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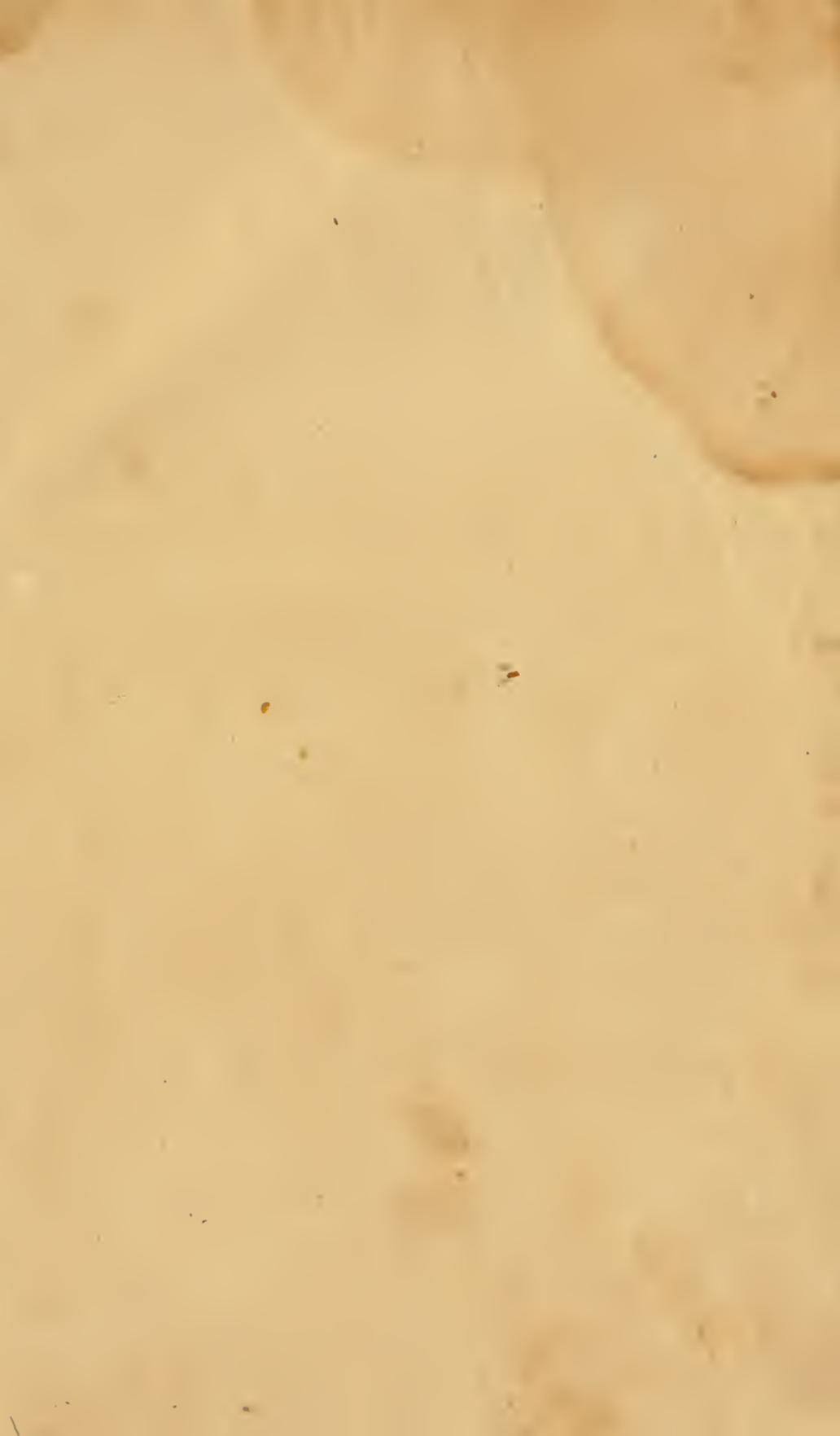
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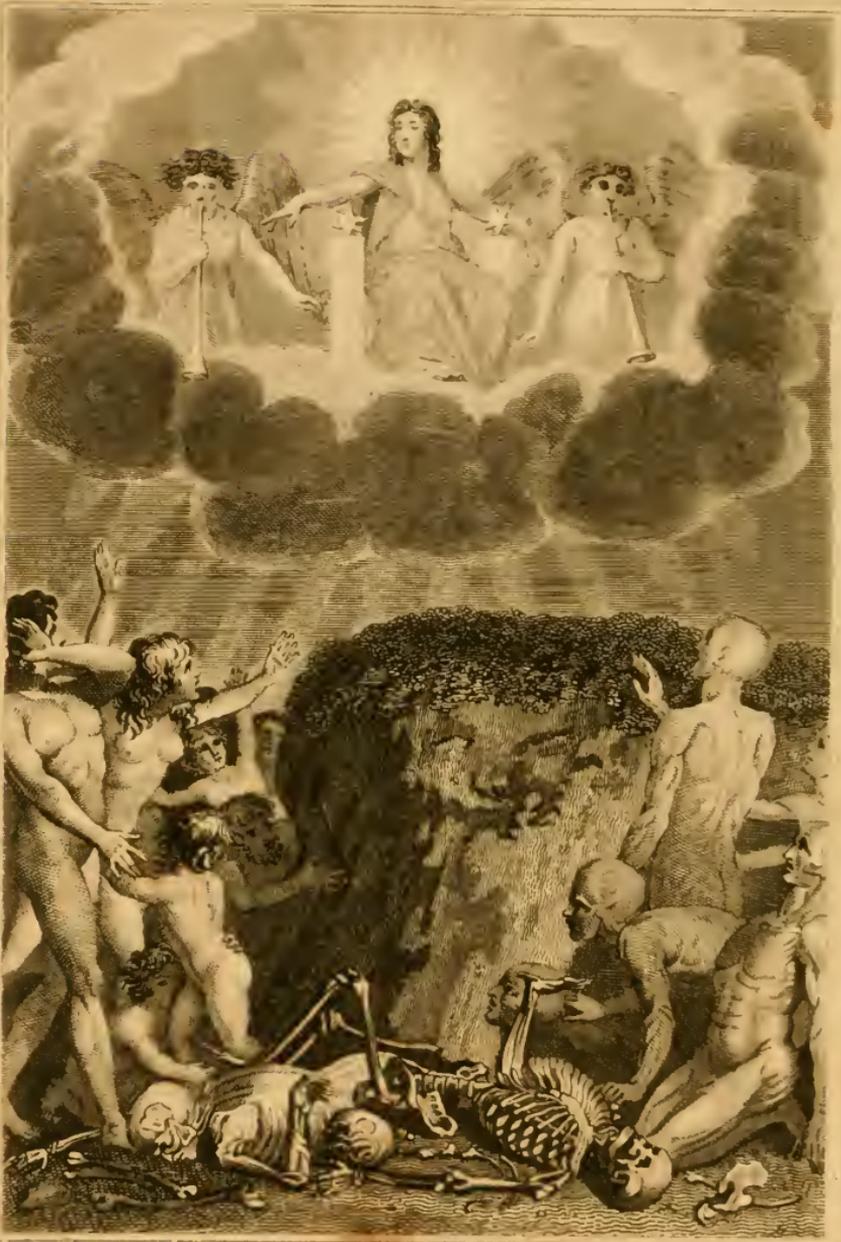








THE GREAT ASSIZE.



For the Trumpet shall sound and the Dead shall be Raised.

THE  
**LAST GREAT ASSIZE,**  
OR  
**GRAND JUBILEE;**

IN WHICH  
WE SHALL BE FREED FROM ALL OUR MISERIES, AND HAVE PER-  
PETUAL EASE AND HAPPINESS, OR ENDLESS  
MISERY AND TORMENT,

AS  
DELIVERED IN SIX DISCOURSES,  
INCLUDING THE  
*Shepherd's Tent, or Fold for Christ's Sheep;*

BY  
SAMUEL SMITH,  
*Late Minister of the Gospel at Prittlewell, Essex.*

---

A NEW EDITION,

To which is added,

**THE END OF TIME,**

AND

**Death and Heaven;**

OR, THE LAST ENEMY CONQUERED,

AND

*Separate Spirits made perfect;*

WITH AN ACCOUNT OF THE RICH VARIETY OF THEIR PLEASURES  
AND EMPLOYMENTS,

By ISAAC WATTS, D. D.

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ALSO,

**THE TRIAL OF THE WITNESSES**

OF THE

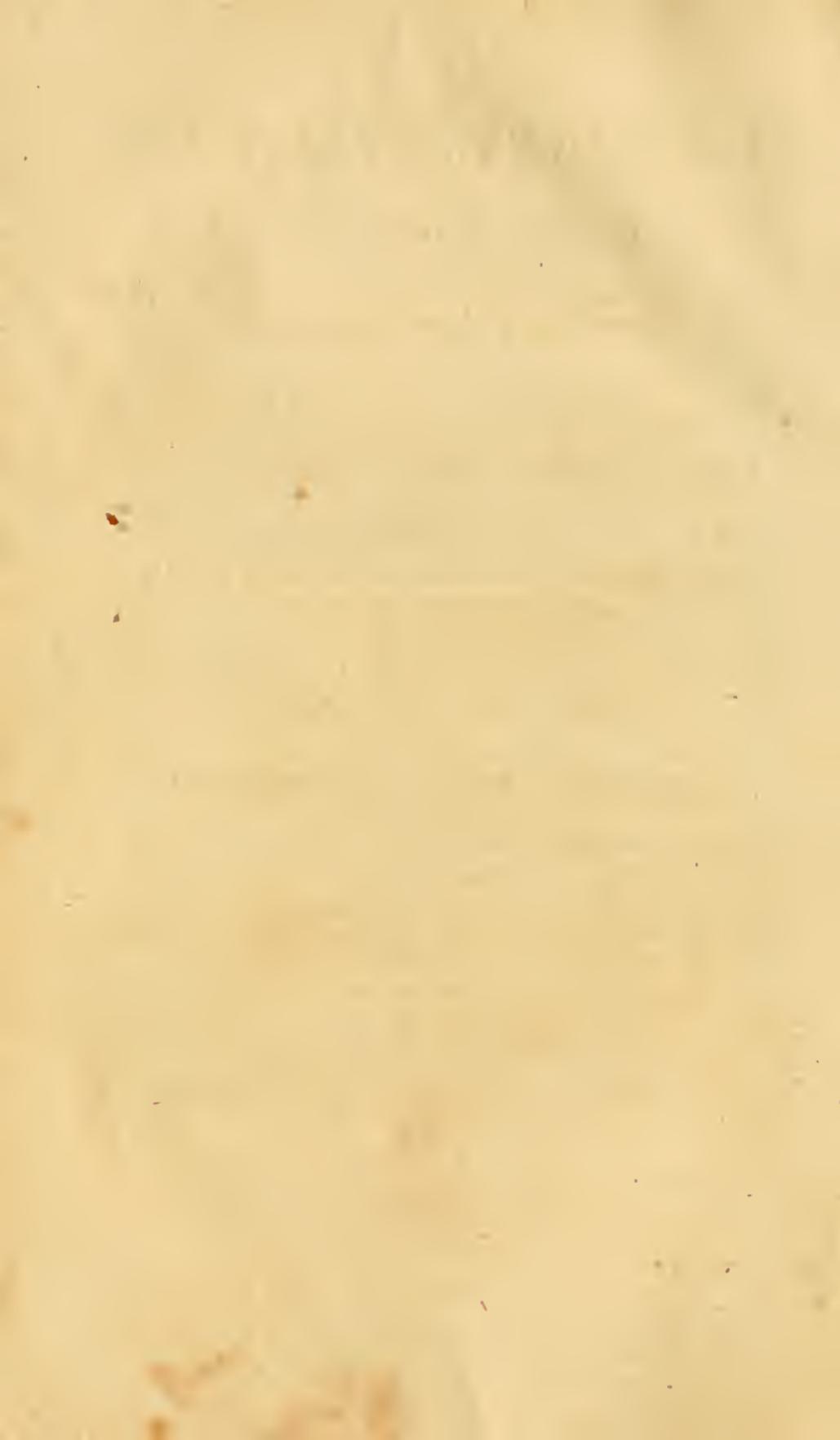
**RESURRECTION OF CHRIST,**

By BISHOP SHERLOCK.

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LONDON:

Published by RICHARD EVANS, No. 17, Paternoster Row;  
J. BOURNE, Greenside Street, Edinburgh; and may be  
had of all Booksellers in the United Kingdom.



TO THE

*CHRISTIAN READER,*

GRACE AND PEACE FROM JESUS CHRIST  
THE PRINCE OF PEACE.



COURTEOUS Reader, I present here unto thy view the fourth public fruit of my ministry; wherein I have endeavoured that those, especially of mine own hearers (those religious people and Inhabitants of *Prittlewell*, in *Essex*, whom I love with my heart) might a second time take notice of these my exercises, that in public I delivered unto them. *The night cometh when no man can work*: Therefore it stands us all in hand, both minister and people, to esteem time as the most precious thing in the world, and the rather, because we know not how soon we shall be called to an account of our work. Many have had (many times) good purposes of heart to cleave unto the Lord, that have been prevented by death, for want of timely repentance. It shall then be our wisdom, to agree with our adversary while we are in the way with him: for if we be but once arrested by death, we shall be forced to pay the utmost farthing. Use this as a help unto thee, to better thee in thy performance of that duty which concerns thee so nearly. That thou mayest one day give an account of thy works. If thou reap any benefit by it, give the praise unto God, from whom every good and perfect work proceedeth: for God is a spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth. And help me in thy prayers, which I shall take as a full recompence of all my labours, and be encouraged to spend some hours in the like duties, for thy good, and in the mean time remain,

Thine in the common Saviour,

SAMUEL SMITH.

THE LAST GREAT ASSIZE,  
OR  
*DAY OF JUBILEE.*

---

HIS winged hosts, fly through all coasts,  
Together gathering,  
Both good and bad, both quick and dead,  
And all to judgment bring.

So that ev'ry one before the throne  
Of Christ our Judge is brought :  
Both righteous and impious,  
That good or ill had wrought.

All these do stand at Christ's right hand  
With pleasure and delight :  
Clothed in bright, a glorious sight,  
And shines day without night.

These blessed ones they sit on thrones  
Judging the world with me :  
Come and possess your happiness,  
And bought felicity.

Henceforth no fears, no care nor tears,  
No sin shall you annoy :  
Nor any thing that grief doth bring,  
Eternal rest and joy.

You bore the cross, and suffered loss  
Of all for my name sake :  
Receive the crown that's now your own  
Come and a kingdom take.

# THE LAST GREAT ASSIZE.



## DISCOURSE I.

Rev. xx. 11—15.

*And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it; from whose face the earth and the heavens fled away, and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead small and great stand before God, and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written on the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hell delivered up their dead which were in them: And they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire; this is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire.*

**H**AVING lately expressed to you the mysteries of Christ's incarnation, and taking our nature upon him to redeem mankind from eternal miseries, being his first coming in *humility* to us, to offer us salvation upon the terms of faith and repentance; it can be no less advantageous to you, that I put you in mind of his second coming in glory to judge the world, that those that will not be worked upon by his coming in love and compassion, might be

terrified and astonished by his coming to judge us, when he shall pronounce that final judgment, *Come ye blessed into that eternal happiness, prepared for you from the beginning of the world: And go ye cursed into everlasting torments, prepared for the devil and his angels.* Which judgment, although it is delayed for a time, yet it will certainly come, *as a thief in the night, in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up,* 2 Pet. iii. 10. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, who will neither be bribed by monies or preferment. If we do but fall into his hands in a fever in our bed, or in a tempest at sea, or in a discontent at home: But to fall into the hands of the living God, so that that living God enters into judgment with us, and passeth a final and irrevocable judgment upon us, is a consternation of all our spirits, and examination of all our succours; especially if we consider, how that God with one word made all; so with another he can destroy all, *As he spake, and it was done, he commanded, and all stood fast,* Psalm xxxiii. 9. so he can speak, and all shall be undone, command, and all shall fall in pieces.

### *The Sum of Scripture.*

To which end I have chosen this place of Scripture which so powerfully presses an awful dread and fear on the minds of those who neglect to improve the precious moments of this life, and put,

away far from them this day of the Lord, saying, *Where are the signs of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation, 2 Pet. iii. 4.* But what then saith the apostle, was not the world that then was, overflowed with water and perished; and if that were done in earnest, why do ye make a jest of this? That the heavens and the earth which are now, are reserved unto fire against the day of judgment. And St. Jude bids us, v. 17. *Remember the works which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, that there should be mockers in the last time.* Against whom Isaiah prophesieth, Isa. lxvi. 15. *That the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots, like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury: For by fire, and by his sword will the Lord plead with all flesh.* And the prophet Joel calls it, *A day of darkness and gloominess, and yet a fire devouring before them, and a flame burneth behind them.* Which is sufficient to make every man to remember, who has any regard to his future happiness, the words of the Holy Ghost written by St. John in the first chapter of the Revelations, verse 7. where he saith, *Behold, he cometh with clouds and every eye shall see him: And all the kindreds of the earth shall wail and lament, and weep and howl because of him.*

The five verses in the text contain in them a very lively description of our Saviour's second coming to judgment; which although he saw it only in a vision, yet it is expressed with as much majesty as words are capable to utter: For words are not capa-

ble to express it with that glory, as when the Son of Man shall sit attended with the heavenly host, *having his throne like a fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire, a fiery stream issuing from him.* Dan. vii. 9.

### *The Parts of the Text.*

This John, who wrote the book of the Revelations, was the Evangelist, and the beloved disciple of Christ, who followed him wheresoever he went, and stood by him, not only when he was apprehended in the garden, but went with him to the judgment-seat of Pilate, and never denied him as Peter did, but even attended him to his death on the cross, and never left him till he had laid him in his sepulchre; and after for preaching the Gospel was banished by Domitian, the Roman Emperor, to the desolate island of Patmos: where this vision of the last day was revealed to him, as a singular favour of heaven. He was one of the three disciples that always attended his Lord and Master. He was with him at the marriage of Cana in Galilee, and afterwards in the garden, and before Pilate, and leaned upon his breast at supper, where he asked him many questions; and upon the cross of Christ commended the care of his mother to him, saying, *Behold thy mother.*

### *The Person of the Judge.*

The person of the Judge is described in the first verse of the text, full of majesty, power, and integrity, severity and terror. And the persons who

are to appear before him to judgment, are, he tells us, in the second verse, *Both small and great*, all that ever were born, or shall be, to the end of the world, rich and poor, high and low, all shall be gathered together at the sound of the last trumpet on this terrible day, to appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, and our own consciences will be both jury and witnesses to acquit or condemn us: for the holy scripture tells us, that *the books* shall be opened, and that then God will judge every man according to his works, our consciences giving evidences either for or against us, by which we must either stand or fall.

*The Issue of the Judgment.*

Those whose names are written in the book of life, shall be blessed and happy for ever; but death, hell, and Satan, and all ungodly persons, shall be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, there to remain with the apostate angels, who kept not the first covenant, but fell, to endure eternal torments for evermore, which is the second death.

And thus having told you the meaning of the text, I shall, in the next place, proceed to speak to the several points mentioned in the text, one by one; in order unto which, if you give good heed, I hope God of his infinite mercy will soon open your hearts, that you may so hear and understand his will, as to escape the second death, and your sinful souls may be saved in the day of our Lord Jesus.

*And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and heavens fled away, and there was found no place for them.*

*I saw a great white throne, &c.*

St. John tells us, he saw a great white throne, as a place put in order for the accommodation of the Judge, that sat on it, which he was commanded to record in a book, that no one might plead ignorance, but having a true sense of his coming, we might take care to work out *our salvation with fear and trembling*, and meet him in the clouds of heaven with joy and not with grief: By which we might observe the inexpressible goodness of Christ to his church and people, that he reveals his second coming to St. John, to the intent that none may be so ignorant of it, but prepare to meet the Bridegroom with oil in their lamps.

*Knowledge of the last Judgment necessary.*

Christ's coming to judgment is nearer at hand now than ever; it was expected in the times of the Patriarchs and Prophets, but then he had not taken our nature upon him, and paid the debt due to his Father by our fall and transgressions: But that being done, we have more reason to expect it now than ever, when we are so divided among ourselves, and such a rent is made in his seamless coat, by our divisions and animosities. What can any Christian or true believer expect, but that the day of the Lord

is at hand, when there are so many satires and libels daily published against our holy religion, and men are grown so audacious in contempt of authority, as to deny the Lord that redeemed them. When the holy Sabbath, which God by express commandment has set apart for serving him, is so much prophaned, and instead of serving him in his churches, which he has set apart to be worshipped in, men spend the day in sports and pastimes; which abominable sin, all true Christians ought to beg of God to forgive, for the sake of the few righteous that remain amongst us, and have not yet bowed their heads unto Baal. And what is the meaning of all this wickedness in the land, but to put us in mind of the last judgment, which none of us know how soon it may happen, for it will come upon us *as a thief in the night*. And it may happen in the night of ignorance, or in the night of wantonness, or in the night of sinful melancholy, and suspicion of his mercy, or he may come in the night of so stupid, or so raging a sickness, as we are not capable of receiving him in the absolution of his minister, or in the participation of his body and of his blood in the Sacrament: Nay, he may come upon us in such a night, as when all these nights of *ignorance, of wantonness, of desperation, of sickness, of stupidity, and rage*, may be upon us all at once.

There is not one truth in the whole Bible more often urged than this of Christ's coming to judgment, to awaken men out of their deep security, and make them mindful of that Majesty, before whom all must one day appear to give up their ac-

counts. Enoch the seventh from Adam, as St. Jude tells us, prophesied the Lord's coming to judgment, to take vengeance on the wicked and disobedient, which should be a terrible and awakening doctrine to souls that are drowsy, and as it were, buried in their sins, to consider they must one day give an account of all their thoughts, words, and actions, before the dreadful Majesty of Heaven.

How did this provoke St. Paul, when he preached unto Felix the Governor, *of temperance, righteousness, and judgment to come*, Acts xxiv. 25. so that his very knees smote together, and he trembled. And Habbakkuk, a prophet, and a very holy man, when he heard of the last judgment, acknowledged his fear, saying, *my belly trembled, and my lips quivered at the voice, and rottenness entered into my bones*. And holy David, though a man after God's own heart, and who upon all other occasions, had courage enough, was not ashamed to own, *that his flesh trembled for fear of God, and that he was afraid of his judgments*, Psalm cxix. 120.

And it is recorded of Noah, that when the Lord had foretold him, that he would drown the world, although there was an hundred and twenty years to come, before it was to happen, that he was so moved with that admonition, that he built the ark to save himself and his family, from the destruction that after fell upon all mankind but them. And as St. Austin saith, *every blow that was given upon the ark by Noah, was so many warning pieces to the whole world*.

And now, my brethren, what doctrine can be

more useful to the men of this untoward generation, who are forgetful of every good duty, and more especially of the day of death and judgment, which the want of the scriptures, make the ground of all sin: For *in the days of Noah, they did eat, they drank, they were married and given in marriage, they planted, they builded, never dreaming of the judgment that was so nigh at hand, until the day came upon them, as a snare, being unmindful of the judgment, not dreaming it was so nigh at hand.* And so it will be with many in these our days, who have no regard to futurity until the day come upon them, and it is too late for rocks and mountains to shelter them from the *fear of him that sits on the throne.* Which is further exemplified in the parable of the foolish virgins, who slumbered and slept, and took not their oil of faith in their lamps, against the coming of the bridegroom. As also of the evil servant in the gospel, who unconcernedly continued to eat and drink, and beat his fellow-servants, never dreaming of his master's returning so soon as he did.

How should the consideration of these things rouse up every Christian from the lethargy of sin, to take care of ourselves in time and not to be ruined for ever; for who that is loaded with a weight of sin, can abide the coming of the Lord to judgment. And yet all must appear before the judgment-seat of Christ? There are no exceptions, both good and bad, rich and poor, there is no sheltering-place for any, which ought to beget in every one of us a reverence of that Divine Majesty, who hath power to do

with us as the potter doth with his clay, to mould us to honour or dishonour.

There are two great things which are great hindrances to godly people, from too due preparation for this day.

*First*, A careless neglect of religious duties, and shifting them off to the last, flattering ourselves it is time enough to begin to repent, and that the Master will not come as yet, though it is written, *the day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels in Heaven.* Who knows whether he shall live an hour, seeing our life is in the hands of God, who can take it from us in a moment; for as St. Austin saith, The day of death is not known, and therefore every day we must endeavour to repent, and prepare ourselves for this sudden dissolution, which every man is subject to by nature, although he continues in ever so wicked a state of life. We are surrounded with innumerable accidents, death meets us at every corner, and is procured by every instrument of violence; only an excess of wine, or a debauch, or by the stumbling at a stone, by the fall of a tile, or by the violence of a beast, and by every thing in Providence. There is no state, no accident, no circumstance in life, but has been soured by some sad accident of a dying friend. The son of Syrach tells us, *The bride went into her chamber, and knew not what would befall her there.* A friendly meeting often ends in a sorrowful parting; nay, sometimes makes an eternal parting. Many have died under the hands of their paranymphs, or maids in dressing to their nuptials, and their wedding-garments have

been laid aside, to put on a wedding-shroud: and instead of a nuptial bed, they have laid down in the silence of the grave.

And if so, how doth it behove every one to repent in time, and prepare himself for the great and terrible day of the Lord's coming to judgment; for there is no repentance in the grave; as the tree falls so it lies. Let us remember the fool in the gospel, who when he promised himself an enlargement in his barns, and bids his soul take its rest for so many years, yet it was taken from him that very night. And so it might be with every one, that promises to himself a time beyond his power to command; therefore whilst *it is called to-day let us hear his voice*, for who can tell what a day may bring forth, lest the night of death steal upon us, wherein no man can work.

And therefore it is high time to hearken to the word of God, whilst the gospel is preached unto us, and while he knocketh at the door of our hearts, and would gladly enter in; for he saith, *If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in and sup with him, and he with me.* Wherein you see Christ makes a proclamation of his love, to all that believe in him, and therefore it behoves all of us to make use of this present time, while we have it, for fear it should be too late, for *time and tide will stay for none.* And therefore it is good, that in time we make our calling and election sure, and labour with the apostle, to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, and not lie in security, and neglect our duty to God, which is the first hindrance that we do not

oftener meditate on the day of death and judgment, *for after death there is no repentance*; for who can be such a fool to imagine, that God has leaden feet, because he is slow in coming, but rather with the wise virgins in the gospel, would not trim his lamp, and put in oil, so that he may find us ready, and prepared for his coming, and we are not cast out, and thereby feel his iron hand.

*Secondly*, There is another hindrance that keeps men from minding the judgment to come, which is the cares of this life, and the enjoyments thereof, which usually swallows them up in a continual hurry of business, so that they think of nothing else, and cannot spare even the Sabbath from looking over their books of accounts, looking upon any account they must give of their word and actions at the day of judgment, as an impertinent thing only to frighten fools and children: Whereas did they but consider that even this night their souls might be taken from them, Luke xii. 19. and that they stand continually tottering on the bank of the grave, they would husband their time to a better end, and lay up for themselves riches that can never fail them, making their chief call to make their reckoning straight, against the day of reckoning come, which no man can tell how soon; they would then part with all the trifling vanities of this world, to secure to themselves a pearl of inestimable price: For all that we can value in this life, is a quiet mind, and a good conscience.

The antient philosophers ever made it their study, not to be over careful for the things of this world.

any more than what is necessary for the support of life ; for here we are but as pilgrims, travelling through a wilderness, to a land flowing with milk and honey, the heavenly Canaan, the New Jerusalem, and should enjoy the things of this world, as using them but not abusing them, having an eye to the recompence of reward, where Christ sits at the right hand of his Father on a *white throne*, judging the twelve tribes of *Israel*.

God takes some out of the world, because it is not worthy of them, and others he suffers not to live out half their time, who are not worthy of the world, as he did Ahab, Agag, and Herod, who being vile monsters, did not live out half their days. And God made haste to take away good Josiah from the *evil to come*, because his soul pleased him. And why, if we consider, should God deal so graciously with us, who have the gospel in its purity preached unto us, and deal so severely with other nations, who worship him in superstition and idolatry, only that he expects we should bring forth some fruits in our lives, worthy of the goodness he has been pleased to shew unto us ; which if we do not, then we must expect the same measure to be meted to us, as he hath done to others.

God punishes some in this life, which should be a warning to us, to amend our lives ; others he lets alone, as he did Pharaoh for a little time, and many he reserves to the day of judgment, and therefore let no man slumber in his security, though he has strength, health, and riches, and all that the world can afford, but rather let him leave the world, and

apply himself to heaven; as Sheba, the Queen of the South did, who left all, and came from the further most part of the world, to hear the wisdom of Solomon; which if we will not do, and hear the voice of the turtle in these our days, we must expect with the Jews to be forsaken, and left as vagabonds wandering up and down upon the earth, or like sheep having no shepherd, and at last have our torments with the wicked in hell fire; so much for security.

Doct. 1. *Christ's Throne described by two Properties.*

2. *Christ's coming with great glory.*

The *great throne* shews the wonderful *might, majesty, and power* of the Judge, and the *white throne* shews the *purity, integrity, and uprightness* of the Judge, and both demonstrate unto us the wonderful majesty and power, in which the Lord Jesus shall appear at the second time of his coming, which is answerable in all points to what we find in the twenty-fifth chapter of the apostle, viz. *And then we shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds, with power and great glory, attended with Angels, Patriarchs, Prophets, Martyrs, and all the Celestial Choir, with joy to those that had done well, and terror to the evil doers; for now he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and made marvellous in them that believe, 2 Thess. i. 10. But the wicked shall cry to the mountains to fall upon them and the hills to cover them, and hide them from his presence, whom they are not able to endure, Rev. vi. 16.*

For his herald, he will have an arch-angel sounding the last trumpet, to proclaim his being on the throne, in order to judge the quick and the dead, when the grave, and hell, and the sea shall give up their dead, and all shall come unto judgment, and the heavens shall pass away with a noise, and the elements melt with fervent heat.

And the use we ought to make of this, is seriously to consider the difference between Christ's coming in the flesh, and his second coming to judge those that he died for: But for those that he finds unprofitable servants, notwithstanding all this state and glory, better it was for them that a millstone was tied about their necks; and that they were drowned eternally in the sea, than to hear that dreadful sentence pronounced upon them, *Go ye cursed into everlasting torments, prepared for the devils, and those that fear not God.*

His first coming was in *meekness, love, and humility*, for he was laid in a manger between two beasts, an ox and an ass, which a learned father of the church said, is to be as it were, between a Jew and a Gentile. And when he grew up, he declares, *The foxes have holes, and the birds have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head*, in which words he confesses himself to be the Son of Man, which shews his meekness, in that he had no place where to lay his head, and his love and humility are abundantly expressed in his sufferings; for he was wounded for our transgressions; and the chastisement of the Lord was upon him.

