equally zealous for the glory of God in both situations. In contrast, if you act fervently only when there is potential gain in reformation but sluggishly and reluctantly when your interests are not at stake, it indicates that you are using religion for your own ends. Jehu, for instance, eradicated one form of idolatry but preserved another because abolishing it

would have been detrimental to his interests. This pattern can also be observed in many heads of households who vociferously denounce their servants for theft but overlook Sabbath desecration or profane oaths since it does not affect their private interests.

2. Pretenders to the things of Christ often perform service for the church or state half-heartedly, only as far as it benefits them. This is why many reformation efforts in the Christian world are incomplete or compromised, as they are moulded according to state interests rather than the Word of God. For instance, during Henry VIII's reign, he discarded the Pope's supremacy to facilitate his second marriage but retained significant elements of the Popish religion, resulting in the creation of the Six Articles, which led to the deaths of numerous godly individuals. Erasmus once remarked about Luther that he would have been a good man had he not been so preoccupied with monks' bellies and the Pope's triple crown. The Pope, too, was willing to endorse church reform only to the extent that it did not jeopardize his triple crown.
3. Pretenders to the things of Christ often discard their pretences once they achieve their objectives. They adopt a profession of religion to pursue their ambitious goals but cast it aside once they attain their aims. Just as angels assumed bodies solely for their missions and abandoned them afterward, individuals assume a religious façade for their ambitious designs, which they discard once their objectives are met. For instance, a fisherman may use a fishing net as a tablecloth to remind him of his humble origins. Still, once he becomes Pope, he orders his servants to put the net aside since he has caught what he has been fishing for all along.

4. Those who claim to seek the things of Christ under the guise of religion will act contrary to their protestations, declarations, vows, and covenants, even when they appear outwardly solemn and earnest in making them. Balaam serves as an example; he vehemently professed that he could not act against God's will even if he were given a house full of gold. Yet, at the same time, he accompanied the messengers sent by Balak. Similarly, there are many among us who, while solemnly covenanting with hands lifted to heaven to work towards eradicating error and heresy, secretly endorse and support the very things they vowed against.

5. Finally, those who feign pursuit of the things of Christ while pursuing their self-interest do not concern themselves with the means or individuals involved in achieving their ends. They are indifferent to whether the methods are lawful or unlawful, or whether the people involved are good or bad, as long as they can attain their ambitious goals. This behaviour is a sure sign of a blatant hypocrite. A person who genuinely strives to promote the glory and honour of Christ will never deviate from Christ's path to fulfil their desires. They understand that Christ will be more dishonoured by their sin than honoured by their efforts, no matter how ardent and sincere those efforts may be.

Let us, I beseech you, examine ourselves according to these several notes and marks to determine whether we are guilty of this sinful, cursed, and devilish self-seeking. Understand that if this sin dominates us, it implicates us in a fourfold murder: it makes us self-murderers, Church and State-murderers, and Christ-murderers. It subjects us to a double Gospel curse, for if any man does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be (as the Apostle says) Anathema

Maranatha. May the Lord grant us hearts earnestly to consider these matters.

The second use is an exhortation, which is twofold:

1. I implore all those present, whether Magistrates, Ministers, or private citizens, to guard against this sinful self-seeking, this six-headed monster. Beware of seeking our own gain and credit separately from the things of Christ, or placing them above or ahead of the things of Christ. Beware of seeking our own things under the pretence of seeking the things of Christ, or when they are in opposition to or competition with the things of Christ. Beware of pursuing the well-being of our sinful bodies to the neglect of our precious and immortal souls. Just as Christ warns against covetousness, I warn against this sin. Consider the immense gravity of this sin and its woeful and harmful consequences. This sin is the plague sore of both Church and State, the great caterpillar that devours all the greenery of the land. It has destroyed our Parliaments, our Ministry, our Gentry. It obstructs the glorious reformation so long anticipated and desired. This is not self-seeking; it is self-hating and self-destructive. Someone who seeks to satisfy their corrupt self is akin to a person who offers strong wine to a friend suffering from a high fever—not out of love, but to harm. Seeking to please one's sinful self is like trying to strengthen a disease, sustaining what God abhors, and nurturing what will destroy one's soul. Neglecting the welfare of one's soul while pursuing the well-being of the body results in the destruction of both body and soul. It's akin to a farmer gathering stubble during harvest and leaving the corn to be devoured by hogs, or a father caring for his children's physical needs while neglecting their instruction and education. In summary, someone who

