

BAXTER ASSOCIATION, 27 April 2023

Richard Baxter and the Nonconformists in 1665: Rereading Plague Heroism

Anne Dunan-Page, Aix Marseille University, LERMA (France)

anne.page@univ-amu.fr

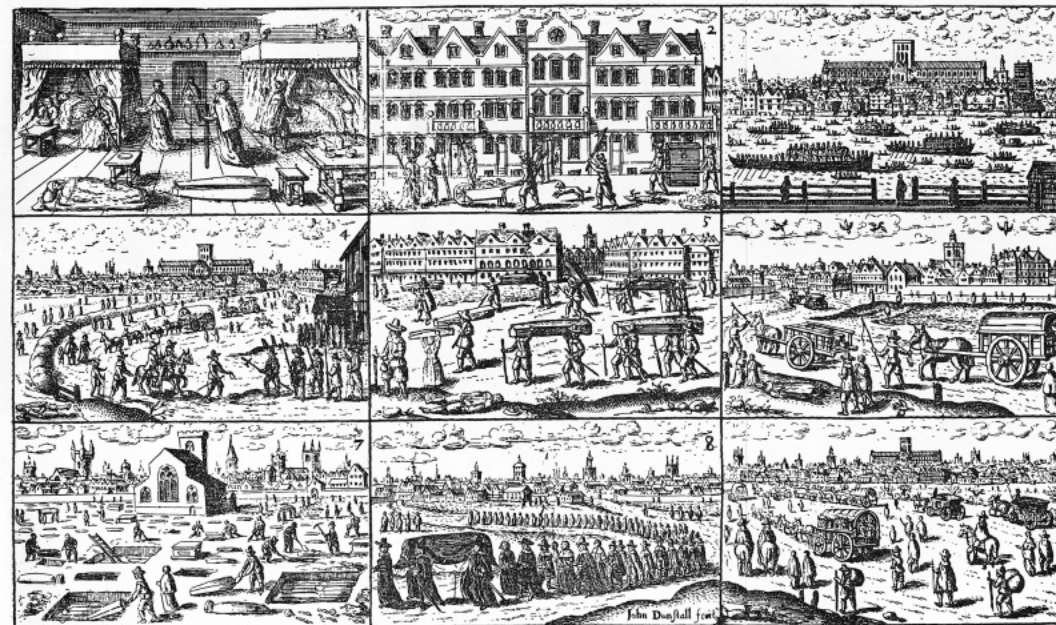
Early
historians

Baxter's
testimony

The call

'Lest he
should run
in vain'

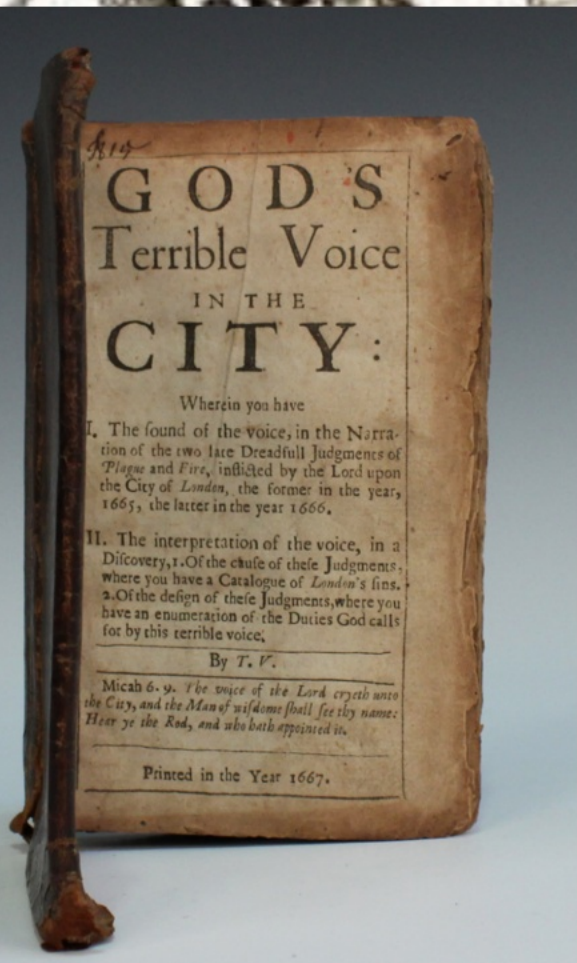
Burnet,
*History of
his Own
Time*
(1724)



FACSIMILE REPRODUCTION FROM A PICTORIAL BROADSIDE OF 1665 [-6] IN POSSESSION OF THE AUTHOR

Vincent,
*God's
Terrible
Voice in the
City* (1667)

Dobson, *The
Preacher's
Precept of
Consideration*
(1665)



Now there is such a vast concourse of people in the Churches, where these Ministers are to be found, that they cannot many times come neer the Pulpit doors for the press, but are forced to climb over the pews to them: And such a face is now seen in the Assemblies, as seldome was seen before in *London*; such eager looks; such open ears, such greedy attention, as if every word would be eaten, which dropt from the mouths of the Ministers (p. 50).