How shall we dare make slight of so great a mercy. The Jews thought once crucifying to be enough, but we who stile ourselves Christians, by our repeated sins of oaths and blasphemies, crucify him afresh every day, trampling under foot the precious blood of the covenant that speaks better things than that of Abel. And what can such expect at his second coming, but fiery wrath and indignation against all ungodly sinners.

Therefore let every one of us have a care to do well, and say with holy David, *Create in me, O God, a [clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me,* Psal. li. 10. For if we are willing, he is able to draw us out of the sink of sin, and make us lie down in safety, so that we shall appear blameless and spotless before God; clothed with the robes of Christ's righteousness, which he will be well-pleased with; for *he delights not in the death of a sinner, but desires that he be converted and live.* And to this end, he sent his only-begotten Son to take our nature upon him, and to die for us, that we might not die eternally; who is become the mediator between God and man, making a reconciliation for us, who had broken the first covenant. As Moses and Aaron pleaded for the children of Israel unto God, and desired rather to be blotted out of the book of life, than that they should perish. And as Moses led them through the Red Sea unto Canaan, so doth Christ lead us even to the heavenly Canaan, the New Jerusalem, shining with the brightness of God's presence, where is fulness of joy for evermore. Which I mention only to shew you the great love

which our blessed Saviour had for mankind, when he first came in the flesh: For he so loved us that he laid down his life for our sakes, and shall we be so ungrateful as to spit in his face, and trample under feet this his kindness, in not returning thanks, and neglecting to love him again? St. Ambrose calls ingratitude the devil's sponge, wherewith he wipes out God's love and mercy. But I hope no one who has been baptized under Christ's banner will ever be ungrateful, even in his thoughts. For Christ cometh with ten thousands of his saints and angels to execute judgment upon all, as David saith in the lviith. Psalm, *The Lord cometh to judge the world.* And St. John in the ninth chapter saith, *The Father judgeth no man, but has committed all judgment to his Son,* who is the second person in the Holy Trinity, although they all agree in the same condemnation.

Let no man then despair of mercy, though his *sins be as red as scarlet, yet he will make them as white as snow,* if we amend our wicked lives, and come into his terms as they are set forth in the Gospel, which are very easy, *For his yoke is easy and his burden is light*; for to this end he has taken our nature upon him, which he has exalted above the heavens, and has seated it in the glory of his Father. And as we have no reason to doubt of this his communion with us in nature, so we ought not to doubt of our participation of his grace in this world, and glory hereafter; for he cannot forget us, if we do not forget ourselves; which if we do, he greater will be our condemnation, when the

*Lord cometh to judge the world in righteousness and truth* : For as he is merciful in giving us time to repent, so he will take vengeance on those who abuse his patience and long-suffering.

But to come close to the text, this should astonish all hard-hearted sinners, who despise Christ and his Ministers, who will at last manifest his power in their condemnation : for such as will hear the voice of his word, by his Ministers, shall hear the terrible voice of him, when he shall sit in judgment, and bid him go into everlasting burnings.

Since the person of the Judge is of such endless power and glory, of such wonderful might and Majesty, it should humble all men when they come into his presence, as they do who come to hear the Word preached, or to receive the Sacraments ; for when the word is preached, God speaks to us, and when we pray, we speak to God : And if so, how dare any man sleep in his presence, or use any unseemly gesture. If they were to come into the presence of the king, how careful would such be, not to offend, and to pull off their hats, and shew all tokens of reverence ? but to see many come into the presence of the King of kings, and Lord of lords, with all the negligence and disrespect imaginable, is a thing no less frightful, than to be abhorred by all good Christians ; even at their prayers, or singing of psalms, how slovenly do some men perform these duties, who if they were to be before a prince or great man, would not only stand up, but bow and cringe like sycophants ? which indecent custom certainly ought to be avoided more

in the presence of God, when we are praying to him, or when he speaks to us by his word preached.

But to sum up all, Christ saith, John xiv. 3. *If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, ye might be also.* Which words are a great comfort and consolation to godly persons, that they shall be where Christ the Son of God is, which gives full assurance that they shall participate of the same glory with Christ their head, for he shall say unto them, *Come ye blessed.* They shall both with body and soul receive a glorious kingdom, and a beautiful crown from the hands of the Lord, which he has purchased for them, who with his own right hand shall cover them, and with his arm will protect them.

Christ intends it as a favour, when he saith in the xxii. of the revelations, *Behold I come quickly.* It is one favour that he will come, seconded with another that he will come quickly; and to establish us in that assurance, he adds, *Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me,* which one would think should work in every man a desire of that day: I am sure it must in all persons that live a holy and godly life. There are scarce any among us, but expects his coming: but that crown which the apostle speaks of, 2 Tim. vi. 8. is laid up for them that *love the appearing of the Lord,* and not only expect it, but love it. And no man can do so, that has not a confidence in his cause. No prisoner longs for the sessions, no client longs for the day of hearing, unless he knew his cause to be good, and

he shall stand upright in judgment. The souls of the martyrs under the altar in heaven, cry unto God, Rev. vi. 9. *How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood,* which, although it is not granted, but the day of judgment is put off, yet God was not displeased with them, but gave them white robes as tokens of innocency.

*White Throne. Doct. 3. The Integrity of Christ's Judgment.*

This throne of Jesus Christ is called a *white throne*, because it betokeneth *purity, beauty, and integrity*, and shews that Christ the Judge of the world, will judge all persons justly, as our consciences shall either testify for or against us; for he fears no man's person be he ever so great, he will not like earthly Judges be moved with favour, nor frightened with big words, nor will he admit of any pleading of lawyers in a bad cause for fees, but every man shall be judged according to his works; the upright man shall enter into life, and eternal joy and happiness, and the murderer and hard-hearted sinners, shall be cast into the *lake of fire*, which is the second death. The Apostle Paul saith, *We know that the judgment of God is according to truth*, Rom. ii. 2. *when every secret thing (as Solomon saith,) Eccles. xii. 14. shall be brought to judgment, and when he shall lighten all things that are hid in darkness, and make the counsel of their hearts manifest.* Then woe unto them, whose sins shall not only be laid open to the face of the Judge,

but exposed to all the host of heaven. What shame and confusion of face must this cause, to those who could cover their sins in this world with bribery and corruptions, when they must appear unveiled, and stand the terrible sentence of God, *Go, ye cursed, &c.* and find the words of Solomon too sadly true, *Prov. xi. 18. The wicked make a deceitful work.*

USE 1. This is a great comfort to those who have been wronged and abused by unrighteous judges in this world, when they shall find themselves to be righted by him that judgeth righteously: and he has pity upon the poor and fatherless; when such as have been persecutors of his poor members, shall feel the smart of it; as Dives was when Lazarus was received into Abraham's bosom. What a comfort, I say, will it be to the poor oppressed suitor to have the Judge say, *Well done thou good and faithful servant, come enter into thy Master's joy.*

USE 2. This should make the godly to bear all their sufferings with patience, for the Lord saith, *Vengeance is mine, and I will repay it.* And St. James saith, *Be ye also patient, and settle your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth near.*

USE 3. This confirms the truth of Solomon's words, *Prov. xi. 18. The wicked worketh a deceitful work,* to persuade themselves that they may sow iniquity, and yet expect to reap happiness: whereas the word of the apostle, *Gal. vi. 8. is grounded upon truth, He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption: but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting.* And

Hebrews xii. 18. the same apostle saith, *Without holiness, no man shall see God.*

USE 4. Seeing Christ comes with majesty, not as a *Mediator*, but as a *Judge*: this should admonish us to repent, *and seek the Lord while he may be found, and so call upon him while he is near*, Isa. lv. 6. In this world Christ came to us by his ministers in mercy to invite us to repentance, but in the world to come he will not come as *Mediator*, but as a *Judge* full of power and glory; so that you see, if we die in our sins, there is no hopes of mercy after our death, for as death leaves thee, so shall judgment find thee. Therefore it highly concerns every man to put on the *white robe*, the garment of righteousness while it is day, lest darkness come upon him unawares, and it is too late to get oil, and light his lamp to attend the bridegroom.

*And one sitting thereon.*

*The person of the Judge described.*

I come now to speak more particularly of the Judge, whom St. John fully describes, Rev. xiv. 14. *I saw a white cloud, and one sitting on it like the Son of Man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.*

Doct. 4. *Christ the Judge at the last day.*

Christ has a right to be Judge in several respects; as first, being Redeemer of the world; and secondly,

in regard to his church, of which he is the head ; and thirdly, as a *Priest*, and *Prophet*, as well as a *King*, a true *High Priest*, who offers up himself once for all, for *the sins of the whole world*, a true Prophet in whom was contained all the council of God, and as a *King*, when he comes to sit on his throne, to judge the quick and the dead, John i. 22. *The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son.* And though it is said, 1 Cor. vi. 2. that the saints shall judge the world, the apostle only means, that they shall appear, applaud, and approve the righteous judgment of Christ, triumphing that his and their enemies are put under his feet, and that all power is given in heaven and in earth to him.

When Christ Jesus lived on earth he came in misery, very poor and meek, so that every sinful wretch durst mock him, and spit in his face ;—Herod, Pontius Pilate, Caiaphas, and all the Jews used him at their pleasure : but at his coming to judgment he shall come as a *King*, guarded and attended with many thousands of heavenly saints and angels, when all his enemies shall tremble and quake, Zech. xii. 10. as they did, when they cried, *Away with him, away with him, Crucify him, crucify him*, may his blood light upon us and our children ; which it has sufficiently done, for they are as vagabonds on the face of the earth to this day.

This should administer comfort to those who have led godly lives, that one who is thoroughly acquainted with our sufferings, is now to judge us in truth and uprightness, so that none but those who have wounded him by their wilful sinning against the light of grace.

need be afraid of this judgment. Which made holy Job take heart in the midst of all his miseries and say, *I know that my Redeemer liveth*; the consideration of which should be a terror to all wicked sinners that live in sin, to think of his coming in glory, whom they have despitefully used, and whose gospel they have trodden under foot, *For he shall come with a sharp two-edged sword to cut in pieces, and a consuming fire to burn up all the ungodly sinners*, Heb. xii. 29. which is enough to strike into the hearts of all wicked men, when *They shall see him whom they have pierced*, as the prophet saith.

Let every man consider this betimes, for as a snare this day shall come on us unawares, for why should any treasure up wrath against the day of wrath. Christ is to be the Judge of the world, which as it may add terror to the wicked, and those that go on in a course of sin, so it administers comfort to those that lead godly lives: since one who is thoroughly acquainted with our sorrows, is to judge us in truth and uprightness. Most think it will go hard with Cain, Pharaoh, Pilate, and Judas in that day, and why not with them, if they resist the grace that is now offered to them in the gospel: for be assured, if we draw our love and obedience from God, he will withdraw his blessing from us.

*From whose Face fled,*

*Severity of the Judge described.*

*From whose face fled away both the earth and the heavens, and their place was no more found. And*

in another place we read, that *The heavens are not pure in his sight*, how much more is the earth polluted by the sins of men, for whose sake it was cursed of God, upon the first transgression of man in Paradise, which shews the wonderful severity of the Great Judge of heaven and earth, at whom we cannot wonder that they should fly, because he is purity itself, and cannot delight in any impure thing. But this mentioned the rather, to express the severity of the Judge, than that things insensible can have any reason to fear. For when God descended on Mount Sinai to give the law, we read the mountains quaked and trembled exceedingly; and in other places how the rocks rent before him as he passed by, and the hills were moved at his presence. And at his dying on the cross, how the foundations of the earth shook, and the rocks rent, and tore the veil of the temple, and the light of the sun was darkened, and the saints arose from their graves. And what then must happen, when he appears in all power and glory? Certainly then it is no wonder, if the affrighted elements then fly, and give place to the terror of his judgment, since the Son of man has scattered an infection over the whole creation.

We are afraid of the plague, because it infects men's bodies, but the plague of sin is a thousand times more to be abhorred, for it infects both body and soul. The remembrance of which should make us be wary, how we mispend our time, the thoughts of which kept holy David in such awe, that he repented him of the evil, and the Lord

forgave him, *I have feared thy judgments, thy judgments were always in my sight.* It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, yet if we repent, he will forgive, for he doth not willingly afflict the children of men. The Ninevites experienced his mercy, in the warning he gave them by Jónah; and it were to be wished that we were like them, and would repent, and not deny Christ entrance, when he stands at the gate of our hearts and knocks.

• *Observe,* Seeing both heaven and earth shall fly from the presence of Jesus Christ, we ought not to dream away our lives, but repent before it is too late: for, *Unless ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.* For the Psalmist saith, *A fire shall devour before him, and a mighty tempest shall be moved round about him,* Ps. xi. 2. yet so merciful is he that he gives warning before he strikes.

2dly, Seeing that heaven and earth shall fly at his presence, who have not sinned, what shall wicked and hard hearted sinners do? Where shall blasphemers and adulterers go, when the Judge is their enemy? The scripture in diverse places declare the severity of the Judge, 2 Thess. i. 8. *He shall come in a flame of fire rendering vengeance.* And, *Many of them which sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, &c. some to shame, and tribulation, anguish and sorrow, shall be upon every one that doth evil,* Rom. ii. 9. And the companions the wicked shall have in the other world are *Even the devil and his angels, &c.* Matt. xxv. 41.

Ver. 11. *And I saw the dead both great and small.*

I have already described the person of the Judge, by his wonderful majesty and power, I come now to shew you who they are that shall appear before this great Judge; who are not those alone that shall be found actually dead, and raised at that day, but even the living that then shall be found; for Jesus Christ shall judge both the quick and the dead, as St. Paul saith, *We shall not die, but be exchanged*: for if the dead who have been rotten many thousand years, shall appear and stand before God, much more they which be living, when Christ shall come to judgment. So then it is plain, although St. John in the text speaks only of the dead, yet all, both quick and dead, shall appear and stand before his throne.

*I saw the dead, &c.*

Doct. 5. *Men shall be raised out of the dust at last.*

*The Lord killeth (saith Hannah in her song,) and maketh alive, bringeth down to the grave, and raiseth up, 1 Sam. ii. 6. I am sure, saith Job, that my Redeemer liveth, and that I shall stand the last day on the earth; and though worms destroy my body, yet I shall see God in my flesh.* We must not think, that our long lying in the grave, can hide us from the general resurrection. It is not the stubble shall hide Saul, nor the ground Achan's sin, Cain shall

rise with Abel, Herod with John the Baptist, Felix with Paul, Moses and Pharaoh.

Then will it be the time that conscience will accuse such as refused to hearken to her dictates; the Gentiles shall rise up against the Jews, and the heavens and the earth, and the works that are therein shall witness against us, and we shall weep and howl, and would give all that ever we were worth in the world, for one hour's time to repent, and make our reconciliation with God, whom we have afore neglected.

The doctrine of the resurrection is so fully made out both in the Old and New Testament, that all must acknowledge it, and believe it shall be as God hath appointed it at the last day.

The prophet Daniel saith, *That they that sleep in the dust shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to everlasting shame*, Dan. xii. 2. And St. John saith, *The time shall come in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and they shall come forth; and they that have done good, shall go unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of condemnation*, John v. 28. Which is confirmed by St. Paul, in 1 Cor. xv. 51. *Behold I shew you a mystery, we shall not all sleep, but that we shall be changed, and that in the twinkling of an eye, at the sound of the last trumpet; for as by sin came death, so by death came life*. And thereunto St. Austin saith, *He that liveth well, cannot be afraid to die, nor doubtful of his resurrection*. And in short we all confess the resurrection of the dead, as one of the most prin-

cipal articles of our faith; and that the godly and wicked shall both arise, but with this difference, the one shall rise to life eternal, and the other to eternal destruction, which to them cannot be called a resurrection, any more than taking of a malefactor out of prison to be executed, can be called a delivery: but it shall be with them, as with Pharaoh's servants, both were taken out of prison, the one to be restored to his office, and the other to be executed.

What manner of persons ought we then to be in all holy conversation, exhorting one another to repentance? Both poor and rich, minister and people, that by the grace of God we may be enabled to lead a new life; and with St. Paul be careful to *keep a conscience void of offence, both towards God and towards man*, 2 Cor. i.

USE. 1. It is a great joy to the godly, that they shall rise again, and a terror to the wicked, because they shall be punished; and well were it for them, if their souls were as the souls of beasts, and should never rise; and therefore St. John saith, *He saw the dead both small and great stand before God*, all must rise to honour or dishonour, to salvation or damnation.

USE 2. In this day, both great and small, high and low, rich and poor, shall appear; and the only difference will be, the concern to be weighed in the balance, whether they have been good or evil; if they are found weight in the scale of Justice, they shall ascend in triumph with their Redeemer to sing hallelujahs world without end: But if wanting, they shall descend into the dismal regions of darkness, *Where shall be weeping and gnashing of*

## THE LAST GREAT ASSIZE,

*teeth*, and that for ever and ever to all eternity. As the thoughts of which should be a terror to all ungodly people, so it should be a matter of comfort to all poor members of Christ Jesus. In this life, the godly undergo many miseries; as holy Job, who said to corruption, *Thou art my mother*, and to the worm, *Thou art my sister and brother*; and yet St. Ambrose saith, *He had within him a soul full of sweet ointment, which was full of sweet savour in the nostrils of God.*

USE. 3. By all which you see our bodies shall arise, not weak and lame, but sound and glorious bodies, having no pain or grief as St. Matt. saith, xxvii. 52. *And the graves were opened, and many of the saints bodies' that slept arose, and came out of the graves after the resurrection, and went into the holy city of Jerusalem.* But as for the ungodly, it is not so with them, they shall arise, but only to go into eternal torments, even hell fire. Which it were to be wished, all men of any degree would consider, while it is yet day, before darkness come upon them, and it is too late to repent, and turn unto the Lord our God.

# THE LAST GREAT ASSIZE.

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## DISCOURSE II.

REV. XX. 12, &c.

12. *And I saw the dead both small and great, stand before God, and the books were opened, which is the Book of Life: And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books according to their deeds.*

**I** HAVE already described with what majesty and glory, the Judge shall come to the comfort of the godly, and amazement of the wicked, and who they are that must appear, both *small and great*. All must arise in their native strength and beauty, as Adam was created at, which was a perfect man, about thirty years old, or at the age of our Saviour, when he died upon the cross, which was about thirty-three years of age; for it cannot be imagined, that infants dying in their minority shall so rise, or that aged and decrepid persons shall rise in their imbecility, who must be enabled to undergo the eternity of happiness or misery, which all authors agree shall be over the valley of Jehosaphat, by mount Olivet, which is near unto Jerusalem, eastward from the Temple. And as cosmographers describe it to be in the midst of the earth, which is very probable for four reasons:

*First*, The scripture saith, *I will gather together all nations into the valley of Jehosaphat, and plead with them there*, Joel iii. 1, 2. *Cause the mighty One to come down, O Lord, let the heathen be awaked, and come up to the valley of Jehosaphat, for there will I sit, and judge all the heathen round about*, Joel iii. 11, 12.

*Secondly*, Because our Saviour was there crucified : so over this place his throne shall be erected, when he sits in judgment, to manifest his power and glory : as also near unto this valley was mount Moriah, where Abraham would have sacrificed his son Isaac, Gen xxii. And here Jacob saw the angels ascending and descending on a ladder, Gen. xxxii. And the angel put up his sword, and fire from heaven burnt the sacrifice in Araunah's floor, 2 Sam. xiv. And here Solomon built the temple, 2 Chron. iii. 1. Likewise in this place Christ preached the gospel, and suffered before he entered into glory.

*Thirdly*, It is very probable that the place where the angels shall be sent to gather together all the elect, from one end of the heavens to the other, is to be near to Jerusalem in the valley of Jehosaphat over the Amorites, Moabites, and those of mount Seir, which is a type of that final victory, which Christ shall give his elect over all their enemies.

*Fourthly*, Because the angels told the disciples, that as they saw Christ ascend from mount Olives, which is over the valley of Jehosaphat, so in like manner he should come down from heaven enthroned amidst the cherubims, attended with ten thousand times ten thousand saints and angels, who shall gather us from all nations even from the four winds of heaven.

*Books, what is meant by them, every man's conscience.*

Thy conscience is the book that shall be opened, and that shall be as good as ten thousand witnesses, either to excuse or accuse thee before God; for as God hath his book of infinite knowledge, whereby he knows the very secrets of all hearts, so likewise he has given to every man and woman a book, which is their own conscience, wherein are written all our thoughts, words, and actions.

Holy David acknowledged this, when he said, *Thou, O Lord, knowest the thoughts of my heart long before I utter them.* And with this book of the law given to man as a rule and guide to walk by, which is called a book of remembrance, by which all our actions must be tried and examined. And then the book of our own conscience shall be opened, which is now so closed up in our breasts, that no eye on earth but our own knows and perceives; and when these books are opened and strictly compared, we shall find our sins do agree in every tittle. And then follows the book of judgment, which the comfortable or terrible sentence will be pronounced by. And after the book of life, in which all our names are enclosed, in which all their names are written that shall be pronounced good and faithful servants, which cannot be changed or defaced by time; and this was the book which Moses's zeal did desire, that his name might be blotted out, rather than his Master's name should be blasphemed.

Thus kind is God to us, and careful of us, that he keeps every thing so just, that no wrong can be done us, for we have all the privilege imaginable to

do ourselves justice. First, The book of the law, shewing us what we should do, and then the book of our own conscience, shewing us what we have done: against the first of these, no man or woman can except; for as David saith, *The commandments of the Lord are pure, and righteous altogether*, Psal. xvi. And for the second, it being always in our own keeping, who can say against that, seeing the Lord will then judge a man, not by another man's conscience, but by his own, wherein nothing can happen, but what we must be knowing of ourselves.

**Doct. 1.** *All our thoughts, words, and works must come to judgment.*

I come now to the doctrinal part of the text, to shew that all our thoughts, words, and actions must come to judgment; for every man's book shall be opened, in which are set down even the thoughts of our hearts: there is none so secret or so close, but it is recorded in this book of conscience, as is also every idle word that we speak, and act that we do, though never so closely done.

As Job on this account saith, *Thou hast sealed up all our sins in a bag*, which plainly demonstrates a kind of keeping them against the day of accounts, even all the sins that we now make so light of, either in thought, word, or action, will be produced against us so plainly, that none dare deny the accusation, because our consciences will come in evidence against us.

How many wicked and vile thoughts have a wicked man and an unchaste woman in their minds night and day, which are all written in this book

of conscience. Which made holy Dávid look upon it as a great mercy, that God had given him a sight of his sins, *Thou hast set my misdeeds before me*, saith he, *and my secret sins in the sight of thy countenance*, which is what every one of us should do, who have put far away from us the evil day; but know ye, the account of them will not be so passed over, when the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open, and whatever has been done in secret shall be published on the house-top and come to light. Which if we did but consider, how watchful should we be over our hearts and lips, that we offend not in thought or word, much more in deed. How many sins that pass by unregarded, would then be taken notice of, and more care would be taken to avoid them, lest they rise up against us at the great and terrible day of the Lord's coming to judge the world.

*Secondly*, Our speeches are noted in this book as well as our thoughts, and yet what a number of profane words pass out of the mouths of ungodly men and women, what horrible and blasphemous oaths! What cursed speaking, lying, and slandering! all of which are written in this book, which when it is opened, it will discover all, not only our filthy thoughts, but every wicked word.

Our Saviour tells us, Matt. xii. 35, *That we must give an account of every idle word at the day of judgment*, which although men strive to forget, yet they are written in their consciences, and one day must come to judgment, and then give an account of all our actions, whether they have been good or bad, *all must appear*, 2 Cor. v. 20. and give an account to this Judge.

And if so, what manner of men ought we to be

in holiness and righteousness of life ; for conscience is so tender, that if it be pricked by sin, it will be blemished and wounded, and therefore we ought to take care that sin gets no entrance into our hearts, lest it make havock of our souls: And in this case, Solomon gives us a very necessary caution, when he saith, *Counterguard thy heart, and watch over thy soul*, Prov. iv. 4. *that thou do not any thing that may wound thy conscience.*

*Thirdly*, If we look into the world, we shall find most men's lives are almost nothing else but a continual course of sin, which though they are as innumerable as the sand on the sea-shore, yet many men never mind them, but they shall all be written in the book of conscience, and come to judgment, though committed never so secret ; for conscience puts them all down against the day of accounts. There is no sin so secret, that will not be brought to light as the wise man saith, *What has been done in secret shall be published on the house tops, and shall come to light*, Eccl. xii, 14. And for this reason,

*First*, Because it makes the sinner the more ashamed and tormented, but the more he perceives his sins, the more it will vex him ; as a man who is in debt, the more he thinks of it, the more it troubles him.

*Secondly*, That they may have no excuse, or cloak for their sin, and say, *Lord when saw we thee an hungered, &c.* the Lord convicts them before he condemns them. From which we might observe, the endless love of God towards man, who forewarns him of all these things, to the end that he might prevent the danger that he is in, and keep a

*conscience void of offence towards God and towards man.*

*Thirdly,* To take heed of falling into lesser sins because they usher in greater, for the least of which, were not his mercy infinite, he might justly destroy us. Paul complains of this, and Peter bids Simon Magus to *repent and pray, if perhaps the thoughts of his heart may be pardoned.* How careful then ought we to be of our thoughts, and much more of our words, seeing we must give account for all, and our consciences will bear witness against us; and with holy David to desire the Lord, *Not to enter into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight no man living shall be justified.* And St. Austin saith, *I want mercy, and as a fugitive I return and seek for peace, and I confess I am not worthy to be called thy creature, my conscience tells me so, which is a witness that I daily and hourly carry about me.*

*Fourthly,* Seeing every man's conscience is his book, we may see the woeful misery of all those who have defiled their consciences; for as their consciences do accuse them, even so will God condemn them; and-if so, what manner of men then ought every one of us to be in all holiness of life; But alas! who thinks of this till it is too late, it doth not so much as enter into our hearts; for if it did, men would not lie, steal, swear, and commit adultery as they do. We pity men who have a bad cause to try before a righteous Judge, and never consider what account we have ourselves to make at this day of the great assize of all the world.

*Fifthly,* Seeing the book must be opened, and every man's conscience must come to scanning, how should this cause us all to have a good con-

science, and entreat the Lord to exhibit into our minds the certain testimony of his saving grace, which he hath begun to work in us, that we may do that which is pleasing in his eyes, to walk in his commandments, and to keep his judgments, and so being made partakers of Christ's righteousness, we may have the books of our consciences found perfect, and our misdeeds cancelled, so that we may cry *Abba Father*, which we cannot do but by having a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man.

The best means therefore to preserve a good conscience, is carefully to keep that book of account, by which we must be judged: and to do this, there are two things required, *First*, to avoid all things that may prejudice a good conscience. *Secondly*, To be careful to use all good means and helps that may cherish it. And so to take care of not falling into any sin, be it never so small, seeing lesser sins usher in greater, and for the least were not God's mercy infinite, he might justly destroy us; for who can stand before him in the great day of account.

There are also two especial lets and hindrances of a good conscience, *First*, Ignorance of the law and word of God; for when a man is ignorant what is sin, how then can he take heed lest he wound his soul. We must remember that the wages of sin is death, and that eternal both of body and soul; for till we are mindful of the curse due to sin, we can never repent us of sin, and be so grieved for our sins, as to hunger and thirst after Christ Jesus, whose blood applied to our souls by faith only can purify the conscience, and quiet the heart.

*Secondly*, The hindrances of a good conscience

is worldly lust as the love and desire of riches, pleasure, honour, &c. which being grounded in our hearts, hinder the keeping a good conscience, to prevent which, let us be careful to do every thing that may cherish true *saving faith* in us, whereby our souls may be assured of the love of God in Jesus Christ for the pardon of our sins; and to preserve in this faith we must often hear and read the word of God, which will instruct us how to repent sincerely of past sins, and take care not to commit any more for the future, but continue to walk in the paths of faith and true repentance, to the increase of a good conscience, and the saving of our immortal souls.

When a man is thus truly humbled for his sins, and beggeth of God to forgive him with sighs and groans, then will the Lord send forth into his soul, his blessed spirit to assure him of God's mercy, of the pardon of his sins, and that our wounds in conscience are healed. But, alas! We find most men in this wicked and adulterous generation, lead such lives, as if they knew not what sin is, and therefore cannot possibly have a clear conscience, for, *whatsoever is not of faith is sin*. Although I am persuaded, that there is not so wicked a sinner living, but at sometimes his conscience checks him.

When a man has got a good conscience, and is truly humbled for his sins, and finds that his conscience doth not accuse him, even then he must take no less pains to preserve it. *O Lord*, saith David, *a wounded conscience, who can bear?* A man's conscience is like the apple of his eye, prick it but with a pin, and it will endanger the sight; so prick the conscience with sin, and it will make havock

of the soul, and therefore Solomon saith, *Counter-guards thy heart, and watch over thy soul*, Prov. iv. 6.

It is requisite therefore to walk with God, by example, as did Enoch and Elias, so to order our lives, as if we were always in the presence of God; for whatsoever we may think, his all-seeing eye is ever looking into our thoughts and actions, when we least imagine he beholds us; and though he for a season delays to punish sinners, yet most certainly the day will come, when we least think of it, and it will fall heavy upon us in the end. Which to have always in our thoughts, is the ready way to make us keep a good conscience, the want of which emboldens men in sin, because they consider not, that God sees them, and that they have a conscience within them to witness against them at the last day.

*And another Book was opened, which is the Book of Life.*

*What is meant by the Book of Life?*

The meaning of this book is, that when Christ the Judge has examined the book of men's consciences, to view what is therein written and found that according to their evidence, as it testifies good or evil, judgment may accordingly be awarded; and now he sheweth that he will open a second book, and this book is even the Book of Life, which is so often made mention of in the Old and New Testament, as that of Moses, Exod. xxxiii. 31, 32. *Oh this people have sinned a great sin, therefore now if thou pardon their sins, thy mercy*

*will appear; but if thou wilt not, I beseech thee rase me out of that book which thou hast written.*

And David saith Psalm lix. 28. *Let them be blotted out of the Book of the Living, and not be written with the righteous.* And Rev. iii. 5. *He that overcometh shall be covered with white raiment and I will not blot out his name out of the Book of Life.*

And the Holy Ghost speaking of the heavenly Jerusalem, saith, *There shall in no wise enter into it, any thing that defileth or worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.* Now this Book of Life so often made mention of in the holy Scriptures, can be nothing else but God's eternal council, purpose and decree, to the faithful in Christ Jesus, on whom he will bestow eternal life and happiness; for we must not imagine that God has need of any book, but he only expresses it thus for our understanding: as a captain recordeth the names of his soldiers, or as the names of the magistrates are recorded in cities, so God has enrolled the names of all his saints in the Book of Life, so that not one of them shall perish.