prioritises their own comfort and safety, gain and reputation, pleasure and satisfaction, while neglecting and disregarding the things of Christ, is the ultimate self-hater and self-destroyer. For those who do not seek Christ's interest will never have any part in Christ.

2. I beseech you to strive for the divine, heavenly, and blessed self-seeking mentioned at the beginning of the sermon. Just as physicians, when they see excessive nosebleeding, divert the blood to another vein to stop the bleeding, I pray that God might use me today as His instrument to effect a most glorious and happy diversion. May I turn you all from being self-seekers to seekers of Christ! If only I could persuade you to seek the things of Jesus Christ before and more fervently than your own things! How joyful would London be if it could be said of it: "All your Magistrates, Ministers, and private citizens seek the things of Christ more vigorously and sincerely than their own things."

To encourage you in this, consider the following:

1. Reflect on what these things you immoderately and excessively seek after truly are:
 - They are not genuinely your own, as you've previously heard.
 - They are not worth possessing; they are vain, empty, devoid of substance, and soul-satisfaction. They are transient and perishable, like houses made of snow or wax. Moreover, they are vexing and tormenting, as experienced and expressed by one, as found in Ecclesiastes 2:2, 17, 26.
2. Consider the excellence of the things of Jesus Christ, which you neglect and underestimate. The truths of Christ, the ordinances,

the Day of worship, the Ministry, and the Government of Christ, the preservation, propagation, and reformation of religion—these are glorious and excellent in their very nature. They far surpass your own earthly pursuits, which you eagerly chase after. They are not even worthy to be mentioned on the same day as we speak of the things of Christ. I lack the time to fully describe the transcendent glory and excellence of Gospel matters and the vanity, emptiness, and insignificance of all our earthly enjoyments. I merely implore you to take note:

- Jesus Christ did not seek His own things; He left Heaven for us. Shouldn't we be willing to forsake Earth for Him?
- Consider how lightly you esteem the glorious things of the Gospel, trading them for poor trifles.
- If you do not seek after the things of Christ more than your own, you are in a cursed state. It would have been better if you had never been born.
- The things of Jesus Christ will prosper even if you do not seek their prosperity. Just as Mordecai said to Esther in another context, "Deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish." A time will come when the Lord's house will be established at the highest peak, above all the hills, and all nations will flock to it. The kingdoms of the world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ. The small stone cut without hands will shatter all opposing kingdoms and become a great mountain, filling the entire earth. Every nation and kingdom that refuses to serve the Lord Jesus will perish and be utterly devastated. For neglecting to establish this Kingdom of Christ, God has destroyed many nations and kingdoms, and He will do the same to us if we follow their examples. If we prioritise the construction of

our own houses over building God's house, He will raise up others to build His house, but He will destroy us and our houses.

3. Lastly, consider that the person who seeks himself most is the one who most diligently seeks the things of Christ. The greatest Christ-seeker is also the greatest self-seeker. God has declared, "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." When Solomon asked for wisdom, God granted him wealth and riches as an extra blessing. If we earnestly seek the things of Christ as our primary pursuit, God will graciously add our own concerns to the equation, just as paper and thread are added to a purchased commodity.

In conclusion, I have concluded this sermon on self-seeking. Oh, how I wish I could bring an end to the sin of self-seeking! I dare to affirm two things:

1. This sin has been the root cause of all of England's miseries.
2. England will never be in a good state, and we will not see better days until this sin is put to death.

Let us turn to Christ and seek, through faith, the power of His death to crucify and mortify this sin. Let our daily prayer be that England may have more Christ-seekers and fewer self-seekers—or, in essence, that God would make us all true self-seekers by making us true Christ-seekers.

FINIS.

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