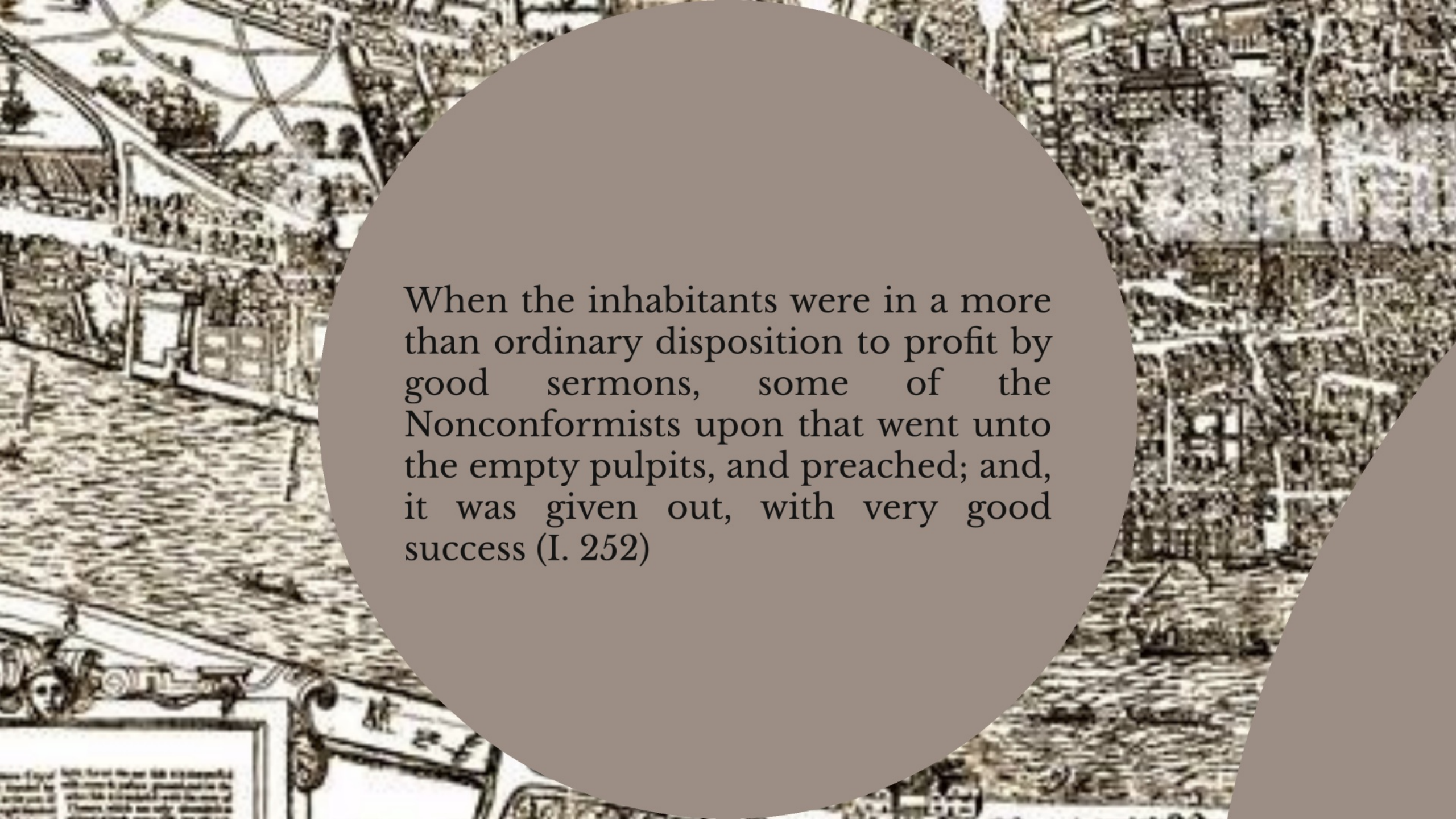
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When the inhabitants were in a more than ordinary disposition to profit by good sermons, some of the Nonconformists upon that went unto the empty pulpits, and preached; and, it was given out, with very good success (I. 252)

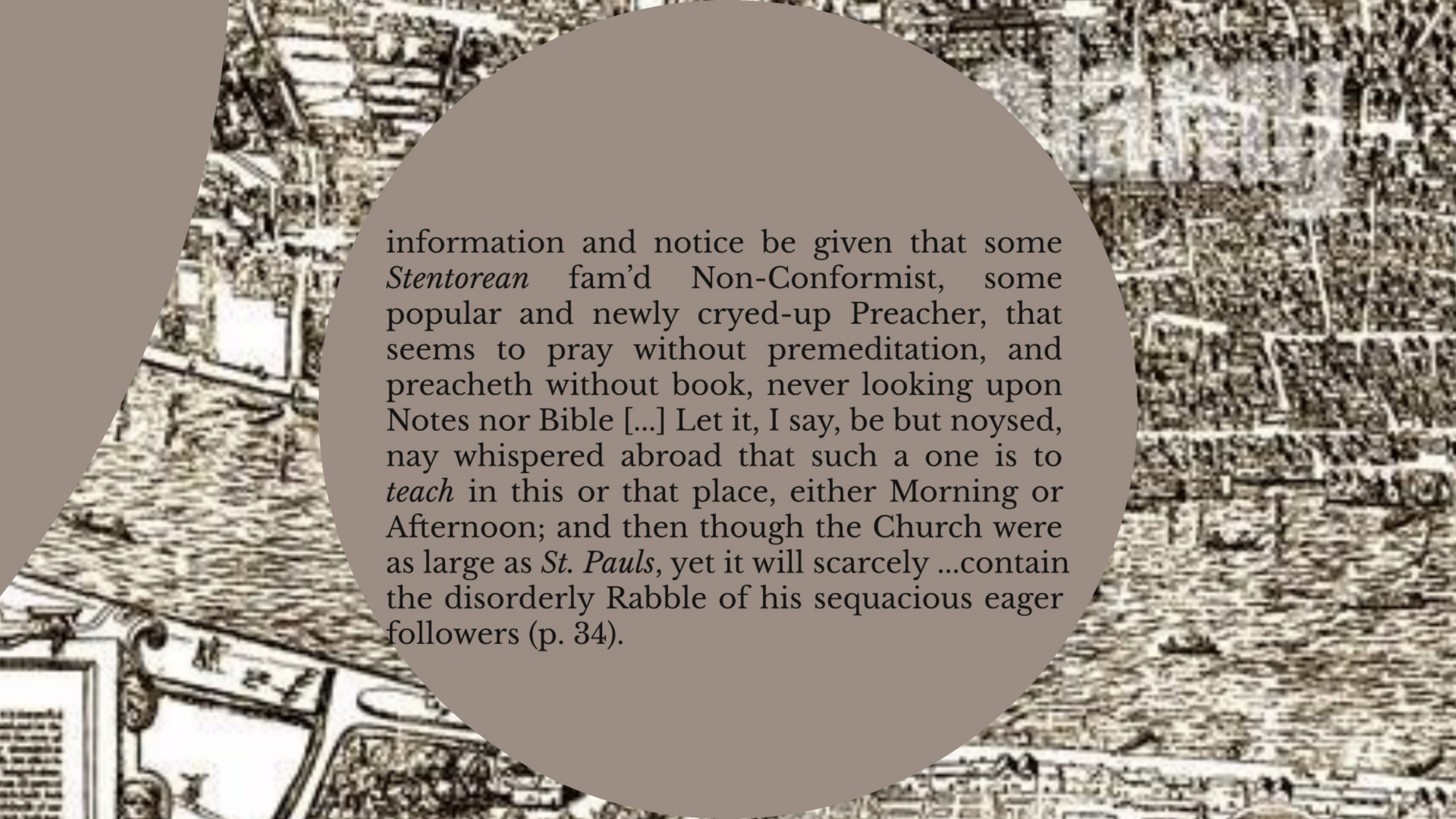
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information and notice be given that some *Stentorean* fam'd Non-Conformist, some popular and newly cryed-up Preacher, that seems to pray without premeditation, and preacheth without book, never looking upon Notes nor Bible [...] Let it, I say, be but noysed, nay whispered abroad that such a one is to *teach* in this or that place, either Morning or Afternoon; and then though the Church were as large as *St. Pauls*, yet it will scarcely ...contain the disorderly Rabble of his sequacious eager followers (p. 34).