*Doct. 1.* Thus having explained what is meant by this Book of Life, it is next to be considered, what is to be learned from hence, which is to know assuredly that God has a Book of Life, wherein the names of his chosen are written, who is able to call over his servants by their names; for Christ is the true shepherd of his flock, and they are always numbered before him, *I am* saith he, *the good shepherd, I know my sheep, and am known of them,* John x. 14. for the knowledge of God is so truly exact and perfect, that nothing is so secret that is

hid from him, *He searcheth the heart, he trieth the reins, and understandeth the heart long before,—his eyes are like a flame of fire, and his feet like fine brass,* Rev. ii. 18.

*What are the Uses ?*

USE 1. Now as for the uses of these considerations, we may behold the blessed and happy estate of all the *elect and chosen children of God*; for all these are written in the *Book of Life*, and so consequently blessed and happy for ever, *If thy name be written in the Book of Life, thou shalt never perish.* For Christ will not blot out their names that are there written, but own them before his father, who is in heaven, and there prefer them to honour and glory, and to endless joy and comfort; *whom God loveth once, he loveth to the end.* But miserable and wretched is the state of those whose names are not found to be written in this Book of Life in the last day; for they shall not enter into the joy of the New Jerusalem, but be utterly excluded from all happiness and comfort. However, let none be too secure, that their names are written in this book, and rely upon that only for their salvation, doing otherwise as themselves list, lest in the end, they find themselves miserably mistaken and deceived. Take heed, I say, with St. Paul, that *Evil communication do corrupt good manners*, for although God has made us without our help, or whether we will or no; for if he hath elected any man to eternal life, he hath ordained that they shall walk circumspectly in the way leading thereunto, so that by their good works which others behold, they may glorify their Father

which is in heaven, it being impossible that a good man can lead a wicked life, and live and die therein. And therefore they that imagine they be the children of God, and their names are written in the Book of Life, that they may live as they please, do cast away their souls, and like Cain and Judas are their own judges and executioners. For as God has ordained some men to eternal happiness, and written their names in heaven, so he hath appointed them the way to walk in, and bring them to it.

USE 2. It is plainly told that God has a book wherein all the names of the elect are written, yet it is presumption in any one to presume to say, he is certain his name is set down therein, if he lead a sinful course of life, or neglects to work out his own salvation with fear and trembling. We find our blessed Saviour, when his disciples rejoiced, because the devils were subdued and cast out by them; say, *Nay, Rather rejoice, because your names are written in the Book of Life.* This indeed is a joy, far exceeding all other joys; and yet many rather rejoice to be the son of a rich man, a gentleman, or nobleman, to have gold and silver, lands and livings, which often makes them so lofty and proud, that they forget God, and a good conscience, which must be their only comfort upon a death-bed, *But who is he that rejoiceth in this, that he is the son of God, and his name is written in the Book of Life,* which is a joy indeed, and yet we find but few, rejoicing at this great benefit, of being a child of God, and that his name is written in the *Book of Life.*

If we set bounds to our love to God, or to our service to God, or if we limit ourselves to our

obedience to the Holy Ghost, love one command and slight another; obey in one point, and yet lie cross in another, then is all we do, but a serving God in part, and hastening to our own destruction, for our conscience tells us, we ought to serve him with all our might and power: but if we love the Lord with our *whole heart* and *whole soul*, and serve him with all our might and strength; if we esteem all God's precepts concerning all things to be right, and have respect to all his commandments, then we may be ascertained that our names are written in the Book of Life.

*What Conscience is.*

If I set bounds to my love to God, or to my service to God; if I limit myself in my obedience to the holy God, love one command and slight another, obey in one point, and offend in another, it is all but the working of a *natural conscience*. But on the other hand, if we love the Lord with our whole heart, and whole soul, and serve him with all our might and strength, Matt. xxii. 37 *And if we esteem all God's precepts, concerning all things to be right, and have respect unto all the commands*, then is our love and service from a *renewed conscience*.

If a carnal man's conscience check or accuse for sin, then he seeketh to slip the mouth of it, but not to reform it; for such men's business is to stifle conscience, whenever it flies in their faces, and accuses them: but the true believer chusest rather to let conscience cry, than to stop the mouth of it, until he can do it upon good terms, and can fetch

in satisfaction to it, from the blood of Jesus Christ, by fresh acts of faith apprehended and applied.

The wicked man seeketh to still the noise of conscience, rather than remove the *guilt*; but the righteous seeketh the removal of *guilt* by the application of Christ's blood, and then conscience is quiet of itself. As a foolish man having a mote fallen into his eye, and making it water, he wipeth away the water, and labours to keep it dry, but never searches his eye to get out the mote; but a wise man mindeth not so much the wiping, as the searching the eye, somewhat is got in and that causeth the watering, and therefore the cause must be removed.

Now then, if, when conscience accuseth for sin, I take up a form of godliness to stop the mouth of conscience, and if hereupon conscience be still and quiet, then is this but a wicked conscience: But if when conscience checks, it will not be satisfied with any thing but the blood of Christ, and thereupon I use duties to bring me to Christ, and if I beg the sprinkling of his blood upon my conscience, and labour not so much to stop the mouth of it, as to remove guilt from it, then is this a renewed conscience. And it is a matter of endless comfort to God's children when they know this, *That they are the children of God, and that eternal life belongs unto them, it will stir them up to obey God with joy and cheerfulness all the days of their lives.* But the wicked man let him go never so far, let him do never so much in matters of religion, yet still he has a *Delilah*, a bosom sin, which draws him off from God and godliness.

If then we profess religion, *If we make mention of*

*the name of the Lord and make our boast of the law, and yet through breaking the law dishonour God, Rom. ii. 23.* If we live in the love of any sin, and make use of our profession to cover it, then are we hypocrites, and our duties flow but from an evil conscience: but on the other hand, if we name the name of the Lord Jesus, and withal depart from iniquity, if we use duties, not to cover, but to discover and to mortify sin, then are we upright before God, and our duties flow from a renewed conscience. *David hated every false way, he regarded no iniquity in his heart, Psalm lxvi. 18.*

*Marks of God's children by the Spirit.*

The first mark whereby we may know whether we be elected or not, is the witness of God's Spirit, and the testimony of a good conscience, *Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba Father. The spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, Rom. viii. 16.* Wherein the apostle saith, that wicked and ungodly persons, who are not directed by the Spirit of God, but live in sin, have no true peace in their souls; but on the other hand, the children of God, have the spirit of adoption, which assures us of our election, and makes it known unto us that we are the sons of the Almighty. St. Peter admonishes, *To give all diligence to make our calling and election sure, .1 Pet. ii. 20.* And our blessed Saviour bids his disciples, *Rejoice that*

*their names are written in the Book of Life*, John xix. And the articles of our belief do confirm the same, which teaches us to believe the *Catholic Church*, and that we shall have *life everlasting*, which we may be assured of, if we have a lively faith and hope in him, and a firm reliance upon him, and then we may address ourselves to his mercy seat with comfort, and a sure confidence in him.

And that no man may deceive himself, St. Paul gives us two signs to know whether we have the testimony of the Lord's spirit or not, it will make us cry unto God, and even fill heaven and earth with sobs and sighs for the pardon of our sins, as David did, who in the sincerity of his heart humbly confessed his sins unto the Lord, which he left upon record for us to imitate: this is very unlike to what many do now-a-days, who say they hope to be saved, and yet never pray to God for pardon of their sins, but pass away their time in sports and pastimes.

The second means whereby we may know that our names are written in the Book of Life, which very near concerns the welfare of the soul of every man and woman, is by the Word of God, which expressly tells us, *Whosoever believeth in Christ Jesus shall be saved*: And therefore it is necessary we should be mindful and attentive in harkening unto the word of God, that we may be able to try and prove ourselves, whether we be in the faith or not; whether we be the children of God or no; for a child of God hearing this comfortable doctrine opened by God's ministers can safely say I can apply this promise to myself, as a man or wo-

man that have true faith, are certain they shall be saved; for we may know our election by the fruits it brings forth in our lives and conversation, as well as the blessed testimony of God's Holy Spirit, which cannot deceive: for the fruits of election are set down by the Holy Spirit, that all men may be able to examine and try themselves, and know whether they be ordained to life or not, Rom. viii. 30. *Whom he predestinated them he also called; and whom he also called, them he also justified, them he also glorified.* In which words we may see the marks of our election; for all that are written in this book are first *called*. Secondly *justified*. And *Thirdly sanctified*. So then if any man would know whether he is elected to life eternal: let him examine himself in these three effects of his *election*, whether he is *called*, *justified*, and *sanctified*: and if so, then he is sure that he is *elected*, without which no man can be sure.

So that you see, the way to know this, is by descending into ourselves, and looking on the marks and testimonies of our own hearts, to prove that we are included in the number of God's elect; for as Solomon tells us, *As water sheweth face to face, so even the heart sheweth man to man*, Prov. xxvii. 19. For if we find written on the tables of our hearts, the true marks and tokens of God's children, then let us conclude that our names are written in the Book of Life: but as for those who continue in sin, they will find their case to be very deplorable, and can only say to themselves, that their souls totter on the brink of everlasting destruction, into which, without God's infinite mercy, they must be swallowed up at the last day. St. Paul

tells us, the wicked and ungodly sinners who are destitute of the Spirit of God, to guide them in the way of truth, have only the spirit of bondage, Rom. viii. 15. But in the next verse he saith, *They that are his children, have the spirit of adoption*, which makes known unto them that they are his *elect*; for saith he, *His spirit doth witness to our spirits, that we are the sons of God*, Rom. viii. 16. And to prove it, he adds, that the Spirit of God makes all his chosen ones to be lowly and humble, meek and contrite, continually crying and praying unto God with sighs and tears, which God will not despise nor reject. So David, who was a man after God's heart, confessed his sins, *Watering his couch with tears*. But those whose hearts are hardened, and cannot thus pray unto the Lord, but their devotions seem tedious, wearisome and uneasy to them, are in a bad state, and have not the spirit of God witnessing to their spirit, and take more pleasure in sin, *Whose wages is death*, than in godliness, which is great gain.

When a man comes to see his sins, and God's anger for them he dislikes them, grieves for them, bewails them, and begs pardon for them, and begins to become a new man, to believe in Christ, and to seek after happiness as Nicodemus did, and is afraid to offend his heavenly Father; not so much out of fear of punishment for sin, as out of filial duty and obedience to him, who so loved us from the beginning. But then we must take heed that we deceive not ourselves with an outward calling, for our Saviour saith, *Many are called but few are chosen*. Before a man can be justified, he must *repent him of his sins*, and then Christ will assure

him of pardon. And therefore if any would know whether he is justified or not, he must first consider, whether he has repented so as to be truly humbled for his sins. And in the next place, he must have a true faith in Christ Jesus to lay hold upon him, and wrestle with him, as Jacob did with the angel, and not let him go till he gives him a blessing.

The third fruit of election is *sanctification* which consists in two parts: *First*, To die to sin. *Secondly*, To rise to righteousness. If you hate your old sins, and delight in holy duties, it is a true sign that you belong to God; but if you do favour the things belonging to the flesh, and desire the garlic and flesh pots of Egypt, then you have no assurance of salvation.

USE. 1. If thy name is written in heaven, nothing can hurt thee, though thou be poor with Job, sick Hezekiah, in prison with Joseph, haled to death with thy Saviour Christ, nothing can hurt thee; for if God justify, who can condemn.

*Secondly*, Seeing God has written down the name of every man and woman that shall be saved in the Book of Life, and shewed us the way that leads to it, and unless we walk in that way, we cannot come to it. It behoves every one of us to walk in that way, which leadeth to life, and not to serve sin and Satan any longer, but labour to die to sin, before we die to nature, and bury sin before it buries us; for sin brings nothing but shame in this life, and perdition in the life to come.

# THE LAST GREAT ASSIZE.

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## DISCOURSE III.

REV. XX. 12, 13.

12. *And the dead were judged out of the Book of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.*
13. *And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hell delivered up the dead that were in them, and they were judged every man according to their works.*

**A**S for the Book of Life, I think I have sufficiently explained that it is the counsel and decree of *God's election*, whereby he has chosen certain men and women out of the lump of mankind, who have their names registered, that they may be admitted to eternal life, which every one ought to be assured of, as they might certainly be, by the marks set down in scripture, and by the testimony of God's spirit which cannot lie.

*Secondly*, By the fruits and effects of election, as *vocation, justification, and sanctification*, love of one another, and obedience to all the commandments of God, and therefore it very much concerns every one of us, to endeavour with all our might and main to make our calling and election sure, or we cannot be saved, "Behold I give you' power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you: notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits

are subject unto you ; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven," Luke x. 19, 20. without which we can have no true joy to our souls, notwithstanding we live in all the splendour and glory imaginable ; which most men are very careful to mind, and at the same time neglect the most substantial happiness, and saving their immortal souls.

*After what manner all men shall be judged.*

St. John proceeds to describe the last judgment, as it was revealed to him in his wonderful vision in the isle of Patmos, where it was necessary to have it because it was private and free from company, and to solace him in that solitary place, so that his soul might the better be fitted with contemplation to receive the power of God ; for when the help of man is furthest off, then God is nearest. And the reason he gives us of it is, "That every man shall be judged according to those things which are written in the book according to our own works."

It hath been already said, That he saw all, *both great and small stand before God*. None shall be wanting at that day, every man's book shall be opened, and every one's conscience shall be tried by the things that are written in the book, and nothing that is alleged shall be gain said : And although it might be wondered how so great a multitude shall be judged, and every man's book shall be read, no, not one shall be wanting, although we see what a long time it holds our Judges in this world, to try a few persons, where there is such calling of evidences, such producing of witnesses,

such preferring of indictments, yet at the day of judgment, every man's own conscience shall either justify or condemn him in a moment. When Christ Jesus the great Judge, shall sit upon the throne of his glory, attended by his holy angels, saints, and martyrs, then shall the book of every man's conscience be opened, and *According to those things which are in the book* they shall afresh call to mind their former sins which they have committed, and no one shall be able to contradict what he is accused of.

From which words I shall observe these two things: *First*, Who they are that must come to judgment, even the dead both small and great, who have laid many thousand years rotting in the grave. And *Secondly*, That God would have us assured of the day of judgment. 1. *For his glory.* 2. *For our comfort.* 3. *To keep us in fear of him.* 4. *That all might be inexcusable.*

The first may serve to exercise our patience, and to put a bridle on all our thoughts, words, and actions. *Secondly*, By hindering our curiosity, to keep us within the bounds of our duty. To which end the Apostle saith, *Be ye always ready; for in such an hour as ye think not of, the Son of Man cometh.* And *Thirdly*, The means by which we must be tried, They are our consciences, which are the books of record, that either excuse or condemn us at that day. And *Fourthly*, The touchstone of this trial is the Word of God.

Saint John saith, both *small and great must stand before God*, from whom nothing can be hid, and *the dead shall be judged*, their long continuance in the grave cannot make them to be forgot. They must then give an account of their good and evil

deeds, though they have been ever so long ago, all shall appear open to his eyes, to whom darkness is as light. And every thought, word, and action shall be remembered that have been committed a thousand years ago, of which we must give an account, as well as a malefactor that died but yesterday. Though Cain be dead long since, yet his sins are not dead. No more than Judas who betrayed his Master above seventeen hundred years since, who will be called to an account before *him who sitteth on the throne, and judgeth all according to their works.*

On the other hand, those that have done well, and suffered for righteousness sake, shall be rewarded, as the apostle saith, *Sitting upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel, &c.* not that they shall give judgment, but only accompany him to approve the equity of it. A likeness whereof we have in these our earthly judgments, where justices and men of account sit with the judge, not that they have to do in pronouncing sentence or judgment.

But those that have done violence, and lived in a course of sinning, shall tremble with horror at the expected sentence, as we read Luke xiii. 18. *There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth,* when their evil consciences shall fly in their faces, and bring in an accusation against them. Then the usurer, the drunkard, the swearer, the profaner of the sabbath, who thought that death would end all their misery, will find themselves mistaken, when they see themselves along with Dives, seeing Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, and with him they shall be tormented without relief. And what will add to their misery,

will be to behold Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob with the apostles, martyrs, and other holy men, entering into the kingdom of heaven, and advanced in glory, whilst they are shut out themselves, and deprived of that happiness, which they might so easily have obtained.

Then shall their consciences accuse them, when they shall say within themselves, "These are they whom sometimes we had in derision. These are they whom we wronged, and whom we so much oppressed and scorned," and said unto ourselves, "We fools thought their lives madness, and their ends without honour: But now we find they are counted amongst the children of God, and their portion is among the saints, and they are highly advanced in God's favour. But we, alas! have not known the ways of God, nor lived in his fear, nor walked diligently with upright conscience before him." Ah! poor souls, they shall then wish for death: but, alas, alas, death shall fly from them. Oh! it had been good for them, if they had never been born, or had rather been toads and serpents, for in death these have an end: It is not so with the wicked man, for when he is dead, even then begins his greatest misery.

Remember this then all of us in time, whilst the golden opportunity is held forth, for though thou die, yet thy sins die not with thee, *Remember, O young man, that for all this, thou must come to judgment*, saith Solomon, even all old sins that have been committed in secret, will then come to light. Oh, then, let us watch over our lives, and have this still in our minds, that although we die and rot in the grave, yet our sins will not die, they must come to

light. For St. John tells us, that *The dead were judged*, even those that were forgotten long ago, for *God will bring every work to Judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil*, Eccl. xii. 24, which must needs be a great terror to the wicked; but the saints of God will be safe from this fear, being comforted by a good conscience and the assurance they have of eternal happiness, through the merits and mercies of Jesus Christ.

Now then, those who have good and holy thoughts written in their book of conscience, shall be glad to have their books laid open, wherein is found, *obedience, repentance, faith, hope, love, zeal, patience, &c.* But woe to the adulterers, fornicators, murderers, liars, swearers, and blasphemers, *For the wages of such sins is death*, and the wrath and curse of God upon them for ever.

No excuse in the world will serve to award or put off this trial, it will not do to say, *I have married a wife, and cannot come, or I have bought a farm, or a yoke of oxen.* Such excuses will not do, come they must, and stand naked before the Judge, as our first parents did, when God called them to trial for transgressing his commandments, who upon their trial made vain and trifling excuses, Adam saying, *The woman which thou gavest me, gave me of the tree, and I did eat.* And Eve thinking to escape after the like manner, saith *The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.* In like manner Saul made an excuse, when he disobeyed God's commandment, and said, "I have obeyed the voice of the Lord, and have gone the way which the Lord sent me, and have brought Agag, the king of Amalek, and have destroyed the Amalekites: But

the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, and the chiefest of the things, which should have been destroyed, to offer unto the Lord." As also Pilate, who against his own judgment condemned Christ, and yet would excuse himself by taking water and washing his hands, saying, *I am innocent of the blood of this just man.* But this would not do, every man's conscience will tell him otherwise. No fair tales, but plain and naked truths, when we shall not be able to answer one word of a thousand, but forced to confess our misdeeds. And we shall not find as it is in this world, that we can hope to be forgiven, by asking pardon, but then shall our confession be to our open shame and confusion, because it occasions (by the means of those sins we are compelled to confess) our endless destruction.

And then the Judge shall separate the one from the other, the just from the unjust, the sheep from the goats, "For he shall send for his angels with the great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, and from one end of heaven to another, Matt. xiv. 38. Wherein it appears, all shall come, both good and bad, before the Judge, and then shall the just shine as the sun, and be as it were by proclamation, *Come ye blessed.* which makes St. Paul break out into these words, *Herein is the law of God perfect towards us, that we shall have boldness at the day of judgment.* This makes the godly wish the hastening of that day and cry, *Come Lord Jesus, come quickly.*

Seeing then, that there will be no evidence wanting, and that every one carries it in his own breast, and that we must give an account to the Great

Judge of all our thoughts, words and actions : what account shall they give who have been idle hearers and idle doers of his word.

USE. 1. This should teach us to be continually looking over the book of conscience in this life, in order to correct and amend it, so that it may stand fair, when it shall come to be opened in the life to come, which David advises us to, when he says, *I will take heed to my ways that I offend not with my tongue.* Let them who fear the Lord, and love their own souls, take all care to make their calling and election sure. St. John tells us. *All must appear at the great tribunal.* The consideration of which made St. Paul careful to keep his *conscience void of offence both towards God, and towards man,* Acts xxi. because we must receive judgment according to the account written in that book. Oh! that we might imitate that blessed Apostle, and would stir and endeavour that no filthy sins blot our books but that we keep them fair and clean in the sight of God, which we ought to do above all things in the world, *For if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and will also condemn us,* 1 John iii. 20.

USE 2. Seeing that sentence must pass according to things written in our books, let us not only avoid evil actions, but also evil thoughts and words, that will rise up against us at the last day; for St. Paul saith, *Even thoughts shall either excuse or accuse us.* Rom. i. 20. By which you see, if we would truly repent, we must repent of all our vain thoughts and imaginations, for were there no other sins, these would rise up, and be a sufficient evidence to convict us.

Let us not content ourselves to imagine we are safe, if we can say with the Pharisees, *I am no drunkard, nor fornicator, nor extortioner*, unless we can truly say, that there is not an idle word unrepented of, for even they come to judgment, for *I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof in the day of judgment*, Matt. xii. 36. And that we may know more perfectly the meaning of this, St. John saith, *That we shall be all judged according to our works*, Rev. xx. 13. And St. Paul saith, 2 Cor. xxii. 10. "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body according to that which he has done, whether it be good or evil." If thy works be good, thou hast glory, but if thy works be evil, then damnation. Good works although they cannot merit, yet they will shew forth the faith that lay in the heart, for our works shall follow us, when we rest from our labour and attend us in life or death; for which reason the day of judgment may be properly called the day of revelation, wherein all hidden things shall be made known, and the dark secrets and counsels of the heart shall be manifested, for then *God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ*, Rom. ii. 16.

Doct. 1. *Men shall be judged according to their works.*

From what has been said, we may see that all men and women shall come to judgment, and be acquitted or condemned by their works, for even Adam entailed death upon his posterity by eating

the forbidden fruit without repentance, which had not been sufficient, had not the Son of God died to appease the wrath of his offended Father, even so man must endeavour by his humility and obedience, by his works of mercy and charity to procure to himself this happiness, or else it will not avail him, for God is not unrighteous to forget your works and labour of love. As it is said of Cornelius, *That his prayers and alms came up for a memorial before God.* And as the godly shall be rewarded according to their works, so shall the wicked, as their deeds have been in the flesh. "These things hast thou done, and I kept silence, thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself: But I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes," Psalm xx. 21. And again, *I was an hungry, and ye fed me not, &c.*

USE 1. This ought to make us above all things to labour and abound in all holy duties and graces of God's spirit, in knowledge, faith, repentance, love, zeal, cloathing, feeding, and lodging the poor, which Christ takes as done to himself, and according shall be our reward, as he saith, who is the author of all truth, *Verily, verily, of a truth, thou shalt not lose thy reward.* Then how ought all men to endeavour that they may be blessed with such a happiness, that eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man to conceive, when we may attain it at so small a price, as doing good to our fellow creature; for although our good works cannot merit, yet they shall be rewarded, they shall not be forgotten in the day of judgment. They are sacrifices well-pleasing to the Lord, and when all our friends and riches can do us no good, they will bring us comfort in our greatest time of need, and stop the

auger of an all-seeing Judge, who judgeth every one according to his works.

What is spent in sensual pleasure, brings a sting with it to torment us in the end, being frequently attended with punishments in this life; but in the world to come, most certainly with despair and endless torments. The remembrance of which, one should think, would teach us *First*, The fear of God, not to sin. *Secondly*, Faith in Christ, to receive eternal life. *Thirdly*, Patience in adversity, because after momentary pain, succeeds everlasting joy.

*Doct. 2.* Seeing all these things must come to pass, and that nothing shall go with us when we die, but our conscience and our works, what manner of men ought we to be in all godliness, St. John plainly tells us, that both the quick and the dead shall hear the trumpet, and be gathered together in judgment. *First*, By the powerful voice of Christ, those *that are in the graves shall hear his voice.* *Secondly*, By the ministry of angels that shall gather the elect from all parts, the *sea, death, the grave, fire*, which time and nature consumed, shall give up their dead, and obey the voice of God, as at the creation.

*Doct. 3.* Certainly, if men would but seriously consider this, they would be wiser than to set their hearts on things that cannot profit. What do men desire? What do they hunger and thirst after? but for pleasures, profits, and preferments. For these they spend their labour, wit, and strength; but there is no account of prayer in their house, no desire to attain knowledge, faith and repentance, no conscience to live in the fear of God: Alas! They never think of these things, but all their desire is for the things of this world: but poor soul, thou canst

not take one piece of gold or silver with thee, but all must be left behind, and only thy conscience, and thy works must accompany thee.

Let us not then set our hearts too much upon those things which cannot profit us in this fiery day of trial: But let us enter into covenant with the Lord, to strive against the corruptions of our own hearts, wherein we have most dishonoured the Lord, and let us see our covenant be kept and continued as much as in us lieth; and let us all remember the words of the prophet Esdras, in his second book, chap. vii. 32. "The earth shall restore those that have slept in her, and the Most High shall appear upon the seat of judgment, and miseries shall vanish away, and long suffering shall have an end; justice only shall continue, and truth shall remain, and unrighteousness shall bear no more rule."

Let me therefore, in bowels of compassion entreat you to consider in time *the things that belong to your peace*, before it is too late, *laying aside every sin that doth so easily beset you, and so obtain the crown*; for those who do this, shall not miss of the reward which God hath laid up for all those that love and fear him, and which is of more value than ten thousand worlds.

Now a question may be asked, why St. John saith, *all must come to Judgment*, when our Saviour saith, "He that believeth, shall not come to Judgment, but he that believeth not is condemned already."

To which I answer, It is true that the faithful shall not come into Judgment, that is, of condemnation, Rom. viii. 10. "For there is no condemna

tion to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit :” But God will pronounce that blessed sentence, *Come ye blessed, &c.* As for the wicked they are condemned already : *First* in the decree of God, as being reprobates. *Secondly*, in the word of God. And *Thirdly*, In their own consciences. And so we are to understand the saying of Solomon, Eccl. iii. 17. “ God shall judge the just and the unjust, the one to salvation, and the other to condemnation.”

Now as to the third point that I proposed, which is the touchstone of the trial, whereby all mens *thoughts, words, and actions*, shall be tried. St. Paul tells us, *At the day of judgment, God shall Judge the secrets of all men’s hearts by his Gospel*, Rom. i. 16. And since it is so, how careful ought we to be, to read and hear and understand his law and gospel, that all our thoughts, words, and actions, shall be agreeable to what is commanded, so that we may be able to chuse that which is good, and eschew that which is evil ; for those who are ignorant of them, are but in a very bad condition, as St. Paul tells us, “ That the Lord Jesus will come in flaming fire, to take vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” And therefore as you love your souls, love ye the word of God, seek with all diligence to know it, which will stand thee in great stead in the time of need ; when those that neglect it, it will stand against them to their condemnation.

13. *And the sea gave up the dead which were in her, and death and hell delivered up the dead that were in them, and they were judged every man according to their works.*

It is a matter beyond all dispute, that the dead shall rise again. Those who have been eaten by fish, fowl, or wild beast, and men perhaps again have eaten them, and have been afterwards burnt to ashes, which have been scattered over the face of the whole earth; which makes the atheists say, there shall be no resurrection: But did he consider, there is nothing impossible with God, and that it was more difficult to create all things out of nothing than to gather together a little scattered dust, and new form it again, he would not dare to dispute the actions of omnipotence, but rather believe it shall be so, because he that said it is *all truth*, and cannot lie. And this is an article of our faith, *We believe the resurrection of the dead*, which were it not so all our religion is in vain: for his resurrection was not only to expiate our sins, but also to obtain righteousness for us. Thus confident is Job in this, “I know that my Redeemer liveth, whom mine eyes shall behold.” And Isaiah saith, “The dead man shall arise, even with my body shall they arise. Awake and sing ye that dwell in the dust,” Isa. xxvi. 9. And the apostle Paul saith, “If there be no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen,” 1 Cor. xv. 12.

And again, “If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and we are in our sins. Moreover, This corruption, must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.” All must arise whether they be good or bad, As the apostle to the Hebrews saith, *It is appointed for all men once to die, and after death cometh Judgment*. For by the sound of the last trumpet, the dead shall arise, which is not a common trumpet, but the voice of angels,

which shall be heard far and near, nothing shall hinder it, from all the corners of the earth, shall this trumpet be heard, for it is the Lord's signal.

REAS. 1. And indeed it is requisite it should be so in regard of God's justice, that his promises and threatenings might be made good to the godly and wicked, which in this life many times are not.

REAS. 2. The very works in nature do in a manner shew this, as the trees and plants in the earth in the winter which seem to be dead revive and live again in the spring. And as a phoenix when she is old, burns herself to ashes, out of which she doth revive and live again.

And why then should any man think it impossible for God to raise our bodies out of the dust, which though it seem impossible to man, yet it is not impossible to God? For he that created all our bodies with nothing, can make them again with something even of their own matter. And since Christ gave life to himself when in the grave, how much more now being alive, and in heaven glorified, is he able to raise his members from death to life. As the apostle Paul saith, "If we believe that Jesus Christ died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him," 1 Thess. iv. 14. And as he tells the Romans, "If the spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you; he that raised Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his spirit that dwelleth in you," Rom. viii. 21. And to prove the resurrection these witnesses are produced, *First*, The angels, "Why seek ye the living among the dead, he is not here, he is risen," Luke xxiv. 5.

*Secondly*, The saints that arose with him. *Thirdly*, A forced testimony of the soldiers. *Who came into the city, and told all things that were done.* *Fourthly*, The disciples and followers of Christ, and more than five hundred brethren at once. *Fifthly*, Himself, who bid the woman, *Go, tell my brethren that I am risen*, 1 Cor. xv. And St. Peter in his first epistle saith, chap. i. ver. 3. "Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance uncorrupt and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." Which St. Paul also confirms in all his epistles, "Christ is risen from the dead, and is become the first fruits of them that slept", 1 Cor. xv. 20. Likewise Eph. ii. 6. "He hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heaven with Jesus Christ." And in Acts iii. 26. "Unto you first, God having raised up his Son Jesus Christ, has sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from iniquities."