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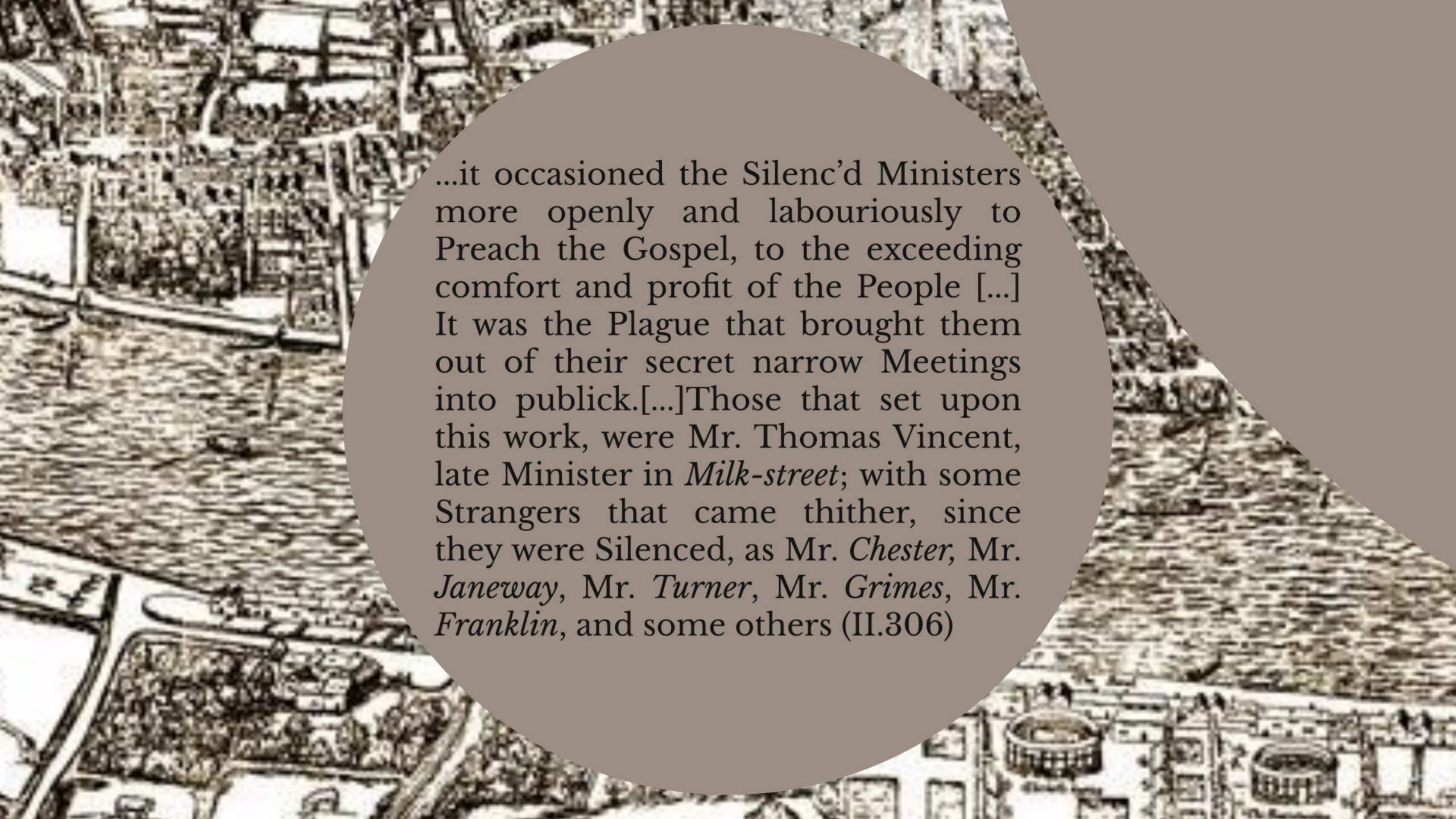
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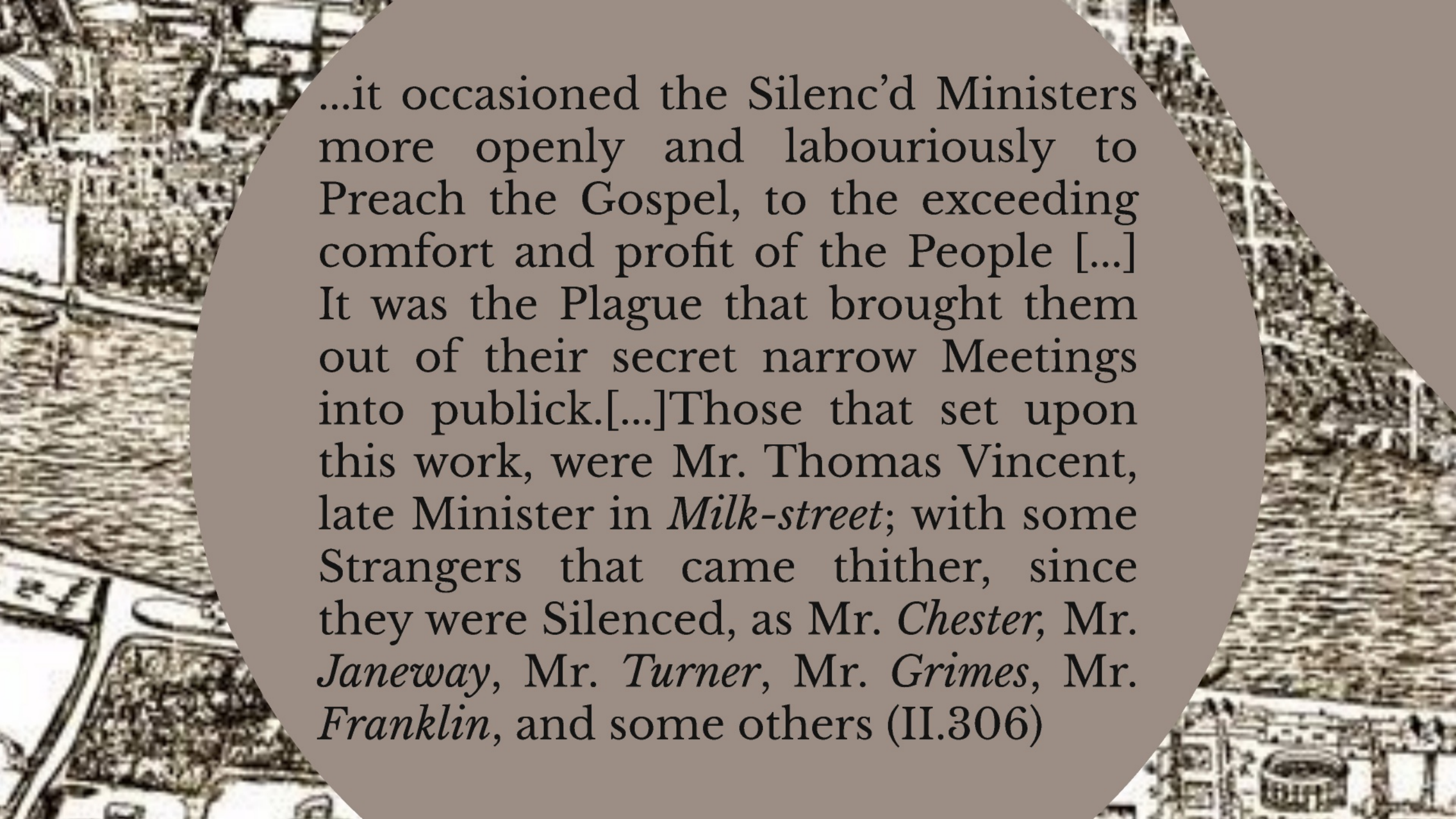
Baxter's Testimony



*Reliquiæ
Baxterianæ*



...it occasioned the Silenc'd Ministers more openly and labouriously to Preach the Gospel, to the exceeding comfort and profit of the People [...] It was the Plague that brought them out of their secret narrow Meetings into publick.[...]Those that set upon this work, were Mr. Thomas Vincent, late Minister in *Milk-street*; with some Strangers that came thither, since they were Silenced, as Mr. *Chester*, Mr. *Janeway*, Mr. *Turner*, Mr. *Grimes*, Mr. *Franklin*, and some others (II.306)



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The Call

Baxter's works

Short Instructions for the SICK: Especially who by Contagion, or otherwise, are deprived of the Presence of a Faithfull Pastor.

By RICHARD BAXTER.

These happy persons who have made it the chief care and business of their lives, to be always ready for a dying hour, have still need of thy present counsel. It is therefore thine duty to visit, who are yet unprepared, when I shall now visit thee. And either the Lord would bless these words, and prosper them, or thou art Time gone!

I'll not bid thee be a reserved man, and make thee Mother of an *Isabel* and a *Rebecca*; but, that an *Isabel's* Life, for ever in me, could be so fruitfully made light of, all their lives, as in my mind, all they perceive that Death is ready to surprise them. They poor *Isabel*, if she have been thy wife, supposing yet that thou art unwilling to be denied, I earnestly desire: that in the Name of Christ, for the sake of thy immortal Soul, that thou wilt presently lay to heart these Short Instructions, before Time and Hope are gone for ever.

I. As I tell thee, there were many a soul for whom *Isabel* and *Work* should call into the world. Thou art a Man of Reason, and not a *Beast*, and I'll assure thee, that thou art made to know, and to do, more than any other creature that ever lived on the face of the earth, with the leastings of the flesh, but in the gift of God would have been the Portion, thy Father, and thy Defense, and thou might have liv'd and dy'd in peace and comfort, and then have liv'd with God for ever. And shouldst thou have been the least of the world, which is made for? Must God give thee all thy powers for Hell, and with them turn them from him, to the service of the flesh, and that when thou hadst vowed the contrary to thy *Isabel*? How wilt thou answer for each sin thou art guilty of?

II. Is it true that thou art a *Man* of Reason, who art the Image of God, and that thou art made to know, and to do, more than any other creature that ever lived on the face of the earth, with the leastings of the flesh, but in the gift of God would have been the Portion, thy Father, and thy Defense, and thou might have liv'd and dy'd in peace and comfort, and then have liv'd with God for ever. And shouldst thou have been the least of the world, which is made for? Must God give thee all thy powers for Hell, and with them turn them from him, to the service of the flesh, and that when thou hadst vowed the contrary to thy *Isabel*? How wilt thou answer for each sin thou art guilty of?

III. And if thou art a *Man* of Reason, who art the Image of God, and that thou art made to know, and to do, more than any other creature that ever lived on the face of the earth, with the leastings of the flesh, but in the gift of God would have been the Portion, thy Father, and thy Defense, and thou might have liv'd and dy'd in peace and comfort, and then have liv'd with God for ever. And shouldst thou have been the least of the world, which is made for? Must God give thee all thy powers for Hell, and with them turn them from him, to the service of the flesh, and that when thou hadst vowed the contrary to thy *Isabel*? How wilt thou answer for each sin thou art guilty of?

IV. Therefore I counsel you in the name of Christ, to look back upon your *Isabel's* life with sorrow, yet only because of the danger to your self, that she should be your *Isabel's* God! When shall you see a *Beast* and a *Man* of Reason? Had it not been better that you had valued Christ and God, and liv'd in the love of God, and in the joyful hope of the life to come, and despised the *Isabel's* desires of the flesh, and been ruled by the Law of God, and spent your time in preparing for eternity? Do you not know, that you were to do as *Isabel's* God recover your self, repent from the bottom of your heart, of the time you have liv'd, the mercy you have shew'd, the grace you have receiv'd, of all your *Isabel's* desires, words and deeds, and that you give up your soul and life to the Love of God and life to come?