Now the benefits he obtained for us by his resurrection, are

*First*, Our justification.

*Secondly*, Our regeneration.

*Thirdly*, Our resurrection to eternal glory.

And the fruits of Christ's resurrection are, *First*, That by his merit, he hath made full satisfaction for our sins. *Secondly*, The application of his benefits, that could not be conferred unless he had rose again. *Thirdly*, In the gift of the Holy Ghost

by which Christ regenerates us. *Fourthly*, We have the same spirit. *Fifthly*, By the man Christ Jesus came the resurrection from the dead. And *Lastly*, The fruits of Christ's resurrection is the consummation of happiness, and the glorification of his church militant, by which he hath made us partakers of his righteousness, sanctification and glorification, purchased by his merits only, "These things have I spoken unto you," saith Christ, "that in me ye shall have peace, in the world ye shall have tribulation: Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world," John xvi. 53. And St. Paul tells us, "To this end, Christ died and rose again, and revived, that he might be both Lord of the living and the dead." Which texts plainly prove the article of our faith, *To believe the resurrection of the dead.*

*The hour shall come, saith our Saviour, in which all that are in the grave, shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and come forth.* Which is compared to the sound of a trumpet, the loudest and shrillest of all instruments, Thess. i: 15, "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall arise." Which noise shall be heard over the whole world; nay, though men have been many thousand years rotten in the grave, yet they shall hear it, and come forth to judgment. All shall be compelled to appear, even the devils and damned spirits shall be compelled to appear, when every secret thing shall be revealed, and the kings of the earth, as well as the meanest beggar, shall come to judgment; for although Christ was a *Lamb* at his passion, yet many will find him a *Lion* at his resurrection.

It were to be wished that men would be wise and consider this, that they may in this their day, hear the mild and gentle voice of Christ in his word, and by his ministers calling them to repentance, and forsake their sins, before they hear his terrible voice calling them to judgment.

Therefore in all afflictions and miseries, and especially in diseases and death, we must strengthen ourselves in the hopes of the resurrection, remembering that of the apostle, Phil. iii. 20, 21. "Our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for a Saviour, who shall change our vile bodies, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working, wherein he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." And that we may be assured of this, St. Paul saith in 1 Cor. xv. 20, 21, "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept; for since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection from the dead."

As for the day of the resurrection, God hath hitherto shut it up in his counsels; but that it will certainly come, has been fully proved, as well as the manner of it. And that those who are dead, shall be taken up to meet the Lord, if their sins press them not down to destruction.

This hope of the resurrection, hath ever been the greatest consolation to the godly in their afflictions: Whence Tertullian saith, that the confidence in a christian is in the resurrection from the dead. An example of which, is in Job, who in the midst of his afflictions said, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand in the latter days upon the earth, and though after the skin, worms destroy

my body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." And Isaiah saith, chap xxvi. 19. "The dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise: Awake and sing ye that dwell in the dust, for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead: At that time the people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." And Ezekiel is very plain, when he saith, Thus saith the Lord, "Behold, O my people, I will open the graves, and cause you to come out of the graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people; and brought you up out of your graves, and shall put my spirit into you, and you shall live," Ezek. xxxvii. 12.

USE 1. Let us die what death soever, and be scattered to the four winds under heaven, yet our dust shall be gathered together by the mighty power of God, that the soul may again enter into the body, and both come to judgment; therefore whilst we live, let us be mindful of our latter end, and then death shall have no power to do us any hurt; for if we every hour think of death, it will make us so live, that we may do well, and hope for a glorious resurrection. As the tree falls so it lies; as death leaves us, so will judgment find us. But in doing wickedly death is so far from ending our misery, that it is the beginning of it, therefore let us take care how we wish for death, e'er we are prepared for it, for if we die in our sins, it had been better for us never to have been born. And every creature else is in a better state than us, because they cease to be, and their pains are at an end; but it is not so with man, for he has yet an account to reckon for at the day of judgment.

USE 2. Seeing that all men must rise to judgment, this is a wonderful comfort to God's poor children because they shall receive their recompence of reward, for all the labours, sorrows, miseries, scorns, and reproaches, they have undergone in this world; and the greater their afflictions have been here, the greater shall their happiness be hereafter.

USE. 3 This ought to be of exceeding comfort to good men, because death shall not have power to keep their bodies in the grave, but they shall rise in glory, as Christ their Captain hath already done, which should make us cautious to keep our bodies undefiled, because they are the living temples of the Holy Ghost. Wouldst thou have thy body glorified? then glorify God in thy body. Can any man think that his *soul shall be saved*, and *his body glorified*, if he use the members thereof, to sin and uncleanness.

USE 4. Seeing that the word of God assures us, that whatsoever death we die, we shall rise again, and God's children only shall rise to life and glory. This should teach us not to be sorry for those that die in the Lord, for they rest from their labour, and shall rise again to eternal happiness.

*And they were judged every one according to  
his works.*

This is often repeated by the Holy Ghost, because we are hardly brought to believe this point; for were men sensible of this, certainly they would not live as they do in all manner of wickedness.

How necessary is it then, that all who are blinded with ignorance and deluded with the suggestions of

the devil, and their own wicked imaginations, to pray to God for the assistance of his Holy Spirit in all their ways, that they may see their mistake, and acknowledge with the true penitent, the judgment and wrath of God due unto them, and to endeavour to die to sin, before they die to nature, and strive to bury it, before it bury us, for sin only brings shame in this world, and perdition in the life to come. By which we shall not only enjoy a quiet conscience in this life, but end our days with full assurance of a joyful resurrection in the life to come, as the consummation of all happiness.

# THE LAST GREAT ASSIZE.

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## THE FOURTH AND LAST DISCOURSE

CONCERNING

*Death and Hell, and the Joys of Heaven.*

REV. XX. 14, 15.

14. *And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire, this is the second death.*
15. *And whosoever was not found written in the Book of Life, was cast into the lake of fire.*

**I**N handling this weighty point of religion, the second coming of Christ to Judgment, I told you who the Judge is, and how he shall come with great power and majesty, attended with an innumerable company of angels, and all the host of heaven, and also the evidence and records by which all must be tried, even the books of conscience, of life, and the word of God. It now remains, that we come to the execution of that judgment upon all the ungodly, who in this life have turned their backs upon good admonition from God's ministers; which is a very terrible thing, when Jesus Christ, the second person in the Trinity, shall say unto them, "Depart from me ye cursed into hell fire, there to remain for ever with the devil and his angels, &c." when immediately the execution of the sentence shall follow,

*Death and hell were cast into the lake of fire, that is the second death.*

Before I proceed any further, it will not be amiss to explain the meaning of this, because some have made an objection that death is no creature, nor hath any sense of feeling, and consequently not subject to pain or torments: And as for hell, how can it be cast into itself, when it is there already? Which must be meant by the lake of fire. Is hell a water, or fire? And then how can they die, who are doomed to live eternally in torments, and wish to die, but cannot.

To which I answer, By death and hell in this place, is not meant death itself, nor hell itself, but the persons who have made themselves heirs of death and hell, by their wicked courses and reprobate living in this world, who shall be cast into hell fire, and there abide for evermore; so that these are spoken metaphorically, referring to those that die in their sins; namely, all reprobates, all stiff-necked Pharoahs, all bloody Cains, all treacherous Judas's, all these shall be cast into the lake of fire.

*This shews the misery of those that die in their sins.*

USE 1. Let all sinners then that live and delight in sins take heed; for as the prophet saith, *Who can dwell with everlasting burnings?* It were to be wished that all wilful sinners would think in time of this horrible misery that hangs over their heads. What a strange kind of speech is this? When God called such reprobates, even death and hell itself, where the worm of conscience shall never die,

which will be always gnawing and tormenting them, continually bringing into remembrance the happiness they have lost, for a few empty pleasures. Oh ! would to God, that the drunkard, the swearer, and adulterer, the profaner of the Lord's day, would lay this to heart before the vials of God's wrath be poured upon them.

Wicked men now do as the people did in Isaiah's time, Isa. xxviii. 21. make a league with death and the grave, as the rich man in the gospel, who said to his soul, *Soul take thine ease, for thou hast goods and riches laid up for many years* : But the Lord tells them he will break the league, and that notwithstanding all their boasting and security, in the end death shall knock at their doors, and then they shall pay dear for their long lease, even the loss of soul and body for ever.

And is not this the daily practise of most men and women now-a-days, do not many men live in swearing, lying, drunkenness, &c. as if they thought they should never die. But alas ! poor souls, let them know, that death and hell will seize upon them at last, and *they must be cast into the lake of fire.*

USE. 2. In this you may see what a cursed and wretched thing sin is in the sight of God, which makes men become fire-brands of hell.

*And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire.*

Now as to this fire, it cannot reasonably be taken for a material fire, though that is very dreadful, but for something far exceeding it, because it never shall go out, nor ever consume what is doomed to abide in it, though it torments with unspeakable torments,

then let us consider it, as the Holy Ghost in the text means it, the *second death not of the body only, but of eternal death and damnation both of body and soul for evermore.* By which we may plainly see, there is a double death, first of the body, and then at the coming of the Lord to judgment, of the soul and body.

The first death is the separation of the soul from the body, and that is common to all, only in this it differs, *There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus,* Rom. viii. 1. But those that die in their sins, *shall be punished with everlasting destruction,* being severed from the blessed presence of the Lord for ever, and from the glory of his power, 2 Thess. i. 9. which is a very terrible death, to be deprived of God, wherein the *happiness and joy of God's children shall stand in the beholding of God, and enjoying his presence for evermore,* Matt. v. 8. and to be compelled to have the company of infernal fiends always upbraiding and tormenting those that are so unhappy and miserable as to fall into this lake of fire, that cannot be quenched.

*Secondly,* Men and women shall not only be severed in body and soul, from the blessed and glorious presence of God for ever, at whose *right hand is pleasure for evermore,* but shall be cast into the lake of fire, and have their abode with the devil, and all the damned spirits in hell, where there is nothing but weeping and gnashing of teeth as our Saviour himself hath expressed it, *Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels,* Matt. xxv. 14. Which words include all the misery that can befall a sinner, to be out of the sweet and comfortable presence of Christ

Jesus, and his holy angels, saints, and all the blessed in heaven, to be companions with devils in the terrible *lake of fire and brimstone*.

*Thirdly*, The misery is the greater, because it is eternal punishment ; for St. John saith, *The smoke of their torments shall ascend evermore, and they shall have no rest day nor night*, Rev. xiv, 11, which is an unexpressible punishment ; for the damned shall not only lose God's glorious presence, in which is fulness of joy for evermore, but be perpetually tormented in unextinguishable flames. *The wrath and vengeance of God shall seize on them*, and feed on them, as fire doth on pitch and brimstone, where they shall be ever burning, and yet never be consumed, this is a torment that cannot be expressed said Isaiah lxvi. 24. *That their worm shall not die, and their fire shall not be quenched*. Which is a very miserable condition in three respects.

*First*, In regard of the degrees of it.

*Secondly*, In regard of the place.

*Thirdly*, In regard of the perpetuity of it.

The first appears in the loss of our blessed communion with God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, *In whose presence is life, and at whose right hand is pleasure for evermore*. But the wicked shall be punished at that day with *Everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord*, 2 Thess. i. 9. which is a punishment that we may guess to be intolerable enough, to burn and not to consume, to live and to have no end, which will make them to "cry out to the rocks and mountains to fall upon them to cover them, when there shall be tribulation, anguish, and wrath upon every man that doth evil," Rom. xiii. 4

*Secondly*, In regard to the place ; which is hell,

which in the scripture is called, “ The bottomless gulph, utter darkness, the fearful tophet, the dungeon of despair, the burning lake, the hollow cave, the choice of all confusion, the grave of perdition, whose furnace is always burning, whose fire is made by God’s wrath, and his power upholds it, and it is blown with the bellows of his indignation, it is unquenchable, even prepared for the devil and his angels.”

*Thirdly*, In regard of the perpetuity of this punishment, it shall never have an end, it shall be without hope of intercession ; for St. John saith, Rom. xiv. 11. *The smoke of their torment shall ascend for evermore, and they shall have no rest day nor night.*

O ! that men would consider these things in time, and not cast away themselves to gain riches, pleasure, or honour, whilst they neglect the most weighty things necessary to salvation, which is timely repentance, and living up to those rules that are appointed to work out our salvation, whilst it is yet to day, least the night of death should come upon us unawares, and no man can work.

There is no man living but hopes to escape this death, this flaming fire, and by that hope to defer their repentance till old age come upon them, and they are not capable of doing any thing else : But this oftentimes deceives them, for the Holy Ghost by the mouth of St. John, saith, “ The fearful, and unbelievers, and abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and liars, &c. shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death,” Rev. xxi. 8  
And after this, there is no repentance, no recovery,

there will be a great gulph, as Abraham told Dives, between the godly and ungodly ; for the godly shall see and behold the ungodly in hell, as Lazarus did Dives in hell torments.

So that you see that the spirit of God saith, and he cannot lie, *That all wicked and ungodly sinners shall be cast into the lake of fire*, which many men and women will not believe although it is often mentioned in the scripture, who will say *tush*, there is nothing in it, *God is merciful*, which in plain words it is to give God the lie who is the fountain of truth : and yet tell the drunkard and profaner of the Lord's day, that they must give an account of those things, and without speedy repentance, they will be damned for them, they will presently say, they hope to be saved as well as the best, notwithstanding the Holy Ghost hath so often said, That, " all unbelievers, and thives, and murderers, &c. shall be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone which is the second death."

But the spirit of God doth not only shew those whose heart tremble for fear of those things, and whose soul doth melt for fear of this second death, how to escape this terrible lake of fire, which is eternal damnation and torment both of body and soul, but to obtain salvation and joy in the presence of God for evermore, " Blessed and happy is he that hath his part in the first resurrection, for on such the second death shall have no power : But they shall be the Priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years, that is, for evermore," ver. 6.

The Holy Ghost saith, they, and none but they that have their parts in the first resurrection, shall

escape the second death, and eternal damnation in the lake of hell fire. Therefore it is manifest the children of God have a double resurrection, and one death, but all wicked and ungodly sinners have one resurrection, and a double death, for they that are to escape eternal damnation, are they that have their part in the first resurrection, and that is by rising out of the grave of sin, to the newness of life, which is otherwise called dying to sin, and living unto Christ. As St. Paul saith, "You hath he quickened, who are dead in trespasses and sin," Eph. ii. 1. "Therefore are we buried with Christ in baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life," Rom. vi. 4.

Now to know whether this may be aptly applied unto us, is to look into our own souls, and there to examine ourselves, whether we are risen from sin in this life, to a newness and holiness of life, and whether we labour to mortify and keep under the works of the flesh, and walk in all holy duties of obedience to God and man. And if so, there is great hopes we have attained to the first resurrection; but then be sure to take heed to your ways, that you fall not again into sin, least it adds new fuel to burn you with: remember what is said, *There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ, which walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.*

Therefore let every man and woman labour to be sure of the first resurrection, and then this second will be easy to them, and they shall enter from judgment into heaven, and remain there in bliss for ever and ever, accompanied with cherubims;

seraphims, arch-angels, angels, saints, and all the holy company of blessed spirits.

This is a very great comfort to all the real members of Christ that forsake their sins, and endeavour to conquer their unruly lusts, and even to live a godly life, though they are in misery, poverty, or want, and in the end die the first death of the body, yet they shall be freed from the second death which is eternal. "The gates of hell shall not prevail against them;" for as St. Paul saith, "The elect shall have eternal life, but they that be reprobates, shall be cast into the lake of fire; for if ye live after the flesh, ye shall also die," Rom. xiii. 8.

Therefore deceive not yourselves, as too many do, who think if they come to church every Lord's-Day, and receive the Sacrament now and then, all is well; but let me tell you, ye may come to church all your lives, and receive the sacrament ever so often, yet unless you live a godly life and strive to become a new creature, your estate is in a very deplorable condition, and your portion is likely to be the lake of fire and brimstone. Therefore let no man deceive himself, to imagine because he now and then hears a sermon, or receives the sacrament, that he is out of all danger, and sure of heaven: but that will not do, no, not by a great deal; for if a man live in sin, as swearing, drunkenness, whoring, &c. he is in a miserable state, and may go to hell, notwithstanding all his pretensions to religion.

Nor is this all, to die and go to hell alone, for they shall be in the sea of miseries, and in an ocean of calamities, fire continually flaming about them, and yet they not consumed, rage and madness, and wrathful indignation, shall be within them, having

the worm of conscience (which never dies) continually tormenting them. And what is more, when they shall look up, and behold the angels and saints rejoicing and triumphing in the presence of the lamb, and at that same time, they see nothing about them but brimstone and hot burning coals : They shall be always in the flames, but never consumed, their meat shall be griping hunger, and their drink lakes of fire and brimstone, and their pleasure, howling and roaring of foul deformed fiends accompanied with devils.

Thus heaven they have lost, which cannot now be recovered, and hell they have received, whose torments they must endure. What doleful cries shall those miserable wretches then screek out? They shall howl and weep because they cannot be heard, which if they could, no man will pity them ; which will make them curse their birthday and the paps which gave them suck, continually crying, Wo, Wo, that ever I was born, to neglect God's commandments, and to break his laws, running after my own inventions, I cannot say but I have justly deserved this punishment.

And therefore you see if you would live after you are dead, you must die to sin, while you are alive, only those who die to sin, shall live to righteousness ; but he that lives in sin, shall die for his sins eternally, and as he would not labour to have his part in the first resurrection, so he shall be sure to have his portion in the second death ! To prevent which miserable condition, let every man and woman labour to have their part in the first resurrection, so that the second death may do us no harm, but they shall live in joy and happiness for ever in heaven

with the almighty, and all the arch-angels, angels, saints, and martyrs, who shall be their companions for ever and without end.

In this kingdom there shall be eternal plenty, God will give them the *Water of Life*, out of the rivers of his pleasure, there shall be neither hunger nor thirst, but all shall be supplied and satiated with every good thing. Here we see God but in part, and that through a glass, but there we shall behold him face to face. It will be a wonderful glory to the children of God to bear the similitude of Jesus Christ, “ who shall change our vile bodies, to be like to his glorious body, according to his mighty working, whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself,” Phil. ii. 24.

Therefore let every man and woman endeavour to seek the kingdom of God, for if that be once found, there is no need of any further happiness ; but if it should be lost, though we should gain the whole world, it would prove but madness and folly. And as it is not possible for the tongues of men and angels to express the joys of heaven, so it is impossible to express the miseries of the damned. In short, to gain the one, and avoid the other, is the main end for which man receives life and being ; and therefore it behoves all to endeavour to make their calling and election sure, so that they may be received into the eternal habitation of bliss and happiness.

1. *And whosoever was not found written in the Book of Life, was cast into the lake of fire.*

The former verse shews the execution of God's wrath upon all ungodly and wicked sinners ; and

this the different estate of the children of God, and of the wicked ; for as there are but two sorts of men, *good* and *bad*, the children of God, and the children of the Devil, so there are but two places, *heaven*, and *hell*, *joy* and *pain*, and the rewards shall be accordingly, either *blessed* or *cursed*; for St. John saith, *The elect shall have eternal life, but they that are reprobates, shall be cast into the lake of fire.*

As the lives of the godly differ from the ungodly in this world, so their condition after this life is far different ; for as the one shall be eternally miserable, so the other shall be blessed and happy for ever ; nay, to such a degree St. Paul saith, “ As the eye never saw it, nor ever entered into the heart of man, to conceive the hundredth part of this happiness,” 2 Cor. ii. 9.

*First*, The blessed estate of the will consists in this, that God shall be *all in all unto us*. If thou desire wealth, God will be it to thee ; if honour or pleasure, God will be all in all to thee.

*Secondly*, In the kingdom of heaven, there shall be no manner of want, for all defects of body and soul shall be supplied : and though we see God now but in part, yet then we shall behold him face to face, not in a glass darkly, but see him even as we are seen, and for evermore live in his blessed presence, and reign with him for ever.

*Thirdly*, All the children of God shall be like unto Jesus Christ, as St. Paul saith, *He shall change our vile bodies, and make them like to his glorious body.*

*Fourthly*, In heaven we shall reap endless joy, and eternal happiness and shall delight in praising

God for ever, so as we shall keep a perpetual Sabbath, and joy in the service of God for ever, where we shall have joy without sorrow, day without night, no *valley of tears*, but a *Sion of glory*, and endless comforts. When wretched will be the condition of those, who say, it is in vain to serve the Lord, or as Pharaoh said, *Who is the Lord, that I should fear him*. Which men then shall know it is not in vain to serve the Lord, for if we will not keep a good conscience, and go to heaven by good example, we must go to hell with the wicked for company; which should make us abound in holy duties, since God will reward even the least work of faith.

If thou give but a cup of cold water in the name of Christ, verily thou shalt not lose thy reward, for though works do not merit, yet they are rewardable. What madmen then are we, if we never think of heaven, till we have one foot in the grave, we cannot go to heaven on beds of down; no, we must strive and take pains to enter in, *for the gate is strait, and narrow is the way*.

It grieves a man to think what will become of the ungodly sinners, whose names are not written in the Book of Life. Alas! poor wretched souls, the Holy Ghost saith, *They shall be cast into the lake of fire*. And Christ pronounces this terrible judgment, *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels*, Matt. xxv. 41. Ah! miserable wretches, it had been better for them, that they had never been born, or had been toads or serpents rather than men; for they shall not only be cast from the presence of the Almighty, and his holy angels, but shall be cast into the lake of fire for ever.

Now although I have already told you, What is meant by this lake, and the torments all wicked and ungodly men and women shall suffer therein, yet for your further instruction, I shall set down these three material points with as much brevity as they will admit of.

*First*, The extremity of it.

*Secondly*, The perpetuity of it.

And *Thirdly*, That from it there is no redemption.

As for the extremity of it, the pains are intolerable, and beyond all expression.

As to the perpetuity of it, it is endless, for so long as God is God, so long shall the damned be tormented in this flame, and that is to all eternity.

And, as from that there is no redemption, certain it is that Christ having once died to save man, will not die again; without which God's wrath cannot be appeased.

These things well considered, one would think, should make the flinty hearts of sinners to melt and break to pieces, for fear they should come into the place of torment, this lake of fire. Which the Spirit of God so often repeats in the scriptures, because men are so negligent of this weighty matter, their own salvation. Now, because it is called a *lake of fire*, it signifieth the extremity of torment, which the scriptures gives several names, to show the unspeakable torments all wicked and impenitent sinners shall suffer to all eternity, for of all torments none is so great as fire: Besides, "Their worm shall never die". And Isaiah saith, "Tophet is prepared for the King, he cannot escape, and it is deep and large, and the burning thereof is fire and

much wood, and the breath of the Lord as a river of brimstone shall kindle it," Isa. xxx. 33. By which you may in part conceive the extremity of this woe-ful lake of hell fire. But had I the tongue of men and angels, I could never express it in full: for as the joys of heaven are unspeakable, so the torments of hell are *idea* of it; and that is, God knows, but a small one, you must know that the torments of hell are universal, even in all the parts of the body, and faculties of the soul at the same time. The pains in this life are for the most part particular in some part of the body, but in this fire the sinner shall be tormented in all parts at once. For the truth of which, I shall give you an example in the rich glutton, who cried out, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame," Luke xvi. 24.

To prevent which, let us make that use which our Saviour advises, *If thy right hand or foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee*, that is as much as to say, let us forsake our darling beloved sins, for it is better to go lame into heaven, than whole into hell.

*Secondly*, As the pains of hell are without any ease, so they are without any end. As Abraham tells Dives, *You are there, and cannot come hither*, Luke xvi. 26. *It is a lake of fire and brimstone that burneth for ever*, Rev. xxii. It can never be quenched: what fools are they then, who to enjoy the pleasure of sin for a season, will endure the torments of hell for ever.

*Thirdly*, They are remediless, for the rich man in hell would have given the whole world, if he had

it, only for one minute's ease, but it could not be had; there is no remedy in hell, no silver nor gold, no wit nor policy will help, but he must abide by the judgment, which makes the devils and damned spirits to tremble, and yet it cannot move stony hearted sinners to be afraid; which is very strange that men should run headlong upon that destruction, which they may in time prevent.

Our blessed Saviour tells us, that the soul of the poor beggar is more worth than many thousand worlds, *What benefit were it for a man, saith he, to win the whole world, and presently to lose both body and soul.* No less comparable to this, which is of all losses, is to be severed from God, and be in hell tormented for ever. Let us remember the word of St. Peter, 2 Pet. iii. 9, and so on, "The heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, and reserved unto fire against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men. The Lord is not slack but patient: but the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burnt up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in holy conversation and godliness, looking for, and hastening unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire, shall be dissolved? But we look for new heavens, and a new earth, according to his promise wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing you look for such things, be diligent, that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless, and account that the long suffering

of the Lord is salvation. Now the end of all things is at hand, be ye therefore sober and watching in prayer." And St. Luke bids you, chap. xxi. verse 34. "Take heed to yourselves, least at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life; and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell upon the face of the whole earth: Watch ye therefore and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all those things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man:" for it is he that will say, "Arise ye dead and come to judgment."

And now having done with all the text, which is *the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone for ever*. I will not leave you in horror and dread, but comfort you with the joys of heaven, and happiness of the blessed that shall dwell therein for evermore. As St. Paul relates in 1 Cor. ii. 9. "The things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

No man can express the comforts and enjoyments of heaven, any more than he can imagine the miserable pains and agonies of the damned.

All men must own that the kingdom of heaven is a glorious place because it is the residence of the Great God, which made holy David cry out, *O how beautiful are thy tabernacles, thou Lord of hosts!* Wherein St. Paul being taken up, *he heard unspeakable words, which is not lawful for any man to utter*, 2 Cor. xii. 4. All we know or can say of it, is only this, it is a spiritual kingdom, and

its glory is past all imagination, which St. John describes to be adorned with all the glorious things that are desirable on earth. The heavens, where the moon is more glorious than our sun, and the sun as glorious as he that made it; for it is he himself the Son of God, the Sun of Glory. A new earth, where all their waters are milk, and all their milk honey, where all their grass is corn, and all their corn *manna*; where all their glebe is gold, and their gold innumerable *carats*; where all their minutes are ages, and all their ages eternity, where every minute is every minute in the highest exaltation; as good as it can be, and yet super-exalted, and infinitely multiplied by every minute's addition, every minute infinitely better than ever it was before: Of these new heavens and this new earth, we can only say, that we can say nothing: for *the eye of man hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart conceived, the state of this place*. We limit and determine our considerations with that horizon with which the Holy Ghost hath limited us, that it is that *New heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness*.

To those who are affected with riches, the Holy Ghost saith, Rev. xxi. 18. *That that new city shall be all of gold, and in the foundations all manner of precious stones*. To those that are affected with beauty, he promises an everlasting association, with that beautiful couple, that fair pair, which spend their time in contemplation, *Behold thou art fair, my Beloved*, and she replies, *Behold, thou art fair too*; signifying the mutual compliance between Christ and his church, Cant. i. 13, 16. To those which delight in music, he promises continual singing, and every minute a *new song*. To those

whose thoughts are exercised upon honour and titles, civil or ecclesiastical, he promises priesthood; and if that be not honour enough, a royal priesthood. And to those who look after military honour, triumph after their victory in the Church militant. In short, as David saith, "We shall be satisfied with the abundance of God's house, and he shall give us waters of his pleasure, as out of a river." Even blessings shall be heaped upon his saints, and though they may differ in glory, as one star differeth from another, yet all shall shine very glorious.

You see then what a blessed life is, it is the fruition of God himself, in heaven, where we behold God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, not darkly as in a glass, but face to face, free from all miseries, diseases, labour, and grief with ineffable comfort. This world is but a vale of tears, and this life is full of misery, but God in the world to come will wipe them all away. "He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces, and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off the face of the earth: For the Lord has spoken it." Why may not we then cry out with the Prophet David, "Lord, what is man that thou takest knowledge of him, or the son of man that thou so regardest him?"

As the Prophets of old did stir up people's minds by expectation of temporal blessing, and thereby give them hopes of greater blessings to come, so let us grow up into admiration of those heavenly and inexpressible excellencies, which are altogether past our apprehension, and understanding; for as spiritual blessings do far exceed corporeal blessings, so heavenly joys do far surpass all earthly glory.

If Abraham left his country and his father's house,

for a land he knew not; and Moses refused to be called the Son of Pharaoh's daughter, despising all the glories of the court of Egypt, to accompany the children of Israel through a barren and desert wilderness to the earthly Canaan; how much more should we leave all to journey toward this heavenly country, whose pleasantness to hear of it is so ravishing to our ears, although it is but a dim and faint representation of what it really is in its own excellency. To do which, let us make haste to reconcile ourselves with God, by a true and sincere repentance, running into the arms of Christ, who is continually holding them out to receive us into all those joys, which he has prepared for all them that love and fear him in the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of God, where St. John saith, "He saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, come down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride trimmed for her husband:" of which we may say with David, Psal. lxxxiv. 1, 2. "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord, my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, they will be still praising thee; for a day in thy court is better than a thousand. I had better be a door keeper in the house of God, than to dwell in the tents of the wicked.

*Secondly*, This kingdom of heaven is a paradise, it is a kingdom of grace, it is the kingdom of glory, a celestial kingdom, not made with hands, but an immortal kingdom, for it is established by grace: whose King never dies and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore, which made David say, I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the glory of

ness of the Lord in the land of the living, which since the beginning of the world, men have not heard, neither hath the eye seen, O God, besides thee, what he hath prepared for him that waited for him, Psalm xxxvi. 7, 8. "How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O Lord! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house, and thou shalt make them drink of the rivers of thy pleasure: for with thee is the fountain of life, and in thy light shall we see light." This city then is the Holy of Holies, in respect to the glorious company that is in it, for there are none but saints and angels, and it is most holy, because it is the habitation of the Lord of Hosts, whose glory exceeds all our imaginations.

If Peter, who saw our Saviour's transfiguration in the mount, which was but an image of the glory that was to be, said unto Jesus, *Master, it is good for us to be here*, rejected all worldly pleasures in respect to that, What shall we say, when we have the fruition of the same, *Blessing, and glory, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.*

By these words you see, how glorious the city of God is; the walls are of jasper, and the foundations of precious stones, the gates of pearls, and the pavements of pure gold; and if so, how much more comfortable are those things within the city? According to Rev. ii. 17. "To him that overcometh, will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth, save he that receiveth it."