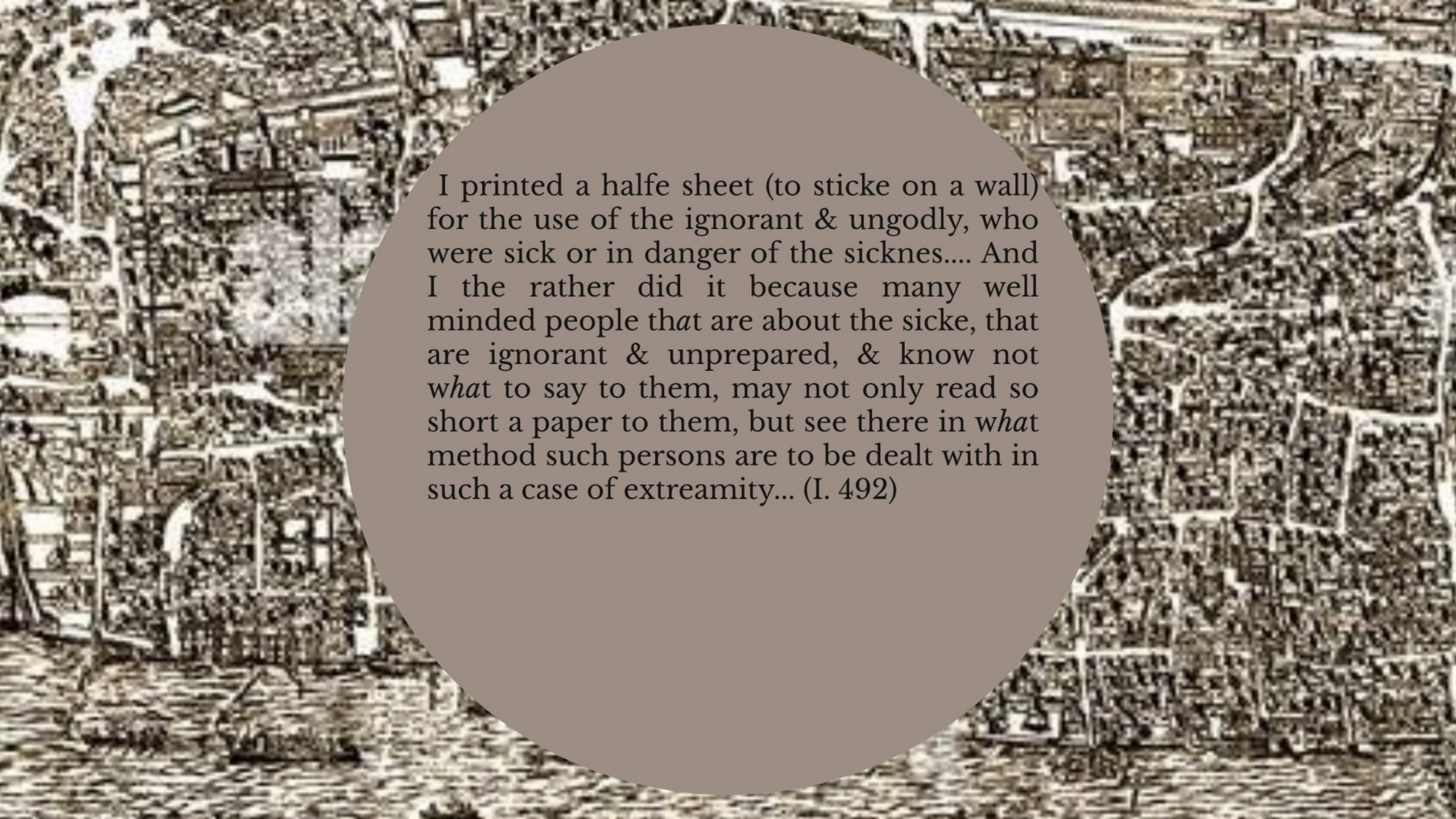
V. And if thou art a *Man* of Reason, who art the Image of God, and that thou art made to know, and to do, more than any other creature that ever lived on the face of the earth, with the leastings of the flesh, but in the gift of God would have been the Portion, thy Father, and thy Defense, and thou might have liv'd and dy'd in peace and comfort, and then have liv'd with God for ever. And shouldst thou have been the least of the world, which is made for? Must God give thee all thy powers for Hell, and with them turn them from him, to the service of the flesh, and that when thou hadst vowed the contrary to thy *Isabel*? How wilt thou answer for each sin thou art guilty of?

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VII. And if thou art a *Man* of Reason, who art the Image of God, and that thou art made to know, and to do, more than any other creature that ever lived on the face of the earth, with the leastings of the flesh, but in the gift of God would have been the Portion, thy Father, and thy Defense, and thou might have liv'd and dy'd in peace and comfort, and then have liv'd with God for ever. And shouldst thou have been the least of the world, which is made for? Must God give thee all thy powers for Hell, and with them turn them from him, to the service of the flesh, and that when thou hadst vowed the contrary to thy *Isabel*? How wilt thou answer for each sin thou art guilty of?

LONDON, Printed by Robert White, for Francis Tyeen, at the three Daggers in Fleet-street: And for Nevil Simons, Book-Seller, in Kilderslyffe. Anno Domini 1665.

A Spiritual Antidote (1665)

An aerial photograph of a city that has been almost completely destroyed, likely by a natural disaster such as an earthquake or tsunami. The remaining structures are skeletal frames of buildings, and the streets are visible as a grid of rubble. A large, semi-transparent grey circle is overlaid on the center of the image, containing a block of text in a serif font.

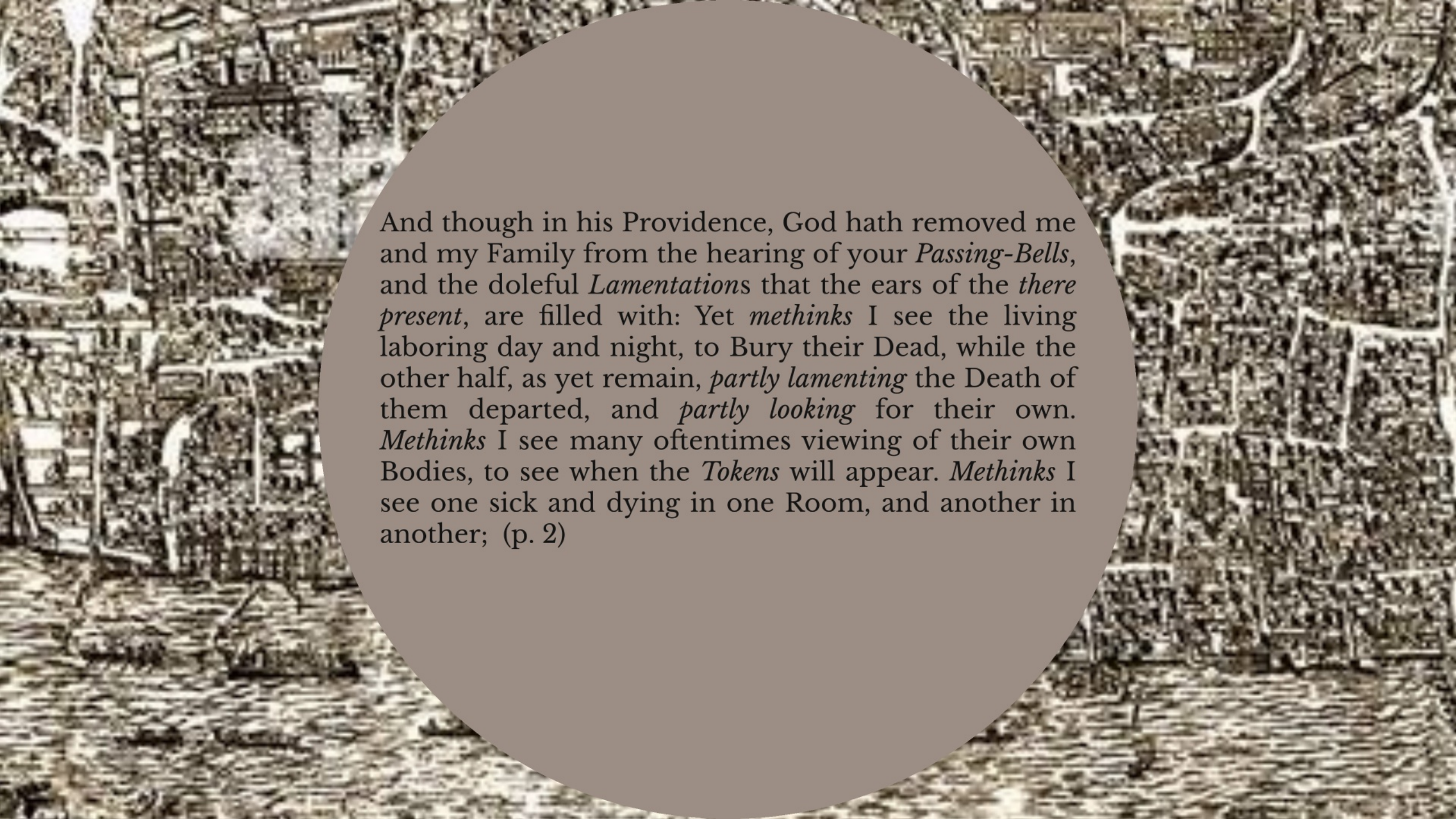
I printed a halfe sheet (to sticke on a wall)
for the use of the ignorant & ungodly, who
were sick or in danger of the sicknes.... And
I the rather did it because many well
minded people that are about the sicke, that
are ignorant & unprepared, & know not
what to say to them, may not only read so
short a paper to them, but see there in *what*
method such persons are to be dealt with in
such a case of extreimity... (I. 492)

The Call

Baxter's works



A Spiritual Antidote (1665)



And though in his Providence, God hath removed me and my Family from the hearing of your *Passing-Bells*, and the doleful *Lamentations* that the ears of the *there present*, are filled with: Yet *methinks* I see the living laboring day and night, to Bury their Dead, while the other half, as yet remain, *partly lamenting* the Death of them departed, and *partly looking* for their own. *Methinks* I see many oftentimes viewing of their own Bodies, to see when the *Tokens* will appear. *Methinks* I see one sick and dying in one Room, and another in another; (p. 2)

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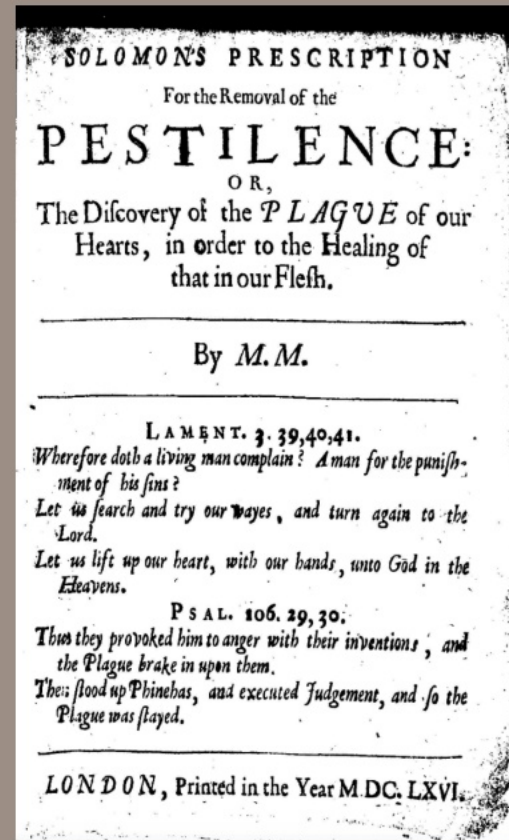
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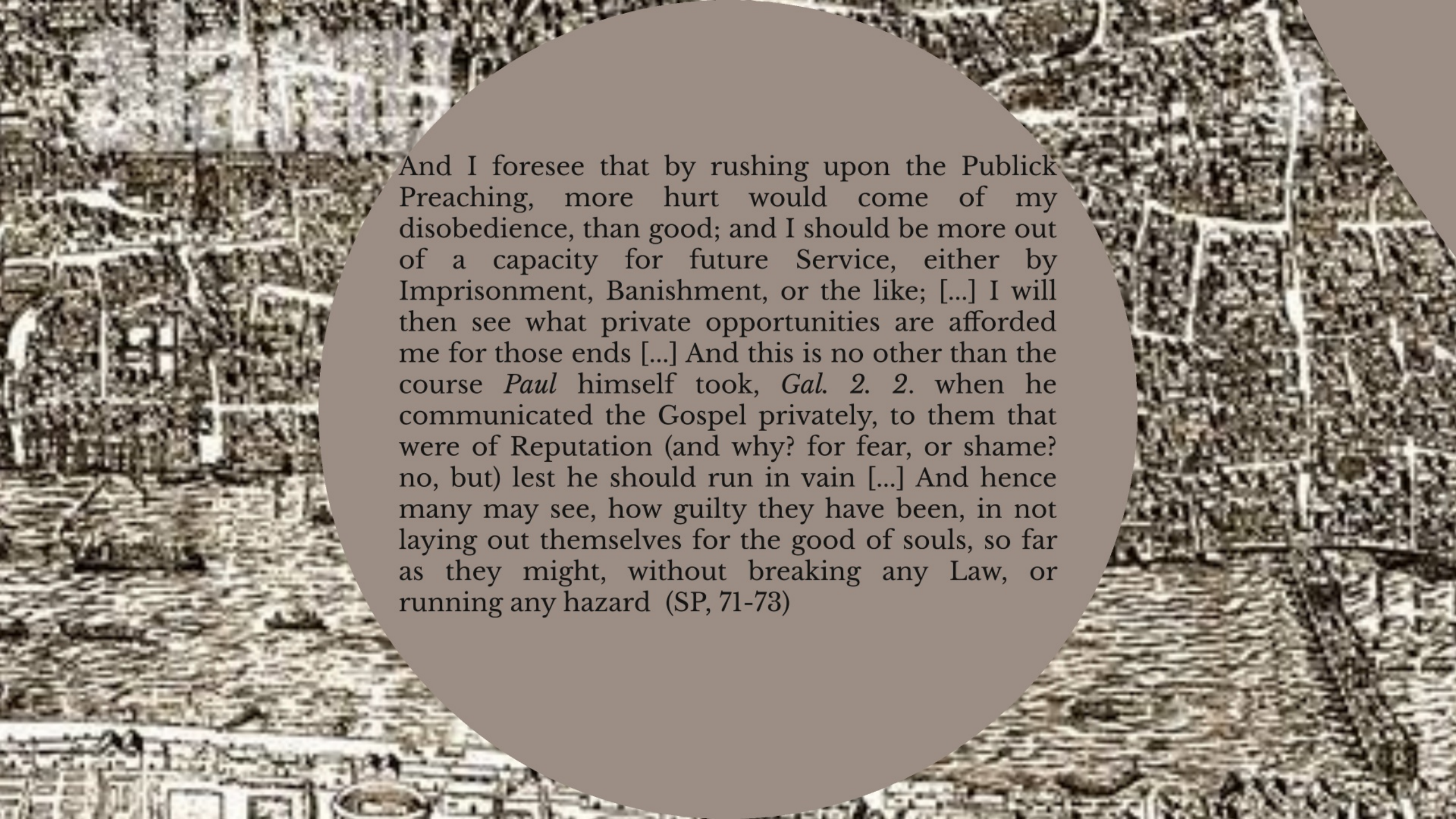
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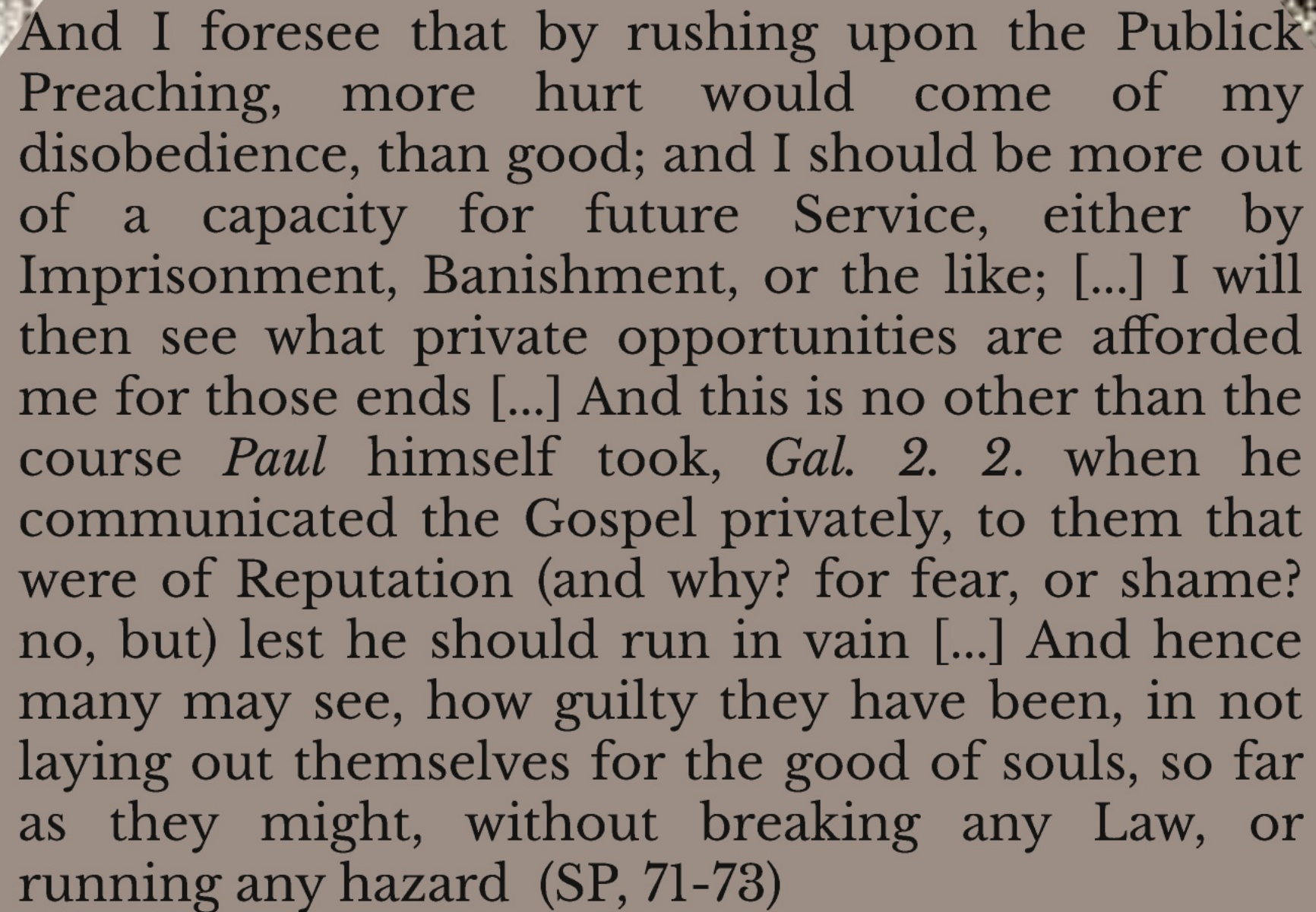
*Solomon's
Prescription*