The greatest joys on earth, are of least account in heaven, for all shall be crowned, 2 Tim. iv. 8. "Henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them that love his appearance." Whose kingdom is past our imagination, and contains in it all that can be wished or desired; for which reason Abraham did forsake his own native country, his friends, and his father's house, to go into a land he knew not where. And Moses forsook Egypt, and refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. And holy men and women in the gospel left their riches and all that they had, and laid them down at the apostle's feet, wandering up and down in wildernesses and in mountains, and hiding themselves in dens and caves of the earth: but they had a respect unto the recompence of reward, the kingdom of God, where they desired to be. Therefore if we desire to come to this place of happiness, come with Jesus Christ in our hearts by faith and plead his merits, death, and passion, and so enter into his joy.

*The Heavenly Joys of his Soul.*

The joys that belong to the heavenly Jerusalem, principally affect the soul, which is the principal part of man, and then the body, for that, at the resurrection, being reunited to the soul, shall with it partake of this happiness, that the whole man may receive his full perfection, as he was at first created. And whereas the only delight of a godly man, is to serve and praise God, especially in the

church and in the congregation, they meet together to worship and adore his holy name. But in this celestial Jerusalem, there will be no need of a church or temple, for the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb are the temple of it. And therefore why should men and women be so backward to enter into this joy, where we shall have in that celestial mansion, no joy by weight or measure, but in the overflowing abundance even to excess; which to a pious and godly soul is as wings to carry it through all the miseries it meets with in this vale of tears, whilst it remains here in the body, as in prison, labouring to be released, that it may fly to its heavenly home. And where, as St. Ambrose saith, rivers of joy and comfort, so much, as we shall be overcome with joy, which will be as it were wings to the soul, to fly through this valley of adversities; for as long as the soul is in the body, it is confined as a bird in a cage, and cannot get out.

Thus, you see, in the presence of God shall be all happiness, and “at his right hand are pleasures for evermore.” And as it is said, “The four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that sat on the throne, and cast their crowns before him,” so shall all the blessed of heaven do, singing “praises and hallelujahs;” for we find Rev. vii. 4. “That the hundred forty and four thousand, which had the name of God in their foreheads, do sing a new song before the throne, and no man could learn that song, but the hundred forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth, and they were cloathed in long white garments, having palms in their hand. Ver. 9. Which cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation be ascribed to him that sitteth upon the seat of our

God ; and all the angels stood in the compass of the seat, who fell before the seat on their faces, saying, Amen, Blessing, and glory, wisdom, thanks, honour, power, and might, be unto our God for evermore."

And as these did, so shall all those that come before God's presence with souls full of joy and thankfulness, who being filled with abundance of all spiritual comfort, shall not cease to sing hallelujah and praises to God, who is the author and giver of all happiness : To whom grief and sorrow will be strangers, and the voice of mourning shall be no more heard, but every tongue, and every place shall sound with praises and thanksgivings to the Son of God, the Son of righteousness, for his goodness in taking our nature upon him, and his mercies in suffering an ignominious death to save all that believe in him.

This made holy David long to come into his presence, when he cried out, *When shall I come and appear before the presence of God ?* For certainly it is an unspeakable happiness to be in his presence, *at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore.*

Now shall the minds and hearts of those that are thus blessed, be filled with abundance of spiritual comfort, for we see now but in part, but then shall we see in fulness of glory, when all terror and darkness of ignorance shall be taken away, and we shall desire to see God ; as holy David saith, " My soul thirsteth after thee, like as a hart desireth the water brooks, so longeth my soul after thee, O God, yea, even for the Living God : When shall I come to appear before the presence of God ? " Then shall our desire be fully satisfied, and that which was denied the pro-

phet Moses, *to see the glory of God in this life*, shall then be granted to every one that shall there be placed. This is what all good christians ought to long for, and earnestly desire, since it is the consummation of all they can breathe and pant after, as an ease of all misery.

Then grief of mind and sorrow of heart shall be utterly removed, no weeping, no mourning, no lamentation, to be heard throughout the holy mountain. Behold, saith the prophet in the person of God, "My servant shall sing for joy of heart, I will joy in my people, and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard, nor the voice of crying," Isa. lxxv. 14. "For God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more sorrow, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are past away," Rev. xxi. 4. That is, those which we suffer in this life, shall not molest us any more with sorrow, but joy and gladness remain for ever. Afflictions shall never be felt, nor complaint heard, nor cause of grief, but happiness which shall abundantly over-recompence all the sufferings of the righteous in this life. In God we shall find all knowledge, wisdom, beauty, riches, nobility, goodness, delight, and every thing that deserveth our love and admiration, or worketh pleasure and content. All the powers of the mind shall be filled with the light, presence, and fruition of God, and all the senses of the body shall be satisfied. God will be all things unto us, causing our souls to be enlightened, and shine with righteousness, holiness, and all spiritual graces, which should raise up our souls to a cheerful undergoing all miseries whatsoever which may happen in this life, and

comfort all the children of God under their afflictions, and make them more cheerfully to bear the troubles and want of life, for God is a content to our will, and a continuation of eternity to our memory. In him we shall enjoy all the varieties of things that are delightful here, and all the joys that content us now, when our souls shall be restored to the image of God, in a full measure, as it was first created, and be thoroughly beautified and adorned with spiritual graces.

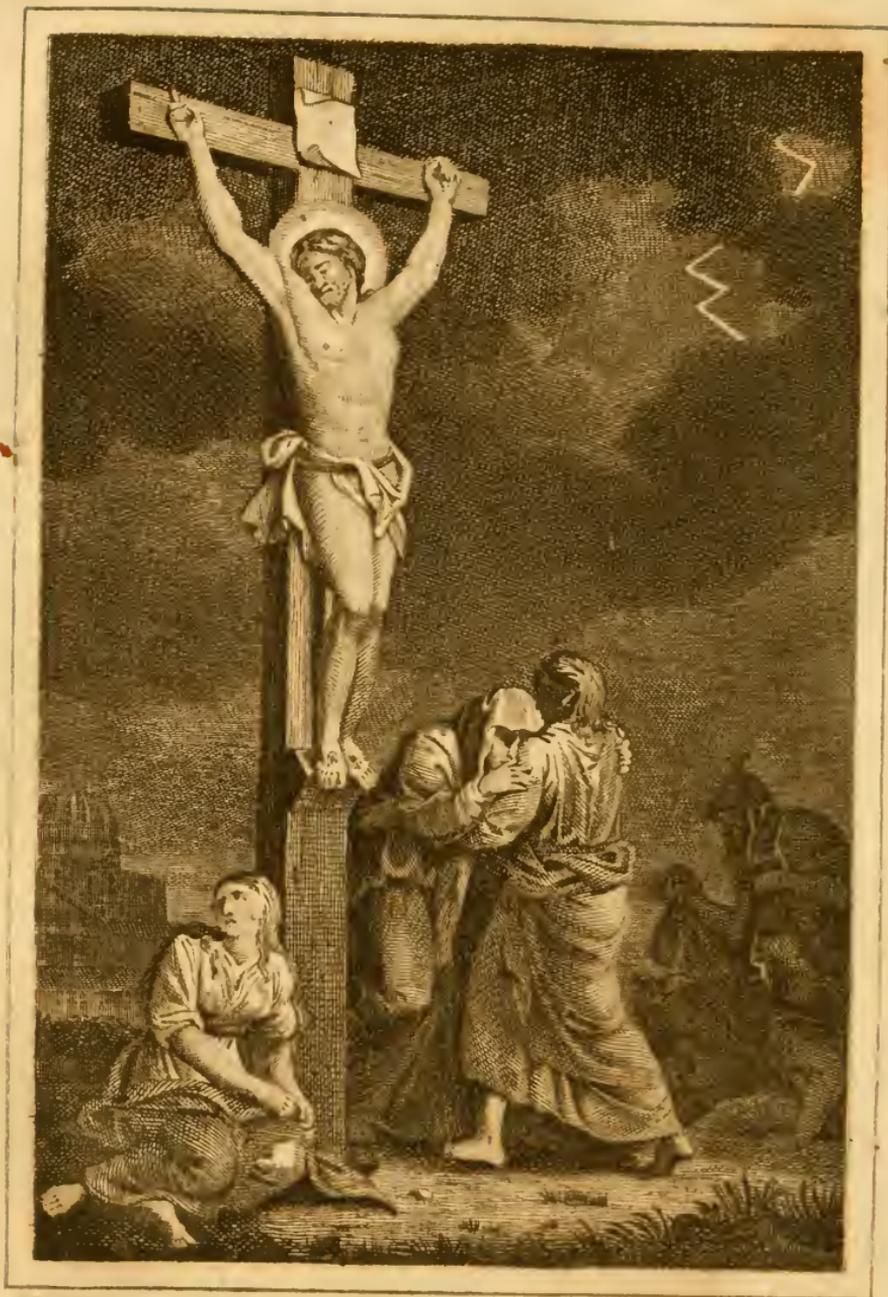
*The Heavenly Joys of the Body.*

As for the heavenly joys of the body, the commodities and privileges of it, contributing to make them full, as they are thus united to the soul are many; for it shall have no need of any thing to preserve it, that in its corruptible state is requisite to its subsistence, nor sustain any of these infirmities that it is in this world incident to, neither shall any night shadow it; for as it is recorded in the verse before the text, *That the city had no need of the sun, or of the moon, to shine in it*, which is as much as to say, there shall be no earthly wants. Notwithstanding the heat of the sun is a great blessing to this world, and most comfortable to man and beast, because it bringeth forth the fruits of the earth for man's food, and without which all things seem to be sad, and lowering, but then shall we need not this blessing: for the presence of God shall comfort us, and the glory of God shall supply the want of the sun and moon; which will always illuminate it, and give it a perpetual day, far more bright and glorious than the sun is capable of doing whilst it remains

below. Its food shall be spiritual nourishment, and its cloathing the white robes of Christ's righteousness, all things shall then be ministered unto us abundantly, that we shall not so much as think of any want, whether it be food or cloathing, or any comforts of this life whatsoever; for as the prophet Isaiah saith xlix. 10. "They shall neither hunger nor thirst, neither shall the heat or sun smite them, for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them." Where the body shall be fearless from hurt and danger, and from the enemy; no secret contrivances nor circumventions shall molest its quiet, but it shall rest always at ease in the pleasant vales of heaven; death shall then be swallowed up in victory, and have no more power over us.

In this world the body hath need of rest, but in heaven, there shall be no need of rest. Here are houses shut for fear of thieves, but there they shall be always open, because there shall be no fear of public or private enemies, nor fear of future hurts or dangers. They that are oppressed in this world, had need of friends to help and comfort them, which are very rare to be met with; but their violence shall no more be heard of, nor oppression be so much as thought of, but every one's case shall be fairly and impartially heard, and every wrong shall be righted. And as no grief of mind, so no disease of body shall molest us, neither shall there be any use of physic; all imperfections shall be turned into perfections, and all deformity into beauty. Death, which is the mighty conqueror of mankind, shall then be trodden under foot; for death shall be swallowed up in victory, so that with comfort we may then say, *O*





THE CRUCIFIXION.

*death, where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory?* There we may freely eat of the Tree of Life, without any danger of forfeiting its happiness, which our first parents could not taste of, nor so much as touch; for though they tasted of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, yet they were soon cast out of paradise for it, lest they should put forth their hands, and take the Tree of Life also, and eat and live for ever, Gen. iii. 22. In this New Jerusalem we shall enjoy mirth without sadness, health without sickness, strength without weakness, life without labour, light without darkness, and happiness without end. It shall always flourish in youth and beauty that never fade or decay. There it shall have joy without ceasing, happiness without change; and in short whatever can contribute to a perfect felicity. For it shall be freed from all corruption, mortality, or other casualty; and all it has to do, is to praise and magnify the living God, who doth all this and abundance more for us, and who shall set his seal upon us, and imprint the name upon our foreheads, as a mark that we are his beloved children, worthy to hear the ravishing melody and harmony of the angels antheming the throne of God, whilst we ourselves join in the holy choir, singing continually praises and hallelujahs to him that liveth for ever and ever.

Now man grieves for the loss of his body, and delights of the world, which faith alone doth ease, that promises an undoubted restitution of the body, to a better condition, and assures him of everlasting life, in which shall be everlasting blessedness. Then, as I formerly said, shall this body be free from all corruption, and men shall then be like

angels, free from want and poverty. They shall hunger no more, nor thirst, neither shall the sun scorch them; for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and lead them unto the living fountain of water, and "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes," Rev. xxi 4. "I saw no temple therein that was made with hands, (saith St. John,) for the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple of it," Rev. xxi. 22, 23. "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God did enlighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof," whom his servants shall serve, they shall see his face, and his name shall be in their foreheads. Who shall continually hear such heavenly music which is sung by the choir of angels in the church triumphant, that it would ravish any soul on earth to hear; which St. Basil saith, To hear is more sweet than devotion, and far sweeter than all things in this world can be.

Let us therefore be converted, and turn unto the Lord with all our hearts betimes, that when we die, we may with holy David, lift up our voices and say, "Oh! how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee, before the sons of men. Even as the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; O when shall I come and appear before God," Psalm. xlii. 1. Certainly there is nothing so bitter and sharp in this life, but the contemplation of the joys of heaven will sweeten and allay; for in heaven there is neither death nor mourning, weariness nor weakness. famine

nor thirst, but content and happiness in the highest degree, as it is written, " Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love and fear him. Therefore let no man that hath lived uprightly, be staggered at any tribulations and misfortunes or fear to die, or doubt of the joys of heaven; for as we are all born, so we must all die, and then the joys of heaven will recompence us for all our sufferings in this world, were they ten thousand times more than any they have been. And can any man if he rightly considers, think to get that by favour, which God himself only has by nature, *immortality*! No, we must change this life, and this mortality must put on immortality; for no man or woman can expect to gain so great an happiness by being negligent and putting off his repentance from day to day, even to old age, or a death-bed repentance, which is very uncertain whether it will be acceptable or not in the last hour; for God loves the early penitent, often putting young persons in mind, *To remember their Creator in the days of their youth.*

Let me advise you then to enter early into the church militant, and put on the whole armour of God, to resist the temptations of Satan, that in the end ye may receive the crown, for the godly are as warriors, in skirmishes daily in this life; but in that to come they shall be crowned conquerors. Now they suffer trouble, though their life be hid with Christ in God; but when Christ shall appear, they shall also appear with him in glory; according to that which was pronounced by a voice from heaven, Rev. xiv. 13. " Write, Blessed

are the dead which die in the Lord, even so saith the spirit, for they rest from their labours, and their works follow them."

Consider then, what joy will the soul receive in that day, when it is presented in the presence of so great a multitude before the throne of the Holy and ever blessed Trinity, where shall be exposed to the view of all the host of heaven, all thy virtuous deeds and innocency of life? and for thy farther comfort, as the wicked shall be vexed with horrible fear, when they shall thus see the righteous stand in great boldness, "so shall the righteous go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed God's will and holy law," Isa. lxvi. 24. And then looking back upon the dangers they have been in, and wherein other men are now, their joy shall be the greater, when they see what miseries they are cleared from, and what happiness they enjoy.

In earth no joy or happiness so great, but will breed a satiety, and we grow weary of them, for novelty and change is grafted in our very natures. But we shall never be satisfied with the joys of heaven, for the "Tree of Life bears twelve sorts of fruits, bearing fruit every month, twelve manner of fruits," Rev. xxi. Which is aptly applied to the diversity of joys, those that strive to enter at the strait gate, and take heaven by violence, shall enjoy as a reward of their labour and sufferings: So that you see, that there is a continual change and variety of delights and joys still pleasing the minds, and ravishing the senses with immortal pleasures.

And thus I have shewed you the joys of heaven as they are revealed to us, or as our imagination

can reach them, though in reality they wonderfully surpass all that can be said of them, as much as the sun in its lustre, does the smallest glimmering star; for no tongue is able to express to them as they are in themselves, till the party who would do it, comes to the possession of them, which makes us more eager after them, because we shall not be long without them. For the time of this life is but short, and the time of thy trial in this world is but in a manner a moment; if our time here should be a thousand years, what is it to one day in heaven, which has no night.

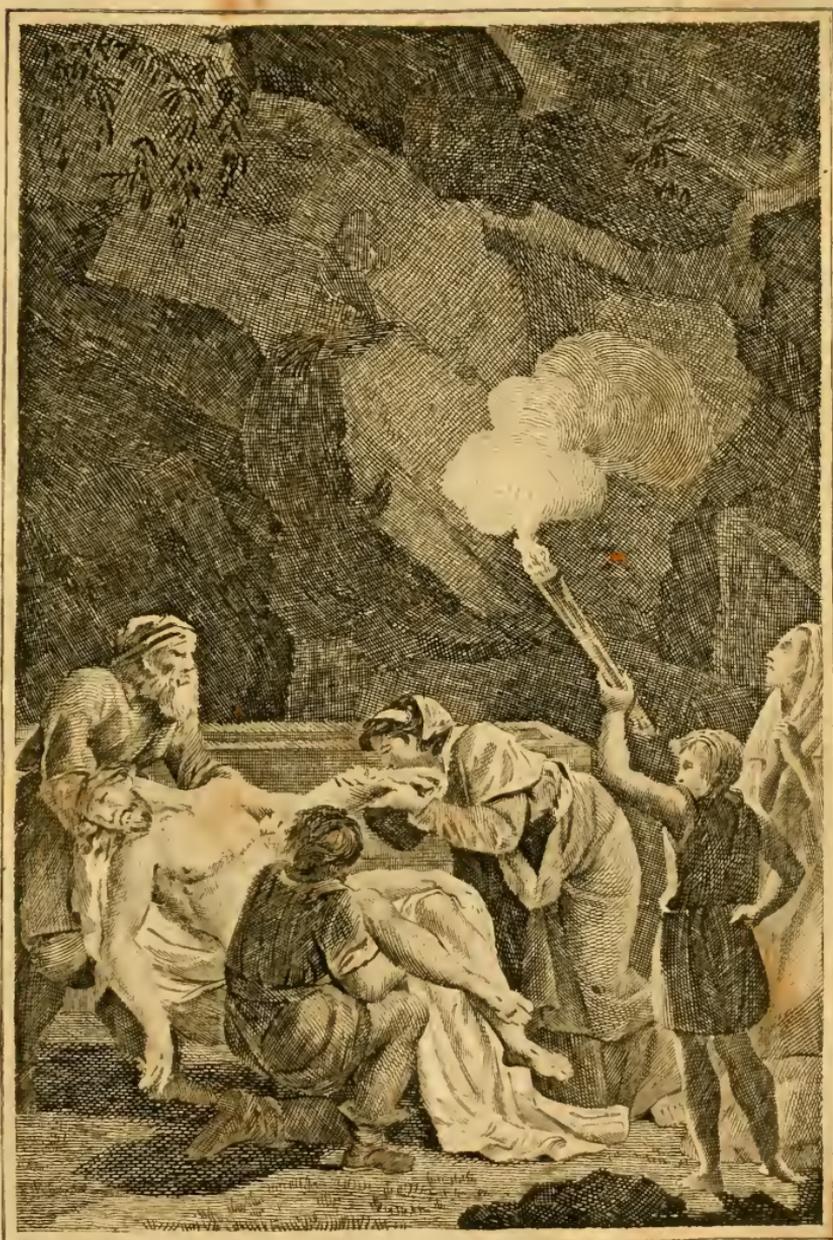
And as the torments of hell are endless, so are the joys of heaven beyond all time, and as they are remediless, (for out of hell there is no redemption) so are the joys of the blessed above, without any change or alteration.

Thus have I shewed you the joys of the kingdom of heaven in part, but their fulness I cannot utter, nor you conceive, we can only guess at them. St. Paul being wrapped up in the third heaven, saw and heard things unutterable, himself seems not to be able to reveal what he saw there and heard, and therefore in a manner he passeth it over in a silence, as a thing unlawful for him to speak, or as some translations have it, beyond man's utterance: for all the learned men in the world, are not able to give a lively description of the joys of heaven, as in themselves they really are, for no mortal eye has seen them, or heart can conceive them. Then how can any tongue declare them in their full perfections. But by what I have already said, it is sufficient for our instruction and comfort, for things that are not revealed, belong to God alone. If I should fill your

heads with my own devices and imaginations, as many do, I should but delude you, therefore be not any of you desirous to know more than is fit and convenient ; for when we have said all we know, no man can fully express the truth of these joys. But that which we do know, let it be instructive, and let us leave off to search where God will give no understanding : hidden they are and unknown, that we might the more earnestly desire them, for known things he gives out of love : yet here is enough revealed unto us, to enflame our love, and raise our desires to long and wish for them, and so consequently to spur us on in using the means, whereby we may attain to them in his good time, who has provided those joys for all that love and fear him, walking uprightly according to his word, and in a ready obedience to his holy commandments, the consideration of which might be sufficient to confirm us that there be not in any of us an unfaithful heart, to depart from the living God : beside, who in his senses would deprive himself of these joys, if there were no other, but such as our own minds might imagine, or our own heart conceive.

The profitable instructions thereof that hence may arise, are more than I can utter, yet give me leave to recite some for your satisfaction ; for when it pleased God, I wrote this for your good, it was with comfort, and therefore I doubt not but that you that hear it, will hear it also with comfort : for I myself who perhaps have searched more than any of you, am at a loss to declare the wonderful working of the Lord.

*First,* Let us learn to grow out of love with the present world, and with the transitory pleasures and



ENTOMBING OF CHRIST.







*Jesus the fire runner entering to prepare  
mansions for the Blessed in the World to come*

profits of the same, which will stand us in no stead at the last day, so that we may prepare our journey to our long and wished home, and to those houses and heavenly habitations whose leases shall never expire, to our heavenly Canaan, and to this new and most beautiful Jerusalem. And though necessity and the needs of nature require us to use many things, yet let us be careful to use them, as not to abuse them, nor ourselves in the use of them. Let us be modest in all our conversation, not toiling ourselves to heap up riches, when we know not who shall gather them up after us; or if we did, 'it would nothing avail us in the hour of death, much less in the day of judgment. But let us labour to fight the good fight, that so finishing our course, we may with joy lay down this mortal life, in exchange for that life which is immortal.

Howbeit, men for the most part are so bewitched with the pleasures of this world, that no exhortation will prevail to draw our minds from thence, which thing may be lively represented by a parable of a certain commonwealth, who were accustomed to choose their king from amongst the poorest sort of people, and advance him to great honour for a time, and then to despoil him of his felicity, and banish him naked into an island of a far country where he lived in great misery, which another king looking into, took care to prevent; against it came to be his own turn, by sending before hand a great treasure into that island, whereunto he was daily in danger of being sent; which when it happened, he went to that island with joy, because his treasure was there before him, and was received with great honour and respect.

Now this city or commonwealth, is this present world, which advanceth poor men to authority; that is, such as come naked into this world, and on a sudden when they least look for it, pulls them down, and sends them naked into their graves; when bringing not treasure with them, they can expect no favour but eternal misery.

The wise king who prevents this calamity, is every one who in this life, doth endeavour to lay up treasure in heaven against the day of their death; at which time if their good deeds follow them, then shall they be happy men: but if they come without oil in their lamps, then there is nothing for them to expect, but this terrible sentence, *Depart from me, I know ye not.*

The sum of money is not so much our good deeds, as the forgiveness of our manifold offences, and the amendment of our sinful lives. That which we are so greatly in love withal, the apostle adviseth us against, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world," 1 John ii. and he gives us this reason for it, *because the world passeth away*: But he that doth the will of God abideth for ever.

The joys of heaven, and the desires of the world, are directly opposites; worldly pleasures hinder us from mounting up so high, wherein we may be likened to the grasshopper, who liveth and dieth in the same ground, it hath wings, and hoppeth up a little, but presently falleth down again to the ground; so many of us have good motions unto goodness, but we return strait to our old affections to this world, as though all our portion were only in this life.

The fowls that feed grossly, never fly high, and they who feed their hearts with things below, cannot have their affections above. But as the ox is fatted in the pasture, and the bird singeth sweetly, and feedeth without fear, and suddenly the one is driven to the slaughter, and the other is taken in the snare ; so they that be worldly minded, are lulled asleep in security, until the time that death overtakes them, and endless destruction overwhelms them : But where is that man who can say with the apostle, “ I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, which is best of all : for they that say such things, declare plainly that they seek a country,” Heb. xi. 16. “ desiring a better country than is to be found in this world : that is, a heavenly country, and for them hath God prepared a city.” Heb xiii. 14, for here we have no continuing city, no continuing habitation. If we desire them to attain this heavenly place, we must forsake this earthly tabernacle. Christ himself was not free from affliction, for he cried out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me.* We must go first to *Mount Calvary*, before we can come to *Mount Olivet*. Our graves are but so many folds, which death brings us unto, and keep our bodies till the general day of the resurrection ; for death is but a door of entrance to the crown of glory. Woe be to you, saith Christ, that now laugh, for you shall weep, and therefore happy shall they be in another world, who in a good cause suffered wrongs, committing themselves unto God.

The time of heavenly joys is in scripture, compared to the harvest, and what care doth every man take to provide the best seed, that their harvest

might prove good? The Psalmist saith, "They shall reap in joy, and whoso goeth on his way weeping, and beareth good seed, shall come and bring his sheaves with him." Therefore let me exhort you as the apostle doth, Gal. vi. 7. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap; for he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption. But he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting:" So that you see that such as our seed is, such shall be our harvest. The date of this life is but short, but the remembrance of a life well led, will be a comfort to us for ever; and in the end of time, prove an endless harvest to supply us with a blessed crop of joy and pleasure, still gathering, still increasing, never diminishing, but springing to life and immortality.

Be careful then in this, and abstain from fleshly lusts; bridle and keep them under, for they war against the spirit. The last thing in the aforesaid chapter is that there shall enter into this heavenly Jerusalem no unclean thing. And as the prophesy of Zachariah, xiv. 21. *In that day there shall be no more the Canaanite, in the house of the Lord of Hosts.* Now the Canaanites were a lewd people, and for the same were driven out of the land; and if they were not worthy to dwell on earth, much less shall they be worthy to be received into heaven. "Dearly beloved," saith the apostle St. Peter, 1 Epist. ii. 11. "abstain from fleshly lusts, bridle them, keep them under, for they war against the soul." Col. iii. 1. "If then ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God: Set your affections

on things above, and not on things on the earth, and mortify your immoderate affections and evil concupiscence," remember this peremptory word, "No unclean thing shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Let us then cleanse ourselves from all filthiness and defilements of the flesh and spirit, and grow up into full holiness in the fear of God, for they that thus do his will shall enter into the New Jerusalem, and shall have a right to the Tree of Life. But without are dogs, and all unclean persons, Rev. xxii. 4. And let us work out our salvation with fear and trembling, being desirous to receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken; let us pray for grace to serve God, that we may please him with reverence and godly fear. And seeing we have precious promises, 2 Pet. i. 4. and that more sure than the heaven and the earth, "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God; for as they that thus do his will, shall enter through the gates into the city, and their right shall be to the Tree of Life, so without are dogs and all unclean persons;" let not then this my last exhortation be forgotten among you, *Enter in at the strait gate*; for it is the wide gate and broad way that leadeth to destruction, and *many there be that go in thereat; because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth to life, and few there be that find it.*

Now I may add unto those, one of the greatest joys of all, and that is God's mercy, which is evident to us in this life, as well as the life to come, for without that, no man can enter into that place where true joys are to be found; for in the strictness of

his justice, our sins would debar us of all the happiness we hope for in heaven, our first parents being by God's just anger, and according to their desert, cast out of paradise, and an angel set with a sword drawn to keep the way, that no flesh should return thither; unless by God's mercy we enter through the strait gate. Which is called the *rich mercy* of God, because no treasure is comparable to it, he being a God of long-suffering, patience and forbearance: A God slow to anger, and of great loving kindness, not willing any should perish, but that all should be saved: and because the tongue of man cannot speak it, let angels proclaim it, as we read Luke ii. 14. *Glory be to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men.*

Let every man and woman then take care how they abuse this mercy, which can only open the gates of heaven to them, lest when they stand in need of it, his severe justice takes place to their destruction.

And now I come, in the last place, to shew you the right way of dying well, which brings all the joy and happiness I have been mentioning, as a recompence for our travail and labour in this world.

*First,* By the virtue of Christ's death, death ceaseth to be any more a terror or affrightment to us, but appears as a friend, and opens the door to let the soul into a happy eternity, he being the key of our graves, hath opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. For death is only terrible, when it is joined with God's wrath and indignation against sinners, and we are not defended with the shield of faith, when he approacheth; for in dying we should rejoice in the Lord, since the corruption

of our nature is thereby abolished, and our sanctification thereby accomplished; consider then what happiness it is to see the glory of God's majesty face to face, and to abide with God and the holy angels for ever. Which being assured of in our consciences, let death come when it will, we shall rest contented, whether we wake or sleep, or whatever we do, let us bear in mind the noise of the trumpet, *Arise ye dead, and come to judgment*, knowing that the power of death lies in our sins; and therefore to weaken the power of death, let us repent of our sins, amend our lives, and rely wholly upon the mercies of God, that we may with comfort say with St. Paul, *I live not, but Christ liveth in me*.

By death then you see, there is a removal of present miseries, and by it, all miseries that may happen are prevented; for let death seize us when it please, we shall still remain in the covenant, and at last be taken up into everlasting life. But it is too late to begin to live well, when we, must of necessity die, and depart out of this life. Can any man think that God will be content, that we should lay our old and rotten bodies upon his altar, when we have lived all our youthful time in revelling and wantonness! What was the reason that Christ loved his disciple John better than any of the others, but because he came to him in his youth. God will not be our staff in our age, if we do not serve him in our youth; Solomon the wisest of all men, adviseth us, to *Remember our Creator in the days of our youth*. We must not think to come into the world, as Cato did in the theatre, only to go out of it again; or to imagine that the world was made for man, as the sea was for the *leviathan*, to take

his pleasure in ; no, we must strive to observe God's commandments, which will bring rest to our souls. That man can never shoot well, who has not his eye upon the mark, neither can a man live well, that hath not his mind upon the day of his death, and we must remember that our bodies when they are in the earth, are but like seed that is sown, for they shall rise again. "When the trumpet shall blow, it shall be both loud and shrill : no ear but shall hear the sound, the dampness of the earth shall not hinder it, nor the depth of the grave excuse us ;" No place though never so remote, shall hinder this sound, for it shall be universal, and in every corner of the earth shall this trumpet be heard. The Lord calls to man by his prophet Isaiah, saying, *Earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord, to put us in mind, we are but earth.* But St. Paul saith, *Our bodies shall be changed at the last day, even in the twinkling of an eye, and then we shall have a resurrection.* *First, Of our bodies from the grave. And Secondly, Of our souls from sin.* Notwithstanding the earth devoured some, as it did Corah, Dathan and Abiram, and yet they must come to judgment. It is a divine work, and is past our understanding ; therefore let us rather admire God's infinite wisdom and goodness, than be too curious to search into them, *For our corruption, shall put on incorruption, and our mortal bodies, shall put on immortality, though we have lain a long time in the grave, mouldering and consuming away.*

We all know when we have set a root in the ground, it must lie all the winter, and it is seemingly dead, but in the spring it revives by virtue of the sun, and so will it be with us at the day of our

resurrection ; therefore let us endeavour while we live here on earth, that we be found as white as the snow in *Salmon*, and clothed with the robes of Christ's righteousness. We are at best but like a painted wall, one winter's storm quite defaces the beauty of it ; so one blast of death carries us quite away to the grave and earth again ; therefore saith the prophet, " The dust shall return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return to God that gave it," Eccl. xii. 7.