*Meade,
Solomon's
Prescription
(1665)*

An aerial photograph of a city, likely Jerusalem, showing a dense grid of buildings and streets. A large, semi-transparent circular overlay is positioned in the center of the image, containing a block of text. The text is in a serif font and discusses the speaker's perspective on public preaching versus private opportunities, referencing the Apostle Paul's actions in Galatians 2:2. The background image is in black and white, with the circular overlay being a light gray color.

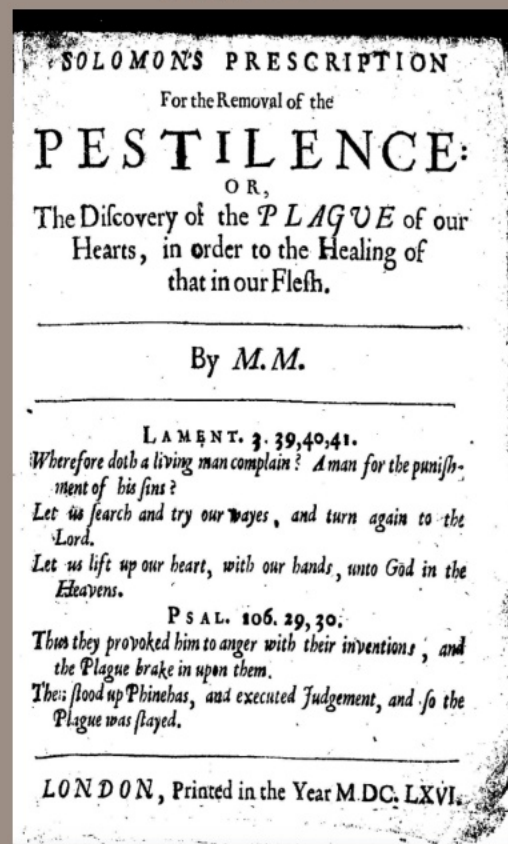
And I foresee that by rushing upon the Publick Preaching, more hurt would come of my disobedience, than good; and I should be more out of a capacity for future Service, either by Imprisonment, Banishment, or the like; [...] I will then see what private opportunities are afforded me for those ends [...] And this is no other than the course *Paul* himself took, *Gal. 2. 2.* when he communicated the Gospel privately, to them that were of Reputation (and why? for fear, or shame? no, but) lest he should run in vain [...] And hence many may see, how guilty they have been, in not laying out themselves for the good of souls, so far as they might, without breaking any Law, or running any hazard (SP, 71-73)

The image features a circular text overlay on a background of a dense crowd of people. The text is centered within the circle and reads: "And I foresee that by rushing upon the Publick Preaching, more hurt would come of my disobedience, than good; and I should be more out of a capacity for future Service, either by Imprisonment, Banishment, or the like; [...] I will then see what private opportunities are afforded me for those ends [...] And this is no other than the course *Paul* himself took, *Gal. 2. 2.* when he communicated the Gospel privately, to them that were of Reputation (and why? for fear, or shame? no, but) lest he should run in vain [...] And hence many may see, how guilty they have been, in not laying out themselves for the good of souls, so far as they might, without breaking any Law, or running any hazard (SP, 71-73)". The background image shows a large group of people, possibly a crowd or a church service, with some individuals in the foreground appearing to be in a state of distress or prayer.