Seeing then we must all die, and that death is only terrible to the wicked, it is our own fault to delay and put off our repentance, till it is too late ; let us do as St. Paul did, who joyfully cried out, *O death where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory?* Certainly the meditation of death makes it familiar to us, for otherwise the thoughts of death will so affrighten and astonish us, that our minds will be disordered.

That man must die, common experience shews, scarce a night passes but we meet one or other going to their long home, and the sound of the bell daily informs us, some one or other is departed out of this life, which is so uncertain that it is often compared to things of momentary duration ; as a span long, a vapour, a shadow, the grass that withereth, and a flower that fadeth. Death stealeth on us unawares, and our lying down at night, and rising in the morning, is an emblem of death and the resurrection. Let us not then be like the rich fool in the gospel, who promised himself the enjoyment of great riches, and many years of happiness, whose soul was that very night required of him, and death fatally disappointed him of all

his expectations. Let every man and woman then be continually on the watch, so that when death comes, we may be ready to embrace it, knowing that we shall rise again to the life immortal.

Let us not then put off the thoughts of dying, as Felix did St. Paul, saying, *I will hear thee another time.* The prodigal must forsake his sins of wantonness, as Zaccheus did, who came down hastily, and received Christ joyfully. We must not defer time, but must with Zaccheus make Christ overseer, who said, *Behold Lord half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have done wrong to any, I will restore him four fold.* God doth not regard the extension, but the intention, not only the tongue, but the heart. We must put the sword to the throat of sins, and cut them off as Phineas pierced Zimri and Cosbi, through and through. We must not have our beloved Delilah sins, and say as Naaman did, *The Lord be merciful to me a sinner,* but pray with holy David, *The Lord be merciful to me a sinner, cleanse my soul from secret sins,* from my sins of omission, and sins of commission, which if not repented of, we shall be cast into hell for ever. What would Dives have given that he might have been sent to his five brethren; but Abraham told him, it could not be, *if they would not believe Moses and the prophets, neither would they believe, though one rose from the dead.*

It was Jerusalem's sin, that they remembered not their latter end, and our Saviour wept over it, because they would not believe, and consider the things that belonged to its peace. Death comes swiftly, not on foot, but on horseback, and on a pale horse: delays in this case are dangerous, be-

cause our time in this world is uncertain. Let us therefore remember our death, and leave sin, that sin may not leave us in the grave: for if it does, a severe judgment will take hold of us at the resurrection.

A dying man must not so much fix his mind on the pangs of death, as on that blessed estate of eternal life enjoyed after death, which will appear *First*, In the examination of our hearts and ways. *Secondly*, In the confession of our sins. And *Thirdly*, In begging pardon, so that we may be reconciled to God in Jesus Christ.

We must look upon death in the glass of the gospel, as a sweet sleep, and not in the glass of the law, as a pit, full to destruction. For death of itself is nothing, it is our ill consciences that makes us afraid. The very sighs, sobs, and groans, of a repenting and believing heart, are effectual prayers before God; such as, *Lord have mercy on me, Christ have mercy on me, Lord have mercy on me.* Remember the last words of a dying man mentioned in the holy scripture, *O Lord I have waited for thy salvation: Father into thy hands I commit my spirit, Lord Jesus receive my soul.* And then will our Saviour meet us, and say, *Come ye blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you, from the beginning of the world.*

St. Paul saith, *No man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself, for whether we live, we live unto the Lord, and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; Whether we live or die, therefore, we are the Lord's.* Which words teach us, that in the pangs of death we should resign ourselves unto the Lord: as David

did, saying, *Into thy hands I commend my spirit,* knowing that God would receive him.

The consideration of which ought to raise our souls inflamed with divine love, far above the level of this world, and give them the wings of an eagle, that they may fly up to heaven in contemplation of those joys they sigh for in this vale of tears, and by faith stedfastly to behold their Blessed Redeemer, sitting at the right hand of God, obtaining for us a crown of life and immortal glory.

Therefore I entreat you to conclude with this following prayer, which is the substance of what I have already written, "That God Almighty may guide both our hearts and minds, to pray for a pious dissolution out of this life, whensoever it shall happen.

"O that men would therefore praise the Lord, who does such wonderful things for the children of men, which the tongues of men and angels are not able to express, and are ever beyond our imaginations till we come to enjoy them in full glory, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

*A Godly Prayer to the effect of the foregoing Sermon, proper for any Man or Woman on their Death bed.*

○ ALMIGHTY and Everlasting God, from whose face the heaven and the earth fled away, lead me into the way that I must go, so that I may in the end find my Saviour Jesus Christ, who sitteth on the white throne, and be thought worthy to appear in the presence of the Bridegroom. I am weary of the wicked and sinful world, and desire to be with Christ which is best of all. O Lord,

Jesus, who knowest how long I have to live, and the hour of my death: my days are in thy hand, for thou hast made my days but as a span long, and my age is nothing unto thee, therefore teach me so to number my days, that I may apply my heart unto wisdom. But above all, deliver me from the body of death, which the very thought of makes my soul to tremble, and lift up my thoughts on high, so that I may sing praises and thanks to thee in thy heavenly choir, with angels and saints.

I desire to go from darkness to light, from pain to pleasure, from the troubles of this life to eternal rest. Come then, Lord Jesus, come quickly, and dissolve me from this body, that now longeth to be with thee. A little before thy death, thou didst pray thy father, saying, "Father, these whom thou hast given me, I will that they shall be where I am, that they may be with me, and see my glory which thou hast given me; for thou hast loved me before the foundation of the world;" therefore, O Lord Jesus, be present at my right hand, when I die, and let not the devil have any advantage over me, nor the wicked approach to hurt me, but say to my poor soul, Soul be of good comfort, thy sins are forgiven thee, *This day thou shalt be with me in paradise.* And at the resurrection of the saints, O sweet Jesus, raise my body to life eternal, so that I may with joy appear before thee, my Judge and Advocate, and hear that comfortable sentence, *Come thou blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom prepared for thee from the foundation of the world.* O come then Lord Jesus, come quickly from thy kingdom of grace, to thy kingdom of glory; and not for any merits of mine, but for the sake of him, who is the Son of thy love, and

Lamb of thy bosom ; to whom with the Father and Holy Ghost, be ascribed all honour, glory, power, might, majesty, and thanksgiving from me, and all holy men and women, now and for evermore.

*A Morning prayer for a private person, or family.*

**O** LORD Jesus, Judge of all men, whether alive or dead, send thy Holy Spirit to instruct me, that I may daily live in expectation of thy coming in glory, and ever be mindful of the last day of my life, as the happiest day of my redemption, expecting thy coming as my Saviour, Advocate, Surety, and Bishop of my soul. But what will that avail me, except thou, O my Saviour, keep and guide me, that I might avoid those horrible vices, which in this sinful and degenerate age, do reign amongst the wicked and ungodly ; such is drunkenness, adultery and covetousness, being certain that no such shall inherit the kingdom of God. And that I set not my affections too much on things of this world, as riches, profits, and preferments, with the pleasure of which our hearts are often carried away, so that we seldom come to a serious contemplation of things belonging to our peace and future happiness : but give me grace to seek after Christ, and him crucified, so that with St. Paul, I may desire to be dissolved, and be with Christ ; in comparison of which, I count all things but loss for the excellency of Christ Jesus, my Lord.

Lead me, O good, O gracious, and merciful Lord and Saviour, and guide me, I beseech thee, in the way of all truth and righteousness, and so govern all my thoughts, words, and actions this day, that I

may not wilfully commit any thing that might offend thy divine majesty, and that all my doings may be to thy glory, the good of thy church, and the discharge of my duty in this life; in order to which, deliver me from all temptations and afflictions of this sinful world, and from all mine enemies both public and private, and from all the temptations of the devil, the deadly enemy of mankind. But above all, inflame my heart and affections, with a fervent zeal of thy sacred word, that I may embrace thy holy religion, and know thy blessed will, and walk in thy ways; and to do which, strengthen me with thy Holy Spirit, boldly and constantly to profess the honour and service of thy great and holy name, lest at any time through the frailty of the flesh, or the corruptions of my own nature, or the temptations of the devil, I fall off from my duty to thee: O Lord strengthen my weak faith through Jesus Christ, kindle it more and more in fervency and love towards thee, and in love and charity towards all men. Suffer me not, O Jesus, to receive thy grace any more in vain, but grant that it may prove as good seed sown in fertile ground, so that I may bring forth the fruits of repentance in holiness of life and conversation, to thy honour and glory, and the future good of my soul and body, and therein give me a contented mind with my condition, and all other blessings, which thou, O Lord God, of thy abundant goodness in mercy hast bestowed on me, that I may use them soberly as becomes me, and be truly thankful to thee for them; therefore grant me patience in all my troubles and afflictions which may daily happen unto me. And above all, O dear Father, grant that I do not repine at thy fatherly

correction, I well knowing that vengeance is thine, and that in due season, thou wilt repay it.

Keep, O Good Father my wandering will and desires from all evil thoughts, my tongue from profane cursing and swearing, evil-speaking, lying and slandering, and my body in temperance, soberness, and chastity, not coveting nor desiring other men's goods, but that I may learn and labour truly to get my own living. Let all my love, faith, hope, delight and confidence be only upon thee; and open my heart to have pity and compassion upon all the poor distressed members of Jesus Christ, whether they be afflicted in body or mind. Give me the gift of chastity, that I possess my vessel, which is the temple of the Holy Ghost, with sanctification, and not in the lusts of the flesh as the wicked and foolish do, who know not God, nor Jesus Christ whom he has sent; and grant that every day more and more, I may become sorrowful for my sins and transgressions that are past, and which I have so wilfully committed. Accept, O Lord, of these our petitions, as also of our praises and thanksgivings, for all thy mercies and benefits which thou in thy tender mercy hast from time to time bestowed upon me. Let thy mighty hand and outstretched arm, O Lord, be still my defence, and thy mercy in Jesus Christ be my salvation. Thy Holy Word my instruction, and thy Holy Spirit my comfort all my days, so that I may continually perform that which thou hast commanded me, and daily live in the fear of thy holy name, to the intent that I may die in thy favour, and then rise to life immortal with my Lord Jesus Christ, to dwell with him in heaven for evermore, which is the

only happiness I hope and pray for, not for any of my own merits, but for the merits and mercy of Jesus Christ, who came into the world to suffer death upon the cross to save mankind, and who hath taught us thus to pray, *Our Father, which art in heaven, &c.*

*An Evening Prayer for a private person, or Family.*

**O** MOST Great and Mighty Lord God, and merciful Father, I a poor wretched and undone sinful wretch, return unto thee praises and thanks, for all thy goodness which thou hast been pleased from time to time to bestow upon me, begging of thee to hear my supplications, and to grant my requests in what shall seem to thee convenient for me, thou knowing my necessities better than I that ask; who have been negligent of every good work, but run headlong into every thing that is evil, yet if thou please to wash me with one drop of my Lord and Saviour's precious blood, it is I know for certainty, sufficient to make my sins, though as red as scarlet, to become as white as snow. Oh! Let not my own sins, nor the sins of my forefathers ever be numbered up against me, but be thou my God, and let me be thy servant. Forgive me, O good Father, all the sins that I have committed from day to day against thy divine majesty, and suffer me not, O Lord, to offend thee any more, that neither sin nor Satan, nor any unruly passion may any longer reign in my mortal body, for I confess with shame and confusion of face, I have heretofore done wickedly, and have broken all thy commandments, for which

thou mightest in justice have cast me into hell. But thou, O God, who art gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, I hope will forgive me all that is past, and pour upon me the holy spirit of wisdom, that it may be a lanthorn to my feet, and a light to my steps. Increase my faith, O heavenly Father, that I do not swerve from thy word at any time, but increase in me hope and love, shew thy mercy upon me, and enlighten the natural blindness and darkness of my heart, by thy heavenly grace, that I may daily be renewed by the same, and be pleased to purge the grossness of my understanding, which hath been choaked with the cares and pleasures of this world ; so that I may profitably read, hear, and understand thy will, believe and practice the same in my life and conversation ; all carnal desires and lusts of the flesh being mortified in me : But most chiefly I intreat thee, O Lord, to defend me against the temptations and subtile deccit of the devil, who goes daily about seeking whom he may devour. And should I happen to fall into sin, through the frailty of my nature, I beseech thee to give me true repentance, that I may amend my life for the time to come, and become truly religious, and increase in all holiness and godliness of living, to the praise and glory of thy holy name. Finally, for as much as it has pleased thee to make the night for man to rest, and ordained for him the day to follow his honest labour and vocation, grant, O heavenly Father, that I may so enjoy my rest, that my soul may watch, like the wise virgin, with the oil of faith in my heart, for the second coming of my Lord Jesus Christ, and that I may fully set my mind to love, fear, and to rest in thee : And then, O Lord, awaken me, that I may behold the day

with comfort, so that when I have run the short race of this mortal life, thou mayest be pleased to summon me to partake of a better in thy kingdom, where I shall for ever remain with thee in glory, through Jesus Christ our Saviour. In whose name I beg all these graces, in that short but excellent form of prayer, which Christ himself hath taught saying, *Our Father, which art in heaven, &c.*

# A CONTEMPLATION

UPON

## Death.

**D**EATH knocks as boldly at the rich man's door,  
As at the meanest cottage of the poor :  
It spares not old nor young, nor high nor low,  
But all must yield to its unerring blow.

Both men and beasts, fish, fowls, and trees that spring,  
Must yield to death sent out by Christ our King.  
Nothing on earth's more certain unto men.  
Nor more uncertain how, or where, or when.

The sand runs in the glass, so runs our breath,  
And every moment life runs nearer death.  
Which if that men would once consider well,  
Not knowing but the next might be their passing bell.

They would repent before it is too late,  
And welcome death which sinners tremble at.  
Whose trumpet warns, us and his warning past,  
Like verdent grass, his seythe cuts down at last.

Though death is terrible to flesh and blood,  
Yet it brings solid comfort to the good.  
Their miseries and troubles out of date,  
And unto life eternal, death's a gate.

To the ungodly, by the doom supernal,  
Death is the door unto the death eternal.  
Where they for ever shall be in fetters bound,  
And cry for mercy, which shall ne'er be found.

So all that shall be, are, or ever was,  
To endless joy or pain, by death must pass.  
His coming's must unsure, but come he will,  
And when he comes, he never fails to kill.

# THE SHEPHERD'S TENT :

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OR, A FOLD

FOR

## CHRIST'S SHEEP

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CANTICLES i. 7, 8.

7. *Tell me ( O thou whom my soul loveth ) where thou feedest ; where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon, for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions.*
8. *If thou knowest not, O thou fairest amongst women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherd's tent.*

**B**EFORE I enter upon the text, I shall say something concerning the order of placing this book, the title of it, and the matter therein contained. As for the order, in likeness, as there were three degrees in the material temple built by Solomon, The *First*, For the People, The *Second*, For the Priests and Levites, And the *Third*, The *Sanctum Sanctorum*, where none but the High Priest could enter, and that but once a year. Even so in this Spiritual Temple, he hath erected three Courts ; *First*, An outward Court, which is the book of *Proverbs*, easy to be understood by the People. *Secondly*, *Ecclesiastes*, which leads men no further in the way of godliness. And *Thirdly*, His excellent book of *Canticles*, wherein, none but those that

delight in heavenly mysteries, can see the affection of Christ Jesus towards his church, and every member thereof; as also the church's love towards him, and the benefit she reapeth by him.

*Secondly*, As for the titles of that book, It is the *Song of Songs*, the most divine piece of all Solomon's writings, wherein he decyphers out unto us the most perfect love of Jesus Christ towards his spouse, the church, who he makes in love with one another, which may serve as to the book itself, and therefore I shall proceed in the next place to the consideration of the words of the text.

*Tell me, O thou, whom my soul loveth.*

In the beginning of this chapter the church speaks to Christ, earnestly desiring to embrace him, preferring him before all the pleasures of this world: in the *third verse* she expresseth her unworthiness to embrace him. And in the *fourth*, she confesseth her inability and want of power, and desireth to be beautified with his graces, to become a mere spouse for him whom her soul loveth. And in the *fifth*, she owns her imperfection, confessing that though by nature she is full of corruptions and pollutions, yet being washed in Christ's blood, *she is fair and comely*. And then she proceeds in the text, *First*, That Jesus Christ would shew her where he feeds his flock with his holy word, to the end that he should feed her as he fed his flocks in former time. And *Secondly*, where he covers them from the scorching heat of persecution. And *Lastly*, she gives the reason, *For why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions.*

*First*, The person to whom she seeks for direction in Christ Jesus, the Saviour and Redeemer of his church, whom she describes, *O thou, whom my soul loveth*, which love far exceeds all other love, and is the best in the world. By which we may see, with what affection every believer ought to love Jesus Christ; namely with the greatest affection of love, that the soul of man is capable of; with a love that enflames the heart with divine raptures; for if any thing in this world be beloved like unto him, all is in vain; he requires the whole heart when he says, *Son, give me thy heart*. And therefore all that will be his followers, must from the bottom of their heart say, *O thou, whom my soul loveth*: nay, so earnestly was the love of the church towards Christ, that she cries out, *Stay me with flaggons; and comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love*; Cant. ii. 5. And St. Peter, whose love was so great, that he died for Christ, being interrogated whether he loved him or not; with concern answered, *Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee*. And Mary in testimony of her love, washed his feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head; which so moved our blessed Saviour, that he hath left upon record this testimony of her, *that she loved much*; for the Lord hath commanded us to *love him with all our hearts, with all our souls, and with all our might*, Deut. vi. 5. He will not be satisfied to be loved in part, but requires the whole man; we must say, with holy David, *Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee*, Psalm lxxiii. 25. *We cannot serve God and Mammon*, we must not part our love to the

world, and the lusts thereof, but Christ must have it all. And the reasons are many, for

*First*, He is our spouse and husband, whose name is the Lord of Hosts, Isa. liv. 3. And the Holy Ghost bids us *be glad, and rejoice, and give glory to him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife has made herself ready*, Rev. xix. 7. Now our service and worship of God is as it were a marriage of our souls to Christ, when in our baptism we betroth ourselves to him as a husband, entering into covenant with him to keep only to him as long as we shall live. And as a man cannot endure that another should have share in his wife's love, so *he is a jealous God*, Exod. xx. 4. And though death may, and does separate man and wife, yet if we love Christ, we shall never be separated from him, but our souls shall be for ever closely united to him, and he will feed us here, and we shall reign with him from everlasting to everlasting. But if we shall be so false to him, to renounce our baptismal vow, and give ourselves up to the sinful lusts of the flesh, and the delusions thereof, he will give us a bill of divorcement, and cast us off, as shameless strumpets to the miseries of the world, and eternal torments hereafter.

*Secondly*, We should love Christ above all, because he loved us first, *We loved him, because he loved us first*, 1 John iv. 19. for he loved us when we were his enemies, and in love to us, he endured poverty, distress, scorn, abuses, stripes, and even death itself, whose bands he broke, so that he could not be holden of death in the grave, or prevented to ascend on high to draw us after him with the

cords of his love, where he sits at the right hand of his Father, continually interceding for us, stopping the hand of his justice in mercy, from executing justice on us for our evil deeds. And as the apostle Paul witnesseth, *You hath he quickened, who were dead in sin*, Eph. ii. 1. which he has sufficiently manifested, *In washing us from our sins in his own blood*, Rev. i. 5. Greater love than this, can no man shew, and shall not we love him again. Suppose a man were taken captive by the *Turks*, where he had been a long time kept in bondage, think ye that he would not be very thankful to any man that should redeem him from his slavery. Much more we who are in bondage by the subtilty of Satan, ought to return thanks for our redemption from eternal torments, "by God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sin, he quickened us together with Christ, by whose grace we are saved," Eph. ii. 4. "Hereby, (saith St. John,) we perceive the love of God, because he laid down his life for us. In whom (saith the apostle,) we have redemption through his blood," Eph. i. 7. Which love being so very extraordinary, one would think to every ingenuous mind, should constrain us to love him again.

*Thirdly*, Because Christ Jesus is most excellent in himself, and above all things to be desired, as the church saith, *My Beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand*, and fairer than the children of men. In the world we observe some are beloved, because they are beautiful, rich, and honourable, which prevails very much in this world to draw men into their esteem; but all this is

nothing in respect of Christ, who is the store-house of all mercies, the Lord of heaven and earth, and the Son of God shining in grace and truth, *Whose countenance*, as St. John tells us, *outshone the brightness of the sun*. In short, he is in all things lovely and desirable, as the soul of man can desire, and therefore above all should he be beloved, who is worthy to receive glory, and honour, and power, and praise, and dominion both now and for evermore.

What then can we prefer to him that is worthy of our love, and yet here many for a little earthly dross reject him, making riches their God, and doting upon the things of this world; as the *Gadarenes*, who preferred their hogs before the presence of our Saviour; or like Judas, who sold him for so small a sum as thirty pence; and love their pleasures as Dives did, more than their own souls; or like the *Bethlehemites*, let him lie in the stable amongst beasts, rather than afford him one corner in their hearts: nay, we even see those that own him, break covenant with him, and follow their own lusts, which takes off their love to spiritual things; they outwardly pretend indeed to love the Lord Jesus Christ, but in their works they not only deny him, but say, *We will not have this man to rule over us*. Consider then, how would any man be content, that his wife should say she loves him, and at the same time setting her heart upon another man? Much more, how can we imagine God will take it at our hands, and at the same time, we are dallying with his enemies, the world, the lusts thereof. Certainly he will withdraw the light of his amiable countenance from such, and cease to shine with his grace

in their hearts, leaving them to stumble on dark mountains, and lose their way to the heavenly Canaan, for robbing him of that respect which is due to him, and giving his honour to sin and Satan.

How then shall such as reject his love be able to look him in the face, when he shall come in flames of fire, accompanied with ten thousand of his saints and angels, to convince all gainsayers, and render vengeance on ungodly sinners.

St. Paul's love was so fervent, *That he accounted all things but dross and dung, in comparison of the love of Christ.* It is impossible for a man to be religious, that hath no delight in the word of God, which most men have no delight in now a days, and therefore no love in Christ. David made the testimonies of God his heritage, and esteemed them above gold, yea, above fine gold.

*Secondly,* If we love God with all our hearts, we shall love his ministers, and all those that he loves, as St. John saith, *Hereby we know that we are passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren,* 1 John iii. 14. And holy David declares publicly, *All my delight is in thy saints.* It is our duty to love all, but we must love the saints with a peculiar and special love, as members of the same body with us; for those that do otherwise, are not in Christ, but in the love of the world, and the love of Christ is not in them, for the world loves her own. "But because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you," John xv. 19.

*Thirdly,* If we love our Saviour, we must be obedient to his laws; for he saith, *If ye love me, keep my commandments,* John xiv. 15. Little

obedience, less love ; and hearty obedience, hearty love. And if we love our Saviour as we ought, we cannot endure to have him blasphemed, his word despised, or his sabbath profaned, but it will grieve us to the heart, and we will upon all occasions defend his cause to the utmost of our power, as a dutiful child will that of his father, or a faithful servant the credit of his master. And furthermore, it will make us be content to endure trial and persecution for his sake, even the loss of life and limbs, and all things else for his sake, because he so loved us, that he laid down his life for us, which may suffice for the love of the church to Christ. It remains now, that I speak of a church's petition to her beloved Spouse.

*Tell me, O thou, whom my soul loveth where thou feedest, &c.*

In this place, as in many others the church compares Christ to be a faithful shepherd, in imitation of the prophet Isaiah, who saith, "He will gather together his lambs," Isa. xl. 11. and of Ezekiel, "Behold I will require my flock of the shepherd : and I myself will feed my sheep, and cause them to rest in quiet," Ezek. xxxiv. 10. Which is acknowledged of the prophet David, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want," Psalm xxiii. 1. Yea, Christ calls himself so, when he says, "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine," John x. 14.

To this shepherd, the church put up her humble petition in the most devout manner, that he would be pleased to tell her where he feeds his flocks,

with the preaching of the word, and the use of the sacraments, that she may join with them to receive the benefit of the holy sacrament, and be comforted; for though the church of Christ is but one, yet it has many parts, as the Holy Spirit distinguisheth it, writing to the seven churches in *Asia*. And as there, so here, one part may be under persecution, and the other in prosperity; but in the text, the church desires to know where Christ feeds his sheep according to his word, that she may join with them in the service of God.

By this petition, we find, it is a true sign of a sheep belonging to Christ's fold, when he hungers and thirsts after the word of God, faithfully preached, and the sacraments duly administered, which our Saviour himself observes to be the mark of his sheep, John x. 27. *My sheep hear my voice, and I hear them: but the voice of a stranger will they not hear.* David was very earnest in seeking for God, when he saith, *O how amiable are thy tabernacles? How does my soul long after thy altar? O when shall I come, and appear before the Lord in Sion?* Even so should every Christian hunger and thirst after Christ in the spirit, as the body hungers and thirsts after nourishment to refresh it, for the holy Scriptures are the nourishment of the soul, and those that hunger not after it, but after the things of this world, starve and pine their souls to death, even the second death, which is the most terrible of all. And this is the miserable case of too many, who strive to pamper their bodies, but never mind to refresh their souls with spiritual food; yea seeing there are but few, very few that desire the word of God, or can discern what a miserable condition they are in. but

expose themselves to temptations, which lead them insensibly into sin before they know what they are about, never so much as reflecting upon themselves to say, *Alas, What have I done?* Jer. viii. 6. Much less having a desire for the sincere milk of the Word, or longing for it, as the infant does for the mother's breast, or panteth after it, as the *hart does after the water brook*, Psalm xlii. or as the Church does in the text, *Tell me where thou feedest thy flock*. We should do as the earth doth in time of drought, open our mouths until the Lord sends rain. The beggar never begs so earnestly, till he feels his own want, and then he will neither spare time, labour or words; so till we see our own wants, we never seek for the spiritual food of our souls: But they are blessed, *who hunger and thirst after righteousness*, Matt. v. 6.

Those that fancy themselves happy, because they feel no want, are most likely to fall into it, because their imagined plenty makes them negligent to recruit their wanting stores; so even it is with a sinner, whose sins have so far blinded him, that he is not capable of seeing the want of grace and mercy, he stands in need of, to comfort his soul in the great and terrible day of the Lord; who for refusing the love of Christ, will meet with his just anger, hearing him say, *I know ye not, depart from me all ye workers of iniquity*; for he that denies him before men, he will deny before his father which is in heaven.

Now the reason why we do not hunger nor thirst after the Word of God, is, because we do not consider it is the *Bread and water of Life*, and without it we can never enjoy the variety of all those good

things, which are treasured up in the Word, to make us truly happy; for as all good things which we have, and enjoy in this present life, are appendances to the Word of God, by which Word, and the Lord's Prayer they are sanctified to us. And no otherwise can it be obtained, but by thirsting after it, as the Blessed Virgin expresseth it in her song, *He filleth the hungry with good things, and the rich he hath sent empty away*, Luke i. 53. By the rich here, are meant those that think they want nothing, when indeed they want every thing, wanting the comfortable application of God's Word to their souls; for want of which, the soul pines away whilst those that hunger after it, have their souls satisfied with all good things in this life, and lay up a store of endless blessings in the life to come: Which may serve to comfort the distressed children of God, which labour and travel to hear the Word preached, though they meet with mocking and scoffing for it, by unbelievers. Beside, if we should not eagerly seek after the Word of God, we should never know how much we are beholden unto the Lord, for the manifold blessings we receive: For as Solomon saith, *The full soul loatheth the honey-comb, but unto the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet*, Prov. xxvii. 7. So that when we shall come to a sense of our spiritual poverty, it should, one would think, make us highly prize it, as the only thing that can supply our wants, and make us rich in the abundance of all good things held forth to us, in hearing the Word preached, and reading and digesting it to our comfort.

Now, seeing this longing after the word that Christ hath left us, is an infallible mark that we are

of his fold, and that he is our shepherd, we ought therefore to enquire where *Christ doth feed his sheep*, and to gain such a mark, as may distinguish us from the goats, *who tread down the pasture of the sheep*, Ezek. xxxiv. 18. Who can be content as well to want the word of God, as to have it? By which we may judge of our own estates, whether we be the true sheep of Christ, or the goats of Satan, the children of God, or limbs of the devil. If thou love the word of God, and desirest to be taught, and to know where Christ doth feed his sheep with good pasture, and doth delight in his word, John x. 27. then thou mayest minister comfort unto thy soul, if thou art one of those that belong unto his fold; but if thou loath the word of God, and never desirest to put thy foot in God's house, but spendest the sabbath in gaming and drinking, it is a sign thou art none of Christ's sheep, but one of the stinking goats of satan, and thou shalt be divided in the last day from the sheep whom he shall set on the right hand, and the goats on the left. Which serves to reprove three sorts of men.

*First*, The Atheist, who thinks it *lost labour to serve the Lord*, and that there is no good got by hearing sermons, or leading a godly life; but let such take warning in time, if they expect to have any comfort in the hour of death.

*Secondly*, The Papists, who keep poor men in ignorance, and all those who hinder Christ's sheep to be taught, who otherwise would enquire, *Where Christ feedeth his sheep*. These men are like the Scribes and Pharisees, *who shut up the kingdom of heaven, that will not enter themselves, nor suffer those that would*. Whereas the scripture doth

require of all men, to *try the spirits, whether they be of God*, 2 John iv. 1. Otherwise, if they follow their false teachers, they are sure to perish, for *if the blind lead the blind, they both fall into the ditch*, Matt. xv. 14.

*Thirdly*, All covetous persons, who enquire where they may get a good purchase, and never enquire *where Christ feeds his sheep*; who are certainly none of Christ's sheep, for if they were, *they would hear his voice and follow him*, John x. 27. but let such be warned in time, if they expect any comfort in death, and at the day of judgment, that they now labour to be found sheep of the fold of Christ's, and not to follow vain notions.