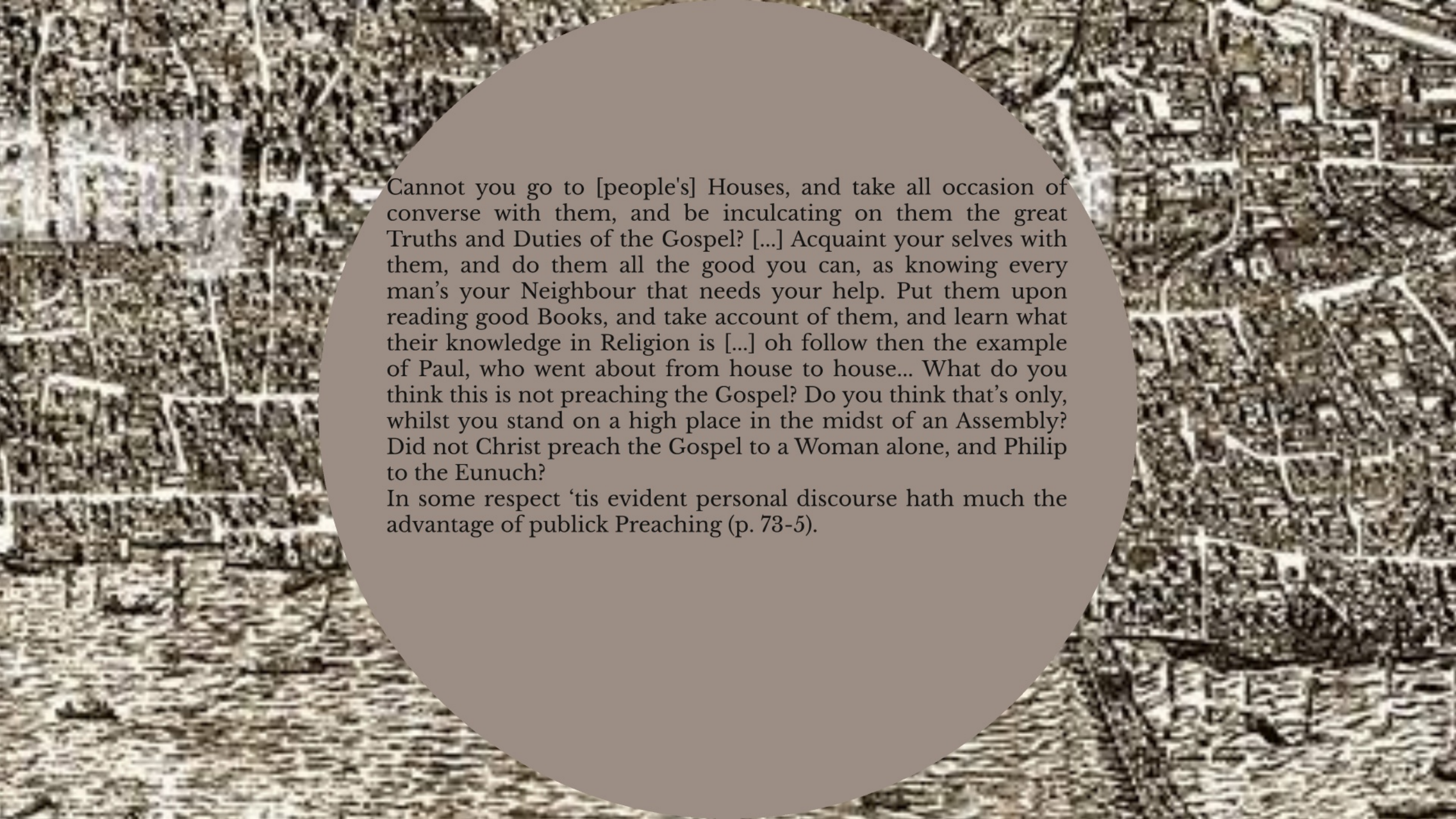
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'Lest he
should run in
vain'

*Solomon's
Prescription*



*Meade,
Solomon's
Prescription
(1665)*



Cannot you go to [people's] Houses, and take all occasion of converse with them, and be inculcating on them the great Truths and Duties of the Gospel? [...] Acquaint your selves with them, and do them all the good you can, as knowing every man's your Neighbour that needs your help. Put them upon reading good Books, and take account of them, and learn what their knowledge in Religion is [...] oh follow then the example of Paul, who went about from house to house... What do you think this is not preaching the Gospel? Do you think that's only, whilst you stand on a high place in the midst of an Assembly? Did not Christ preach the Gospel to a Woman alone, and Philip to the Eunuch?

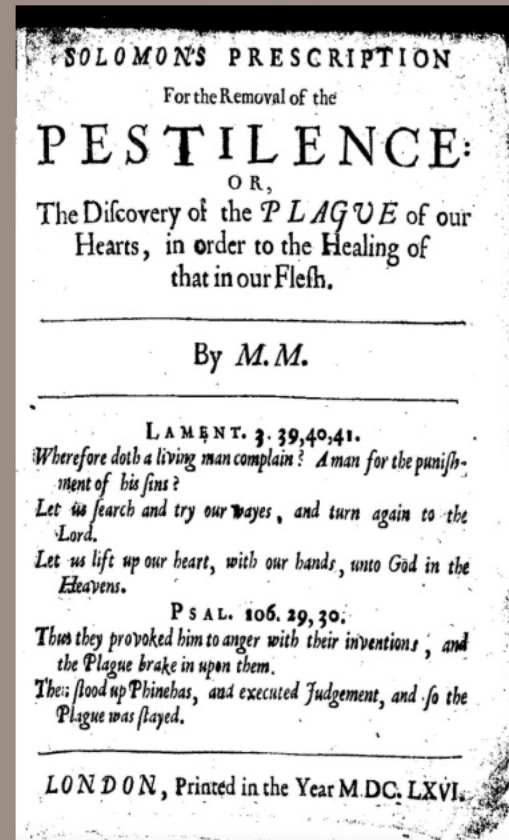
In some respect 'tis evident personal discourse hath much the advantage of publick Preaching (p. 73-5).

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