It is the duty of the true church of God, to acknowledge Christ Jesus alone for their shepherd, the only head and chief bishop of his church, "I am the true shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine," John x. 14. which is acknowledged by Peter, in behalf of the disciples, who saith, "Master, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And Christ hath promised to be present with his church, even to the end of the world," Matt. xxviii. 20.

And the reason why they should be thus marked, is, because the great work of salvation is wholly and entirely wrought by him, as the apostle witnesseth, "That amongst men there is no other name given under heaven, in whom and by whom we can be saved, but only the name of Jesus Christ." And in another place, St. Paul saith, *Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him*. Which is a plain argument against the church of Rome, who will not own

Christ to be their great Pastor, and general Shepherd, but set up the Pope as Vicar, and prefer him before the Lord that redeemed them; and will not allow the people the use of the scriptures, but give them inventions and traditions of men, because *They will not hear his voice and follow him*, JOHN x. 27. and be content with the food he hath prepared for them, but feed upon filthy puddles of men's inventions.

By this we ought to learn to teach nothing but the truth of God according to his revealed word, not any dreams or imaginations of our own to please the people's ears, but destroy their souls. And you that are hearers, must content yourselves with the plain and pure preaching of the word of God, and not to be carried away with vain imaginations, that tickle the ear, and cannot work grace in the heart. As the wicked doctrines in the Church of Rome, which poison men's souls, rather than edify them; which may suffice for the church's first request, I shall now proceed to the second.

*And where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon.*

This passage in the text alludes to a custom in those hot countries, to drive their sheep to pastures in the morning, and when the sun waxeth hot, at noon, to drive them to cool shades for refreshment.

So here the church intreats him to tell her where he feeds his sheep, that is, where his faithful people find protection, in the heat of persecution, which is meant here by noon day, when the sun is most hot, as our Saviour says of evil hearers. *And when the*

*sun was up, they were scorched, and for want of root, they withered away.*

From whence we may observe, *First*, that the Church of God sometimes is in the very heat of persecution, and that it is Christ's will that his people should be tried. According to the rule of St. Paul, *Whosoever will live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution*, 2 Tim. ii. 12. And David tells us, *Many are the troubles of the righteous, but the Lord delivers them out of all*, Psal. lv. 19.

This was the condition of the Israelites in Egypt, Exod. i. 42. and of the Church of the Hebrews, "They were stoned, they were hewn asunder, they were buried, they were slain with the sword, wandering up and down in bear skins, and in goat skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented. And our Saviour foretells, That they shall excommunicate you: yea, the time shall come, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doeth God service:" And he gives his reason for it, *because they have not known the Father nor me*: So that if we expect to live and reign with Christ in his Church Triumphant, we must patiently suffer in the Church Militant on earth.

*Secondly*, That Christ never forsakes his flock: but in the heat of noon-day, even in the midst of persecution, he gives them comfort and refreshment. St. Paul saith, *It is necessary that afflictions should come, that the elect may be manifested who they be*. And therefore God would have Abraham tempted to try his faith, Job to prove his patience, David his piety, and Paul his courage, who all for a time endured the shame and reproach of the cross, yet afterwards the Lord return-

ed to them, when the time of refreshing came. So that although God's children may be under the heat of persecution for a time, it shall be but for a time ; he will not leave them destitute of help for ever, but will in the end deliver them. And the reasons are manifest.

*First*, If we consider God as a Father, he will take care of us ; for what father will not save his child, " And if we that are evil know how to help our children, how much more shall our heavenly Father that knoweth all things, give good things unto his children."

*Secondly*, Christ is called a shepherd, and will the shepherd see the sheep go astray, and not bring them home, or let the wolf devour them, and not rescue them ; and can we imagine that Christ the true shepherd of his church, will be more careless of his flock, which he purchased at so dear a price as his own precious blood, than a man is of his sheep.

*Thirdly*, Our weakness is not hid from the Lord, he knoweth whereof we are made, he remembers we are but dust ; and therefore saith the Apostle, " God is faithful, that he will not suffer us to be tempted above that which we are able ; but will even with the temptation, make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it," 1 Cor. x. 13. And the reason why he suffers us to be afflicted thus, is to humble us, lest by over much prosperity, like Jeshurun, we should grow fat and kick, and that being afflicted, they should lift up their eyes to the hills, from whence cometh their deliverance, and not be puffed up with pride, and rely on their own strength, as the Papists do, which cannot avail them in time of need

USE 1. This directs us to whom we should go in time of trouble, for if God be our Father, he will take care of his children; if Christ be our shepherd, he is the preserver of his flock: Shall we be so foolish then as the Papists, and seek for help from saints and angels; *Doubtless, Abraham is ignorant of us, and Israel knoweth us not*, Isa. lxiii. 16.

USE 2. Here is endless comfort unto all the children of God, who hath promised, and certainly will provide a place of comfort, a shade at noon-day, in the heat of persecution. In the midst of which, we may say with holy David, "Why art thou cast down (O my soul) and why art thou so disquieted within me? hope then in God, for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance."

USE 3. This shews the woeful condition of all wicked and ungodly men, who shall hide their heads, and find no place of shelter or refuge in the time of persecution.

The reason the Church useth to move the Lord Jesus Christ to grant her request, is taken from the great danger she was likely to fall into, lest being constrained *To turn aside to the flock of thy companions*; that is, to leave the true Church and worship of God, and join with the false Church, *the flock of thy companions*.

From hence we may learn, that it is impossible for men and women to stand the brunt of persecution, unless they be taught of God, and comforted by his Holy Spirit, which made David earnestly crave, *That the Lord would open his eyes, that he might see the wondrous things of God's law*, and make him to understand the way of his precepts. And Paul prayed for the Ephesians, "That God

would give them the spirit of wisdom, and enlighten their minds, that they may know what is the hope of their calling, and what the riches are of this glorious inheritance."

*And the reasons are,*

*First,* We are by nature blind, and can see nothing, unless God direct us by his spirit, as Solomon saith, Prov. xiv. 12. *The ways that seem right unto us, the issues thereof are the ways of death.*

*Secondly,* Unless the Lord do assist us, we shall not be able to undergo the least temptation that shall befall us.

And *Lastly,* The enemies of truth, are in their generation wiser than the children of light.

USE 1. This shews that if persecution do arise for the truth of the gospel, it is to be feared most men would yield *to the flock of his companions,* either to deny God or to worship him in idolatry, as the Papists do.

USE 2. This should stir us up to pray to Christ, to open our eyes that we may see the truth, and to live and die in it, and to *try the spirits whether they be of God;* so that we may discern truth from falsehood.

USE 3. This condemns all who for fear of persecution, turn, as doth the wind, and join with Papists, Jews, Turks, or with the devil himself for advantage.

*Canticles 8.*

We have already heard the earnest request of the church, that Christ would in mercy shew her where

he feeds his flock, and where he refresheth them in time of trouble. In which we may observe three things.

*First,* His love and kindness, in that he calls her, *The fairest among women.*

*Secondly,* His reproof, *If thou know not.*

*Thirdly,* His direction, *Go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock;* that is, by the direction and rule of the word of God, which leads to all truth, even in the steps of the Patriarchs, Prophets, and Apostles; and in doing of this, he adds ornaments of beauty to her, calls her "the rose of the field, the lily of the valley, the fairest amongst women, an orchard of pomegranates, a well of springing waters, the spouse and sister of Christ, the beauty of the earth, the glory of the world, a lily among thorns," &c.

By which expressions we see how dear and precious the church is in the sight of Christ her beloved spouse, and how gracious and merciful he is to pass over her blemishes, and call her the *fairest among women*, though a little before she confesseth herself to be black and deformed, yet now she is comely as the lily, or unsullied rose.

The use is this, Dost thou repent of thy sins, and art truly humbled for them? Then comfort thyself, that Jesus Christ will blot them all out; so that thou shalt appear fair and beautiful in his sight. Be not discouraged, if thou believest in Christ, and hate thy sins, he will cover them all as he did David's.

Let us learn by Christ's example, if we see any good thing in our fellow creature to commend it; and if any infirmity to cover it with the cloak of

love, and not as the wicked do, if they spy one blemish, to blaze it abroad, and pass by a thousand good actions of their lives: Which may suffice for the first part, wherein Christ calls his church *the fairest among women*.

*Secondly*, His gentle reproof, *If thou know not*, I will direct and shew thee how to find it out. By which we might observe, that a true believer may sometimes be so blind, that he doth not know *where Christ doth feed his flock*; let us therefore do as the men of Berea did, *intreat the Lord to give us the spirit of discerning, that we may try all things, and hold the truth*.

*Go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock*; that is, thou must walk in the steps of the faithful servants of the Lord, and embrace the true faith, as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob did, and believe in the doctrine which the prophets and apostles have taught and delivered, in the Old and New Testament, and then thou shalt know where I feed my sheep, that thou mayest feed with them.

If any man desires to know where Christ feeds his sheep, it is where God is truly worshipped, and we walk by faith with God as Enoch did, and the prophets and apostles, whom we may conclude to be the true sheep of the fold, whom Christ in this world doth preserve, and will preserve for evermore. For thus saith the Lord, "Stand in the way, and behold, ask for the old way, which is the good way, and walk therein, and you shall find peace and rest for your souls."

Let us then stand out against the Antichrist of Rome, and as Christ saith, come out of her, join not with her in her false religion, and idolatrous

service of God, lest we partake of her judgments :  
 But let us hold fast the true religion of God, *Tread  
 in the steps of the sheep, fed by the tents of the shep-  
 herd.* Let us live and die in the true church of  
 God, and for ever hold fast the true antient, and  
 holy religion, which we have received from the holy  
 Patriarchs, the Prophets, and all the holy Apostles  
 of Jesus Christ, and then we shall be safe and sure,  
 yea, blessed and happy for evermore.



A MORNING PRAYER FOR A FAMILY.

*Lord, teach us to pray, that we may call upon thy  
 name, prepare our hearts to seek thee ; and open  
 thou thy ears to hear us.*

**O** ETERNAL and everlasting Lord God, by  
 whose gracious providence we are preserved,  
 for which we desire to humble both souls and bodies  
 before thee : acknowledging our unworthiness to  
 appear before thee, who are but vile earth and  
 miserable worms, the very thoughts and imagina-  
 tions of our hearts being evil, yet, O Lord, thou  
 hast commanded us to call upon thee, and hast  
 promised to grant our requests, which are put up  
 to thee, in faith, which gives us confidence to call  
 upon thee, knowing that thou wilt at all times make  
 good thy promises to us.

We offer unto thee, this morning sacrifice of prayer  
 and thanksgiving, humbly confessing our manifold  
 sins and transgressions against thy divine majesty ;  
 for which we have justly deserved thy wrath and  
 indignation, both in this life and the life to come.

O God, we come not before thee in our own unworthiness, but in the worthiness of thy Son Jesus Christ, humbly beseeching thee for his sake, to forgive all our offences, both in thought, word and deed. And grant, O God, by the assistance of thy holy spirit, that we may serve thee in righteousness and true holiness all the days of our lives.

Begin not, O Lord, repentance in us only, but of thy great mercy perfect the same, and increase us in the saving knowledge of thee, and of thy Son Jesus Christ, and frame our weak hearts more and more to the obedience of thy will, and teach us to resign our affections to thy will, in time of affliction, as in time of prosperity.

Comfort, O Lord, our sorrowful hearts and dejected souls, who daily do those things which we would not, and leave undone those which thou commandest, and give us ability to withstand the temptations of the devil, the world, and the sinful lusts of the flesh, so that we may honour thee in all our actions, and extol thy name while we live here, and at last behold thy face in glory.

And be pleased also to accept of our praises and thanksgivings, for thy many favours which thou from time to time hast bestowed upon us, more especially for calling us by thy Word in time, and for justifying us by thy Son Christ, as well as for giving us a certain expectation of a better life when this is ended. Oh ! it is thy great goodness, O Lord, that thou hast not deprived us of them all, who have from time to time walked so unworthy of thy love : But lay not to our charge our ingratitude, that we have not brought forth more fruit in our lives, but grant for the time to come, we may take more steps to thy kingdom.

We magnify thy name, O Lord, for all thy temporal blessings which thou hast in mercy bestowed upon us, and beg of thee, to give us a right use of them, that we may not abuse them, unto licentiousness. Praised be thy holy name for keeping us the night past from all dangers both of soul and body, and giving us sweet and comfortable rest; and cause that the rest of our lives, we may be good examples unto others, and enjoy the peace of a good conscience, till at last we come to reign with thee in glory. *Our Father, &c.*



## AN EVENING PRAYER FOR A FAMILY.

*O Lord, prepare our hearts for prayer.*

⓪ ETERNAL God, our loving and most merciful Father, it is thy gracious promise that where two or three are gathered together in thy name thou wilt be present among them; we thy poor and unworthy servants, dust and ashes, come before thee, to offer an evening sacrifice of prayer and thanksgiving.

We confess, O Lord, that we are grievous sinners, conceived in sin, and born in iniquity, and have brought forth most vile fruit in our lives, to the great dishonour of thy holy name, and the evil example of our brethren; for which we justly deserve thy wrath and indignation to be poured upon us both in this life, and that which is to come; but we beg of thee, to be merciful unto us, and to forgive us our sins; for against thee only have we sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.

To thee therefore do we come to crave the pardon of our sins, that they may not draw down upon us deserved judgments; and to that intent, arm and strengthen us against sin for the time to come. Direct us aright, O Lord, in the paths of thy commandments, and lead us by thy holy spirit into all truth, so that our sinful hearts may be brought into subjection, and faithful obedience unto Christ.

Guide us, O Lord, that we may give ourselves, our souls, and our bodies to be lively and acceptable sacrifices unto thee. Let thy love constrain us to love thee, who hast made us after thine own image, and didst preserve us in our mother's womb, and now daily nourishes us, and provides for us, and gives us many blessings, which God grant we may use to thy glory.

Accept, O merciful Lord, of our thanksgiving unto thy majesty, for all thy mercies and blessings from time to time bestowed upon us, and for the assurance that thou hast given us of a better life when this is ended, and for thy goodness towards us this day, wherein thou hast freed us from many dangers of soul and body, and brought us with peace and comfort to the beginning of this night. In which, Lord, watch over us with thy Holy Spirit, and give us a holy and sanctified use of our rest and sleep, so that we may be prepared for the duties of the next day; and grant us all other things which we may stand in need of, thou best knowing what is most proper for us, for the sake of thy dear Son Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom with thee, O Father, together with thy blessed Spirit, we acknowledge to be due, and desire to give all honour, praise, and glory, both now and for ever, *Amen.*

*Our Father, which art in heaven, &c.*

THE  
END OF TIME.

*A DISCOURSE*

FROM

REV. X, 5, 6.

*And the angel, which I saw stand upon the sea, and upon the earth, lifted up his hand to heaven, and sware by him that liveth for ever and ever,—That there should be time no longer.*

**T**HIS is the oath, and the solemn sentence of a mighty angel, who came down from heaven, and by the description of him in the first verse, he seems to be the angel of God's presence, in whom is the name of God, even our Lord Jesus Christ himself who pronounced and sware, that time should be no longer; for all seasons and times are now put into his hand, together with the book of his Father's decrees; Rev. v. 7, 9. What special age or period of time, in this world, the prophecy refers to, may not be so easy to determine; but this is certain, that it may be happily applied to the period of every man's life; for whensoever the term of our continuance in this world is finished, our time, in the present circumstances and scenes that attend it, shall be no more. We shall be swept off the stage of this visible state into an unseen and eternal world: eternity comes upon us at once, and all that we enjoy, all

that we do, and all that we suffer in time, shall be no longer.

Let us stand still here, and consider, in the first place, what awful and important thoughts are contained in this sentence, what solemn ideas should arise to the view of mortal creatures, when it shall be pronounced concerning each of them, that time shall be no more.

1. The time of the recovery of our nature from its sinful and wretched state shall be no longer. We come into this world fallen creatures, children of iniquity, and heirs of death; we have lost the image of God, who made us, and which our nature enjoyed in our first parents; and, instead of it, we are changed into the image of the devil, in the lusts of the mind, in pride and malice, in self-sufficiency and enmity to God; and we have put on also the image of the brute, in sinful appetites, and sensualities, and in the lusts of the flesh; nor can we ever be made truly nappy, till the image of the blessed God be restored upon us, till we are made holy, as he is holy, till we have a divine change passed upon us, whereby we are created anew, and reformed in heart and practice. And this life is the only time given us for this important change. If this life be finished, before the image of God be restored to us, this image will never be restored; but we shall bear the likeness of devils for ever; and perhaps the image of the brute too, at the resurrection of the body, and be further off from God, and all that is holy, than ever we were here upon earth.

Of what infinite importance is it then, to be frequently awakening ourselves, at special seasons and periods of life, to inquire, whether this image of God

is begun to be renewed, whether we have this glorious change wrought in us, whether our desires and delights are fixed upon holy and heavenly things, instead of those sensual and earthly objects, which draw away all our souls from God and heaven. Let it appear to us as a matter of utmost moment to seek after this change; let us pursue it with unwearied labours and strivings with our own hearts, and perpetual importunities at the throne of grace, lest the voice of him who swears that there shall be time no longer, should seize us in some unexpected moment, and lest he swear in his wrath concerning us, "Let him that is unholy be unholy still, and let him that is filthy be filthy still," Rev. xxii. 11.

2. When this sentence is pronounced concerning us, the season and the means of restoring us to the favour and love of God shall be no longer. We are born children of wrath, as well as the sons and daughters of iniquity; Eph. ii. 3. We have lost the original favour of our Maker and are banished from his love, and the superior blessings of his goodness; and yet, blessed be the Lord, that we are not at present for ever banished beyond all hope; this time of life is given us to seek the recovery of the love of God, by returning to him according to the gospel of his Son; now is pardon and peace, now is grace and salvation preached unto men, to sinful wretched men, who are at enmity with God, and the objects of his high displeasure; now the voice of mercy calls to us, This is the accepted time, this is the day of salvation; 2 Cor. vi. 2. To day if ye will hear his voice, let not your hearts be hardened to refuse it; Heb. iii. 15. Now the fountain of the blood of Christ is set open to wash our souls from the guilt of

sin; now all the springs of his mercy are broken up in the ministrations of the gospel; now God is in Christ, reconciling sinners to himself; 2 Cor. v. 19. and he has sent us his ministers to intreat you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God; and we beseech you in his name, continue not one day or one hour longer in your enmity and rebellion, but be ye reconciled to God your Creator, and accept of his offered forgiveness and grace, verse 20.

The moment is hastening upon us, when this mighty angel, who manages the affairs of the kingdom of providence, shall swear concerning every unbelieving and impenitent sinner, that the time of offered mercy shall be no longer, the time of pardon and grace and reconciliation shall be no more the sound of this mercy reaches not to the regions of the dead; those who die before they are reconciled, they die under the load of all their sins and must perish for ever, without the least hope or glimpse of reconciling or forgiving grace.

3. At the term of this mortal life, the time of prayer and repentance and service for God or man in this world shall be no longer. Eccl. ix. 10. "There is no work nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest," whither we are all hastening. Let every sinful creature therefore ask himself, Have I never yet begun to pray? Never begun to call upon the mercy of the God that made me? Never begun to repent of all my crimes and follies? Nor begun in good earnest to do service for God, or to honour him amongst men? Dreadful thought indeed! When, it may be, the next hour we may be put out of all capacity and opportunity to do it for ever! As soon as ever an impenitent

sinner has the veil of death drawn over him, all his opportunities of this kind are for ever cut off: he that has never repented, never prayed, never honoured his God, shall never be able to pray or repent, or do any thing for God or his honour through all the ages of his future immortality: nor is there any promise made to repenting or returning sinners in the other world, whither we are hastening. As the tree falls, when it is cut down, so it lies, and it must for ever lie; pointing to the north or the south, to hell or heaven; Eccl. xi. 3.

And, indeed, there is no true prayer, no sincere repentance can be exercised after this life; for the soul that has wasted away all its time given for repentance and prayer, is at the moment of death left under everlasting hardness of heart; and whatsoever enmity against God and godliness was found in the heart in this world, is increased in the world to come, when all manner of softening means and mercies are ever at an end. This leads me to the next thought.

4. How wretched soever our state is at death, the day of hope is ended, and it returns no more. Be our circumstances never so bad, yet we are not completely wretched while the time of hope remains. We are all by nature miserable by reason of sin, but it is only despair can perfect our misery. Therefore fallen angels are sealed up under misery because there is no door of hope opened for them. But in this life there is hope for the worst of sinful men: there is the word of grace and hope calling them in the gospel; there is the voice of divine mercy sounding in the sanctuary, and "blessed are they that hear the joyful sound;" Psal. lxxxix. 15. But if we turn the

deaf ear to the voice of God and his Son, and to all the tender and compassionate entreaties of a dying Saviour; hope is hastening to its period; for this very angel will shortly swear, that this joyful sound shall be heard no longer.

He comes now to the door of our hearts, he sues there for admittance, open unto me and receive me as your Saviour and your Lord, give me and my gospel free admission, and I will come in and bestow upon you the riches of my grace and all my salvation: open your hearts to me with the holy desires and humble submission of penitence, and receive the blessings of righteousness and pardon and eternal life. He now invites you to return to God, with an acknowledgment and renunciation of every sin, and he offers to take you by the hand, and introduce you into his Father's presence with comfort: this is a day of hope for the vilest and most hateful criminals; but if you continue to refuse, he will shortly swear in his wrath, you shall never enter into his kingdom, you shall never taste of the provisions of his grace, you shall never be partakers of the blessings purchased with his blood. Heb. iii. 11, 13. "I swear in my wrath," saith the Lord, "they shall not enter into my rest."

Oh the dreadful state of sinful creatures, who continue in such obstinacy, who waste away the means of grace and the seasons of hope, week after week, and month after month, till the day of grace and hope is for ever at an end with them! Hopeless creatures! Under the power and the plague of sin, under the wrath and curse of a God, under the eternal displeasure of Jesus, who was once the minister of his Father's love, and they must abide under all this

wretchedness through a long eternity, and in the land of everlasting despair. But I forbear that theme at present; and proceed.

5. At the moment of our death the time of our preparation for the hour of judgment, and for the insurance of heaven and happiness shall be no longer. Miserable creatures that are summoned to die thus unprepared! This life is the only time to prepare for dying, to get ready to stand before the Judge of the whole earth, and to secure our title to the heavenly blessedness. Let my heart inquire, have I ever seriously begun to prepare for a dying hour, and to appear before the Judge of all? Have I ever concerned myself in good earnest, to secure an interest in the heavenly inheritance, when this earthly tabernacle shall be dissolved? Have I ever made interest for the favour of God, and a share of the inheritance of the saints by Jesus the great Mediator, while he afforded life and time?

Death is daily and hourly hastening upon us: Death is the king of terrors, and will fulfil all his name to every soul that is unprepared. It is a piece of wisdom then for every one of us, since we must die, to search and feel whether death has lost its sting or no: whether it be taken away by the blood of Christ. Is this blood sprinkled on my conscience, by the humble exercise of faith on a dying Saviour? Are the terrors of death removed, and am I prepared to meet it by the sanctifying influences of the blessed Spirit? Have I such an interest in the covenant of grace as takes away the sting of death, as turns the curse into a blessing, and changes the dark scenes of death into the commencement of a new and everlasting life; This is that preparation for dying for which

our time of life was given us, and happy are those who are taught of God to make this use of it.

Judgment is making haste towards us; months and days of divine patience are flying swift away, and the last great day is just at hand; then we must give an account of "all that has been done in the body, whether it has been good or evil;" 2 Cor. v. 10. and what a dismal and distressing surprize will it be to have the Judge come upon us in a blaze of glory and terror while we have no good account to give at his demand! And yet this is the very end and design of all our time, which is lengthened out to us on this side the grave, and of all the advantages that we have enjoyed in this life, that we may be ready to render up our account with joy, to the Judge of all the earth.

Heaven is not ours by birth and inheritance, as lands and houses on earth descend to us from our earthly parents. We as well as they are by nature unfit for heaven and children of wrath; but we may be born again, we may be born of God, and become heirs of the heavenly inheritance through Jesus Christ: we may be renewed into the temper and Spirit of heaven; and this life is the only season that is given us for this important change: shall we let our days and years pass away one after another in long succession, and continue the children of wrath still? Are we contented to go on this year as the last without a title to heaven, without a divine temper, and without any preparation for the business or the blessedness of that happy world?

6. When this life comes to an end, the time of all our earthly comforts and amusements shall be no more. We shall have none of these sensible

things around us to employ or entertain our eyes or our ears, to gratify our appetites, to sooth our passions, or to support our spirits in distress. All the infinite variety of cares, labours and joys, which surround us here, shall be no more: life with all the busy scenes and the pleasing satisfactions of it dissolve and perish together; have a care then that you do not make any of them your chief hope, for they are but the things of time, they are all short and dying enjoyments.

Under the various calamities of this life we find a variety of sensible reliefs, and our thoughts and souls are called away from their sorrows by present business, or diverted by present pleasure; but all these avocations and amusements will forsake us at once when we drop this mortal tabernacle; we must enter alone into the world of spirits and live without them there.

Whatsoever agonies or terrors, or huge distresses, we may meet with in that unknown region, we shall have none of these sensible enjoyments to soften and allay them; no drop of sweetness to mix with that bitter cup, no scenes of gaiety and merriment to relieve the gloom of that utter darkness, or to sooth the anguish of that eternal heart-ach. O, take heed, my friends, that your souls do not live too much on any of the satisfactions of this life, that your affections be not set upon them in too high a degree, that you make them not your idols and your chief good, lest you be left helpless and miserable under everlasting disappointment, for they cannot follow you into the world of souls; they are the things of time, and they have no place in eternity. Read what caution the apostle Paul gives us in our converse

with the dearest comforts of life ; 1 Cor. vii. 29. The time is short ; and let those who have the largest affluence of temporal blessings, who have the nearest and kindest relatives, and the most endeared friendships be mortified to them, and be in some sense “ as though they had them not,” for ye cannot possess them long. St. Peter joins in the same sort of advice, 1 Pet. iv. 7. “ The end of all things is at hand, therefore be ye sober,” be ye moderate in every enjoyment on earth, and prepare to part with them all when the angel pronounces that “ Time shall be no longer :” his sentence puts an effectual period to every joy in this life, and to every hope that is not eternal.

Thus we have taken a brief survey of what are the solemn and awful thoughts relating to such mortal creatures in general, which are contained in this voice or sentence of the angel, that time shall be no longer.

In the second place, let us proceed further and inquire a little what are those terrors which will attend sinners, impenitent sinners, at the end of time.

1. A dreadful account must be given of all this lost and wasted time. When the Judge shall ascend his throne in the air, and all the sons and daughters of Adam are brought before him, the grand inquiry will be, What have you done with all the time of life in yonder world ? You spent thirty or forty years there, or perhaps seventy or eighty, and I gave you this time with a thousand opportunities and means of grace and salvation ; what have you done with them all ? How many sabbaths did I afford you ? How many sermons

have ye heard? How many seasons did I give you for prayer, and retirement, and converse with God and your own souls? Did you improve time well? Did you pray? Did you converse with your souls and with God? Or did you suffer time to slide away in a thousand impertinences, and neglect the one thing necessary?"

2. A fruitless and bitter mourning for the waste and abuse of time will be another consequence of your folly. Whatsoever satisfaction you may take now in passing time away merrily and without thinking, it must not pass away so for ever. If the approaches of death do not awaken you, yet judgment will do it. Your consciences will be worried with terrible reflections on your foolish conduct.

O could we but hear the complaints of the souls in hell, what multitudes of them would be found groaning out this dismal note, How hath my time been lost in vanity, and my soul is now lost for ever in distress! How might I have shone among the saints in heaven, had I wisely improved the time which was given me on earth, given me on purpose to prepare for death and heaven! Then they will for ever curse themselves, and call themselves eternal fools, for hearkening to the temptations of flesh and sense, which wasted their time, and deprived them of eternal treasures.

3. Another of the terrors which will seize upon impenitent sinners at the end of time will be endless despair of the recovery of lost time, and of those blessings whose hope is for ever lost with it. There are blessings offered to sinful miserable men in time which will never be offered in eternity, nor put within their reach for ever. The gospel hath

no calls, no invitations, no encouragements, no promises for the dead, who have lost and wasted their time, and are perished without hope. The region of sorrows, whither the judge shall drive impenitent sinners, is a dark and desolate place, where light and hope can never come: but fruitless repentance with horrors and agonies of soul, and doleful despair, reign through that world without one gleam of light or hope, or one moment of intermission. Then will despairing sinners gnaw their tongues for anguish of heart, and curse themselves with long execrations, and curse their fellow-sinners who assisted them to waste their time, and to ruin their souls.

4. The last terror I shall mention which will attend sinners at the end of time is, an eternal suffering of all the painful and dismal consequences of lost and wasted time. Not one smile from the face of God for ever, not one glimpse of love or mercy in his countenance, not one word of grace from Jesus Christ, who was once the chief messenger of the grace of God, not one favourable regard from all the holy saints and angels; but the fire and brimstone burn without end, and the smoke of this their torment will ascend for ever and ever before the throne of God and the Lamb.

Who knows how keen and bitter will be the agonies of an awakened conscience, and the vengeance of a provoked God in that world of misery! How will you cry out, O what a wretch have I been to renounce all the advices of a compassionate Father, when he would have persuaded me to improve the time of youth and health! Alas, I turned a deaf ear to his advice, and now time is lost, and my hopes of mercy for ever perished. How have

I treated with ridicule, among my vain companions, the compassionate and pious counsels of my aged parents who laboured for my salvation! How have I scorned the tender admonitions of a mother, and wasted that time in sinning and sensuality which should have been spent in prayer and devotion! And God turns a deaf ear to my cries now, and is regardless of all my groanings. This sort of anguish of spirit with loud and cutting complaints would destroy life itself, and these inward terrors would sting their souls to death, if there could be any such thing as dying there. Such sighs and sobs and bitter agonies would break their hearts and dissolve their being, if the heart could break, or the being could be dissolved: but immortality is their dreadful portion, immortality of sorrows to punish their wicked and wilful abuse of time and that waste of the means of grace they were guilty of in their mortal state.

I proceed in the last place to consider what reflections may be made on this discourse, or what are some of the profitable lessons to be learnt from it.

**REFLECTION I.** We may learn with great evidence the inestimable worth and value of time, and particularly to those who are not prepared for eternity. Every hour you live is an hour longer given you to prepare for dying, and to save a soul. If you were but apprised of the worth of your own souls, you would better know the worth of days and hours, and of every passing moment, for they are given to secure your immortal interest, and save a soul from everlasting misery. And you would be zealous and importunate in the prayer of Moses, the man of

God, upon a meditation of the shortness of life.  
Psal. xc. 12.

“ So teach us to number our days, as to apply our hearts to wisdom,” i. e. so teach us to consider how few and uncertain our days are, that we may be truly wise in preparing for the end of them.

It is a matter of vast importance to be ever ready for the end of time, ready to hear this awful sentence confirmed with the oath of the glorious angel, that “ Time shall be no longer.” The terrors or the comforts of a dying bed depend upon it: the solemn and decisive voice of judgment depends upon it: the joys and the sorrows of a long eternity depend upon it: go now, careless sinners, and in the view of such things as these, go and trifle away time as you have done before; time, that invaluable treasure: go and venture the loss of your souls and the hopes of heaven and your eternal happiness, in wasting away the remnant hours or moments of life: but remember the awful voice of the angel is hastening toward you, and the sound is just breaking in upon you, that “ Time shall be no longer.”

**REFLECTION II.** A due sense of time hastening to its period will furnish us with perpetual new occasions of holy meditation.

Do I observe the declining day and the setting sun sinking into darkness? so declines the day of life, the hours of labour, and the season of grace: O may I finish my appointed work with honour ere the light is fled! may I improve the shining hours of grace ere the shadows of the evening overtake me, and my time of working is no more!

Do I see the moon gliding along through midnight, and fulfilling her stages in the dusky sky?

This planet also is measuring out my life, and bringing the number of my months to their end. May I be prepared to take leave of the sun and moon, and bid adieu to these visible heavens, and all the twinkling glories of them! These are all but the measurers of my time, and hasten me on towards eternity.

Am I walking in a garden and stand still to observe the slow motion of the shadow upon a dial there? It passes over the hour-lines with an imperceptible progress, yet it will touch the last line of day-light shortly: so my hours and my moments move onward with a silent pace; but they will arrive with certainty at the last limit, how heedless soever I am of their motion, and how thoughtless soever I may be of the improvement of time, or of the end of it.

Does a new year commence, and the first morning of it dawn upon me? Let me remember that the last year was finished, and gone over my head, in order to make way for the entrance of the present: I have one year the less to travel through this world, and to fulfil the various services of a travelling state: may my diligence in duty be double since the number of my appointed years is diminished.

Do I find a new birth-day in my survey of the calendar, the day wherein I entered upon the stage of mortality, and was born into this world of sins, frailties and sorrows, in order to my probation for a better state? Blessed Lord, how much have I spent already of this mortal life, this season of my probation, and how little am I prepared for that happier world? how unready for my dying moment? I am hastening hourly to the end of the life of man which began at my nativity; am I yet born of God? Have

I begun the life of a saint? Am I prepared for that awful day which shall determine the number of my months on earth? Am I fit to be born into the world of spirits through the strait gate of death? Am I renewed in all the powers of my nature, and made meet to enter into that unseen world, where there shall be no more of these revolutions of days and years, but one eternal day fills up all the space with divine pleasure, or one eternal night with long and deplorable distress and darkness?

When I see a friend expiring, or the corpse of my neighbour conveyed to the grave, alas! their months and minutes are all determined, and the seasons of their trial are finished for ever; they are gone to their eternal home, and the estate of their souls is fixed unchangeably: the angel that has sworn their "time shall be no longer," has concluded their hopes, or has finished their fears, and according to the rules of righteous judgment, has decided their misery or happiness for a long immortality. Take this warning, O my soul, and think of thy own removal.

Are we standing in the church-yard, paying the last honours to the relics of our friends? what a number of hillocks of death appear all round us! what are the tomb-stones but memorials of the inhabitants of that town, to inform us of the period of all their lives, and to point out the day when it was said to each of them, your "time shall be no longer." O may I readily learn this important lesson, that my turn is hastening too; such a little hillock shall shortly arise for me on some unknown spot of ground; it shall cover this flesh and these bones of mine in darkness, and shall hide them from the light



CHRIST RAISING LAZARUS.

*John XI. V. 32.*

*London, Pub. Sep. 28/1814, by Rich<sup>d</sup>. Evans, White-row, Spital-fields.*



of the sun, and from the sight of man, till the heavens be no more.

Perhaps some kind surviving friend may engrave my name with the number of my days upon a plain funeral stone, without ornament, and below envy; there shall my tomb stand among the rest as a fresh monument of the frailty of nature, and the end of time. 'Tis possible some friendly foot may now and then visit the place of my repose, and some tender eye may bedew the cold memorial with a tear: one or another of my old acquaintance may possibly attend there to learn the silent lecture of mortality from my grave-stone, which my lips are now preaching aloud to the world: and if love and sorrow should reach so far, perhaps while his soul is melting in his eye-lids, and his voice scarce finds an utterance, he will point with his finger and shew his companion the month and the day of my decease. O that solemn, that awful day, which shall finish my appointed time on earth, and put a full period to all the designs of my heart, and all the labours of my tongue and pen!

Think, O my soul, that while friends or strangers are engaged on that spot, and reading the day of thy departure hence, thou wilt be fixed under a decisive and unchangeable sentence, rejoicing in the rewards of time well-improved, or suffering the long sorrows which shall attend the abuse of it, in an unknown world of happiness or misery.

REFLECTION III. We may learn from this discourse the stupid folly and madness of those who are terribly afraid of the end of time whensoever they think of it, and yet they know not what to do with their time as it runs off daily and hourly. They

find their souls unready for death, and yet they live from year to year without any further preparation for dying: they waste away their hours of leisure in mere trifling, they lose their seasons of grace, their means and opportunities of salvation in a thoughtless and shameful manner, as though they had no business to employ them in; they live as though they had nothing to do with all their time but to eat and drink, and be easy and merry. From the rising to the setting sun you find them still in pursuit of impertinencies; they waste God's sacred time as well as their own, either in a lazy, indolent, and careless humour, or in following after vanity, sin and madness, while the end of time is hastening upon them.

What multitudes are there of the race of Adam, both in higher and in lower ranks who are ever complaining they want leisure; and when they have a release from business for one day or one hour, they hardly know what to do with that idle day, or how to lay out one of the hours of it, for any valuable purpose? Those in higher station and richer circumstances have most of their time at their own command and disposal; but by their actual disposal of it you plainly see they know not what it is good for, nor what use to make of it; they are quite at a loss how to get rid of this tedious thing called time, which lies daily as a burden on their hands. Indeed, if their head ach, or their face grow pale, and a physician feel their pulse or look wishfully on their countenance; and especially if he should shake his head, or tell them his fears, that they will not hold out long, what surprize of soul, what agonies and terrors seize them on a sudden, for fear of the end of

time! for they are conscious how unfit they are for eternity: yet when the pain vanishes, and they feel health again, they are as much at a loss as ever, what to do with the remnant of life.

O the painful and unhappy ignorance of the sons and daughters of men, that are sent hither on a trial for eternity, and yet know not how to pass away time! they know not how to wear out life and get soon enough to the end of the day: they doze their hours away, or saunter from place to place, without any design or meaning: they inquire of every one they meet, what they shall do to kill time, (as the French phrase is) because they cannot spend it fast enough; they are perpetually calling in the assistance of others to laugh or sport, or trifle with them, and to help them off with this dead weight of time, while at the same moment, if you do but mention the end of time they are dreadfully afraid of coming near it. What folly and distraction is that? What sottish inconsistency is found in the heart and practice of sinful men, Eccl. ix. 3. "The heart of the sons of men is full of evil, madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go down to the dead."

O that these loiterers would once consider that time loiters not; days and hours, months and years, loiter not; each of them flies away with swiftest wing, as fast as succession admits of, and bears them onward to the goal of eternity. If they delay and linger among toys and shadows, time knows no delay; and they will one day learn by bitter experience what substantial, important, and eternal blessings, they have lost by their criminal and shameful waste of time. The apostle Peter assures them, 2 Pet. ii. 3. Though they slumber and sleep in a lethargy of sin,

so that you cannot awaken them, yet “ their judgment lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.” The awful moment is hastening upon them which shall teach them terribly the true value of time ; then they would give all the golden pleasures, and the riches and the grandeur of this world, to purchase one short day more or one hour of time, wherein they might repent and return to God, and get within the reach of hope and salvation : but time and salvation and hope are all vanished and fled and gone out of their reach for ever.

**REFLECTION IV.** Learn from such meditations as these, the rich mercy of God and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in giving us so long a warning before he swears that time shall be no more. Every stroke of sickness is a warning-piece that life is coming to its period : every death amongst our friends and acquaintance, is another tender and painful admonition that our death also is at hand : the end of every week and every dawning sabbath, is another warning ; every sermon we hear of the shortness of time and the uncertainty of life, is a fresh intimation. that the great angel will shortly pronounce a period upon all our time. How inexcusable shall we be if we turn the deaf ear to all these warnings ? St. Peter advises us to “ count the long-suffering of the Lord for salvation.” 2 Pet. iii. 15. and to secure our eternal safety, and our escape from hell during the season of his lengthened grace.

Alas ! how long has Jesus and his mercy, and his gospel, waited on you, before you began to think of the things of your everlasting peace ? And if you are now solemnly awakened, yet how long has he waited on you with fresh admonitions, and with

special providences, with mercies and judgments, with promises and invitations of grace, with threatenings and words of terror, and with the whispers and advices of his own Spirit, since you began to see your danger? And after all have you yet sincerely repented of sin? have you yet received the offered grace? have you given up yourselves to the Lord and laid hold of his salvation? 2 Cor. vi. 2. "This is the accepted time, this is the day of salvation; to-day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Heb. iii. 7, 8, &c. It is never said through all the Bible, that "to-morrow is the day of grace, or to-morrow is the time of acceptance;" it is the present hour only that is offered. Every day and every hour is a mercy of unknown importance to sinful men: It is a mercy, O sinners, that thou awaked not this morning in hell, and that you were not fixed without remedy beyond the reach of hope and mercy.

REFLECTION V. Learn from this discourse what a very useful practice it would be to set ourselves often before hand as at the end of time, to imagine ourselves just under the sound of the voice of this mighty angel, or at the tribunal of Christ, and to call our souls to a solemn account in what manner we have passed away all our leisure time hitherto: I mean, all that time which hath not been laid out in the necessities of the natural life for its support, and its needful refreshment, or in the due and proper employments of the civil life: both these are allowed and required by the God of nature, and the God of providence who governs the world; but what has thou done, O man; O woman, what hast thou done with all the hours of leisure, which might have been laid out on far better employments, and to far nobler

purposes ! give me leave to enter into particulars a little, for generals do but seldom convince the mind, or awaken the conscience, or affect the heart.

1. Have you not slumbered or squandered away too much time without any useful purpose or design at all ? How many are there, that when they have morning hours on their hands, can pass them off on their beds, and lose and forget time in “ a little more sleep, and a little more slumber ;” a few impertinencies with breakfast and dressing, wear out the morning without God. And how many afternoon and evening hours are worn away in such sauntering idleness as I have described, that when the night comes they cannot review one half hour’s useful work, from the dawn of the morning to the hour of rest. Time is gone and vanished, and as they know not what to do with it while it was present, so now it is past, they know not what they have done with it : they keep no account of it, and are never prepared to come to a reckoning : but will the great Judge of all take this for an answer to such a solemn inquiry ?

2. Have you never laid out much more time than was needful in “ recreations and pleasures of sense ?” recreations are not unlawful, so far as they are necessary and proper to relieve the fatigue of the spirits, when they are tired with business or labour, and to prepare for new labours and new businesses ; but have we not followed sports without due limitation ? Hath not some of that very time been spent in them which should have been laid out in preparing for death and eternity, and in seeking things of far higher importance ?

3. Have you not wasted too much time in your frequent clubs and what you call good company, and

in places of public resort. Hath not the tavern or the coffee-house, or the alehouse, seen and known you from hour to hour for a whole evening, and that sometimes before the trade or labours of the day should have been ended? And when your Bible and your closet, or the devotion of your family, have sometimes called upon your conscience, have you not turned the deaf ear to them all?

4. Have not useless and impertinent visits been made to no good purpose, or been prolonged beyond all necessity or improvement? when your conversation runs low even to the dregs, and both you and your friends have been at a loss what to say next, and knew not how to fill up the time, yet the visit must go on and time must be wasted. Sometimes the wind and the weather and twenty insignificancies, or (what is much worse) scandal of persons or families have come in to your relief, that there might not be too long a silence; but not one word of God or goodness could find room to enter in and relieve the dull hour. Is none of this time ever to be accounted for? and will it sound well in the ears of the great Judge, We ran to these sorry topics, these slanderous and backbiting stories, because we could not tell what to talk of, and we knew not how to spend our time.

5. Have you not been guilty of frequent and even perpetual delays or neglects of your proper necessary business in the civil life, or in the solemn duties of religion," by busying yourselves in some other needless thing under this pretence, "Tis time enough yet?

Have you learnt that important and eternal rule of prudence, "Never delay till to-morrow what may be

done to-day ; never put off till the next hour what may be done in this?" Have you not often experienced your own disappointment and folly by these delays? and yet have you ever so repented as to learn to mend them? Solomon tells us, Eccl. iii 1. "There is a time for every purpose and every work under the sun:" a proper and agreeable time for every lawful work of nature and life; and it is the business and care of a wise man to do proper work in proper time; but when we have let slip the proper season, how often have we been utterly disappointed? have we not sustained great inconveniences? and sometimes it hath so happened that we could never do that work or business at all, because another proper season for it hath never offered; time hath been no more. Felix put off his discourse with Paul about the faith of Christ and righteousness and judgment to come, to a more convenient time, which probably never came. Acts xxiv. 25. And the word of God teaches us, that if we neglect our salvation in the present day of grace, the angel in my text is ready to swear, that time shall be no longer.

Here permit me to put in a short word to those who have lost much time already.

O my friends, begin now to do what in you lies to regain it by double diligence in the matters of your salvation, lest the voice of the archangel should finish your time of trial, and call you to judgment before you are prepared.

What here lies before you for this double improvement, God only knows: the remnant of the measure of your days are with him, and every evening the number is diminished: let not the rising sun upbraid

you with continual negligence. Remember your former abuses of hours and months and years, in folly and sin, or at best in vanity and trifling: let these thoughts of your past conduct lie with such an effectual weight on your hearts as to keep you ever vigorous in present duty. Since you have been so lazy and loitering in your Christian race in time past, take larger steps daily, and stretch all the powers of your souls to hasten towards the crown and the prize. Hearken to the voice of God in his word with stronger attention and zeal to profit; pray to a long-suffering God with double fervency; cry aloud, and give him no rest, till your sinful soul is changed into penitence and renewed to holiness, till you have some good evidences of your sincere love to God and unfeigned faith in his Son Jesus. Never be satisfied till you are come to a well grounded hope through grace, that God is your friend, your reconciled Father, that when days and months are no more, you may enter into the region of everlasting light and peace.

But I proceed to the last general remark. Learn the unspeakable happiness of those who have improved time well, and who wait for the end of time with Christian hope. They are not afraid, or at least they need not be afraid of the sentence nor the oath of this mighty angel, when he lifts up his hand to heaven and swears with a loud voice, there shall be time no more.

O blessed creatures, who have so happily improved the time of life and day of grace, as to obtain the restoration of the image of God in some degree on their souls, and to recover the favour of God through the gospel of Christ, for which end time was bestowed

upon them: they have reviewed their follies with shame in the land of hope; they have mourned and repented of sin ere the season of repentance was past, and are become new creatures, and their lips and their lives declare the divine change. They have made preparation for death, for which purpose life and time were given. Happy souls indeed, who have so valued time as not to let it run off in trifles, but have obtained treasures more valuable than that time which is gone, even the riches of the covenant of grace, and the hopes of an eternal inheritance in glory.

Happy such souls indeed when time is no more with them! their happiness begins when the duration of their mortal life is finished. Let us survey this their happiness in a few particulars.

The time of their darkneses and difficulties is no longer: the time of painful ignorance and error is come to an end: you shall wander no more in mistake and folly; you shall behold all things in the light of God, and see him face to face, who is the original beauty and the eternal truth. You shall see him without veils and shadows, without the reflecting glass of his word and ordinances, which at best give us but a faint glimpse of him, either in his nature or wisdom, his power or goodness. You shall see him in himself and in his Son Jesus, the brightest and fairest image of the Father, and "shall know him as you are known," 1 Cor. xiii. 10, 12.

There is no more time for temptation and danger: when once you are got beyond the limits of this visible world, and all the enticing objects of flesh and sense, there shall be no more hazard of your salvation, no more doubting and distressing fears

about your interest in your Father's love, or in the salvation of his beloved Son. There is no more time nor place for sin to inhabit in you : the lease of its habitation in your mortal body must end, when the body itself falls into the dust : you shall feel no more of its powerful and defiling operations either in heart or life for ever.

The time of conflict with your spiritual adversaries is no longer. There is no more warfare betwixt the flesh and spirit, no more combat with the world and the devil, who by a thousand ways have attempted to deceive you and to bear you off from your heavenly hope. Your warfare is accomplished, your victory is complete, you are made overcomers through him that has loved you. Death is the last enemy to be overcome ; the sting of it is already taken away, and you have now finished the conquest, and are assured of the crown, 1 Cor. xv. 56, 57.

The time of your distance and absence from God is no more : the time of coldness and indifference and the fearful danger of backsliding is no more : you shall be made as " pillars in the temple of your God, and shall go no more out : " he shall love you like a God, and kindle the flames of your love to so intense a degree as is only known to angels and to the spirits of the just made perfect.

There is no more time for you to be vexed with the " society of sinful creatures : " your spirits within you shall be no more ruffled and disquieted with the teizing conversation of the wicked, nor shall you be interrupted in your holy and heavenly exercises by any of the enemies of God and his grace.

The time of your " painful labours and sufferings is no more," Rev. xiv. 13. " blessed are the dead that

die in the Lord, for they rest from all their labours that carry toil or fatigue with them : there shall be no more complaints nor groans, no sorrow or crying : the springs of grief are for ever dried up, neither shall there be any more pain in the flesh or the spirit. " God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes," and death shall be no more, Rev. xxi. 4.

It is finished, said our blessed Lord on the cross : It is finished, may every one of his followers say at the hour of death and at the end of time : my sins and follies, my distresses and my sufferings are finished for ever, and the mighty angel swears to it that the time of these evils is no longer : they are vanished and shall never return. O happy souls, who have been so wise to count the short and uncertain number of your days on earth, as to make an early provision for a removal to heaven. Blest are you above all the powers of present thought and language. Days and months and years, and all these short and painful periods of time, shall be swallowed up in a long and blissful eternity ; the stream of time which has run between the banks of this mortal life, and bore you along amidst many dangerous rocks of temptation, fear and sorrow, shall launch you out into the ocean of pleasures which have no period ; those felicities must be everlasting, for duration has no limit there, time with all its measures shall be no more. Amen.

THE  
**Conquest over Death,**

DESCRIBED IN A  
*FUNERAL DISCOURSE.*

---

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TO  
SIR JOHN HARTOPP, BART.

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*SIR,*

**T**O descend from such parents as yours, is no common favour of heaven ; nor is it the blessing of every descendant to inherit the natural virtues of his progenitors ; yet I know that you esteem your happiness incomplete, without the imitation of their heavenly graces, and the attainment of their sublimest hopes.

Forgive me, dear Sir, if I take the liberty to say, it is with a sort of fond pleasure that I have beheld your victories over the most dangerous scenes and temptations of youth ; and every step in your progress towards perfect triumph, is an addition to my joy. The world and the church hold their eyes fixed upon you, while God and angels, and perhaps

the souls of your sacred ancestors, look down from on high to observe your conduct. Never was there a more proper time to awaken your zeal for the religion of CHRIST, than in a day of spreading infidelity and heathenism ; nor can there be a fitter season to exert your utmost efforts for the support of serious piety, than in an age of numerous and growing iniquities. Your just sense of religious liberty will shine in its fairest glory, while you stand as a barrier against the fearful inroads of a wild and unbounded licentiousness. Nor can your attachment to the cause and interest of the Protestant Dissenters appear with more honour, than while they are defamed and scorned by the proud and the profane, and while their own imprudent contests stand in need of your candour and charity.

Many are the advantages you enjoy for this purpose. Divine Providence has placed your circumstances above the bribery of a flattering world, and a corrupt generation. Your superior sense has no need to stand in awe of fools, who make a mock of sin and godliness. Let your native modesty and gentleness then arm itself with an unshaken courage in the cause of God ; and fear not the malicious scoff and censure of sinners, since you have nothing to expect or hope from them.

Go on, Sir, and prosper in the things of heaven, and become an example of shining holiness in a degenerate world. Let the libertines of the nation know, that you also dare to think freely for yourself, and with all that freedom of thought you dare to chuse the paths of your holy ancestors.

The peculiar favour of God has provided you a consort, whose natural and pious accomplishments

and assistances will attend you through all the way. These will soften the seeming severities of strict religion with the tenderest endearments of life, and make the pleasure of it double and transcendent. The name, the title, and the character of your excellent father deceased, require and demand an eminent degree of goodness in his successor. The pious lady, your mother (now in heaven) would have rejoiced in the present prospect, and would have purchased your felicity even with her own life; and your numerous relatives around you suspend their happiness upon yours. The piety you have shewn towards your worthy parents from your infancy, and the affectionate honours which you now pay their memory, give me further assurance that this is your aim, and your glorious ambition. And that you may ever keep in mind their example and your duty, you have commanded me to make public these Discourses, which were framed on the occasion of their decease.

You well know, Sir, I am no friend to loose panegyric, nor am I wont to bestow it on the dead or the living. What I have written of the late Sir JOHN HARTOPP, at the end of the Second Discourse, is the first attempt that ever I made of concluding a funeral sermon with a distinct and particular character of the deceased, through the whole space of twenty-three years of my ministry; and surely the world will not envy nor detract from the just honours of a name so much beloved. As for the lady, your mother, she affected retirement to such a degree, that it would have placed her in a wrong light to have drawn out her virtues at length, and set them to public view. I have therefore only interspersed a few hints of her emi-

ment piety, as the text and argument led me into them : and indeed this is the utmost that I have ever done before on such occasions.

I have much reason to ask pardon that I have so far enlarged these Discourses, and especially the last ; for I hate the thought of making any thing in religion heavy or tiresome. But having entertained myself many a time with some of these meditations on the business and the blessedness of separate spirits, I took this opportunity of shewing them to the world, enshrined in the lustre of two such names as adorn my title-page.

To render the reading of them yet more agreeable to yourself and to all your friends, I have cast them into distinct Sections, that my readers may leave off almost where they please, and peruse so much of them at one time as suits their present inclination and convenience.

You know, Sir, I pretend to no authority to pronounce effectual blessings upon you ; but you will accept the sincere good wishes of a man that loves you, and is zealous for your felicity in the upper and lower worlds. May the best of mercies descend daily on yourself, your lady, and your little offspring ! May the closet, the parlour, and public assemblies, be constant witnesses of your piety ; and the house where a Sir JOHN HARTOPP dwells, be a house of prayer and of praise in every generation ; nor the name be extinguished in your family till the heavens be no more ! May the ladies, your sisters, live happily under the sweet influence of that mutual affection that has been always remarkably cultivated amongst you ! Their interests are your care ; and I am well persuaded that their solicitude and tender concern for

your welfare, will ever deserve and find such returns of love, as I have long observed with delight! May the prayers of your progenitors in past ages be answered in hourly benefits descending on you all, and be fruitful of blessings in ages yet to come! Such a lovely scene, with such a long and joyful prospect, will advance the satisfactions of my life, and give pleasure even in a dying hour, to him who had once the honour to be your affectionate monitor, and must ever write himself,

Sir,

Your obliged

Humble Servant,

*I. WATTS.*

*July 6th, 1722.*



THE  
P R E F A C E

TO THIS BOOK OF

**Death and Heaven;**

*When it was translated into the German Language, and  
Published at Halle in Saxony, 1727.*

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TO THE READER.

**H**ERE is communicated to you a treatise in which the late pious Mr. *Francke*, professor of Divinity at Halle, found so much edification and satisfaction, that he engaged an able person to translate it into our German tongue, to make others partake of the same spiritual benefit. This treatise consists of *Two Funeral Sermons*, which an English divine, who perhaps is still living, composed on the death of two eminent persons, which he enlarged afterwards for their publication. The subject of the first is *Death*, taken from 1 Cor. xv. 26. The second is *Heaven*, from Heb. xii. 22. From this last he takes an occasion of flying with his thoughts into the blessed mansions of the just made perfect, by giving us not only a very probable and beautiful idea of the glory of a future life in general, but also

an enumeration of the many sorts of employments and pleasures, that are to be met with there.

*After the several false notions people of different complexions have of eternal life are laid open, the author of the Preface goes on and quotes some German authors who have writ upon that subject: and says at last, I hope no body will presume to aver this doctrine to have been so far exhausted by those authors, that nothing new could be said upon it. For several learned writers in England, who in meditating and searching after hidden truths, have shewn an extraordinary capacity, prove the contrary; and among others there is the Treatise, called, *The Future State*, published 1683, by a gentleman whose name is concealed, which appeared in French 1700, and is now printed in German with a Preface of the famous Dr. *Pritius*, sen. at *Frankfurt ad Moenum*. There is among Sir *R. Blackmore's Essays*, one upon the *Future Beatitudes*. The traces of these two English gentlemen are followed by our present English divine *I. Watts*, who, however, in many points has out-done these his predecessors, and advanced a step farther in his contemplations.*

Though the first sermon contains many elegant passages worthy to be read, yet the latter seems to be a more elaborate piece, because it sets the doctrine of eternal life in a greater light, and enriches it with many profitable inferences drawn from the word of God. He proposes his excellent thoughts in most emphatical terms, in that beautiful order and with such a vivacity of style, that he keeps the reader in a continual attention, and an eager desire to read on. It is plain the author's mind was so taken up with the beauty of heaven, that his mouth

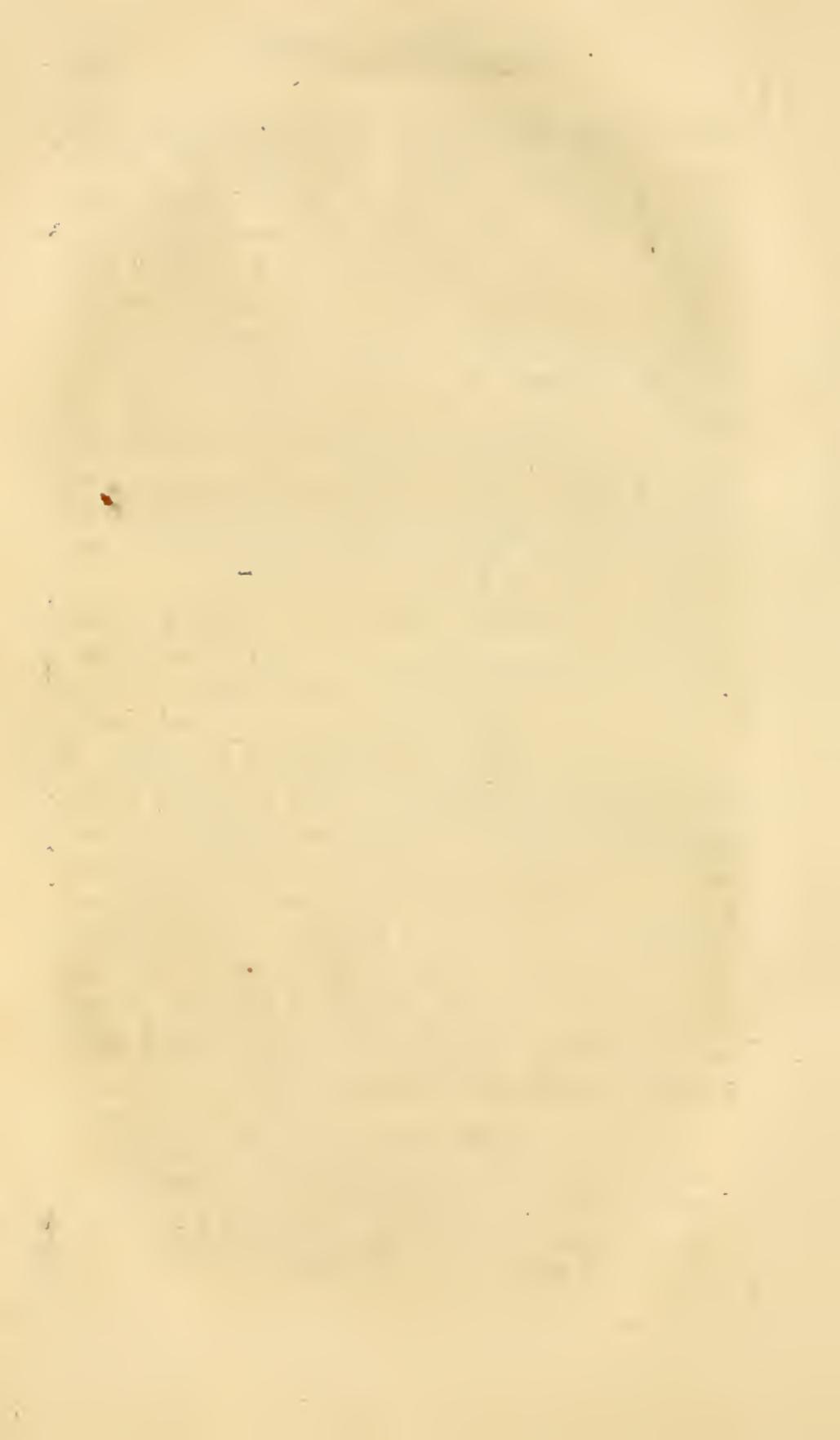
could not but speak from the abundance of his heart. There is a secret unction in his expressions, which leaves a sweet savour in the reader's heart, and raises in him a desire after the blessed society he speaks of. And though the reader should not entirely agree with the author's notions, yet he will not peruse this treatise without a particular edification and blessing. I cannot deny but the author's conjectures may be sometimes carried a little too far, but that doth not prejudice the subject in the least. Besides, he is generally so happy as to find some arguments for his probable notions in the word of God, and to answer very dexterously all the objections that can be made against him.

May the ever-living God give a blessing to this work, and grant that those sweet and relishing truths proposed in these leaves, may make such an impression upon the minds of the readers as those noble truths deserve. May he prevent all the abuse of this delightful subject; and never permit it to be turned into a mere dry or fruitless speculation; but may he inflame every reader with a holy desire after a blessed eternity, and rouse and excite all those, that have not begun yet to tread the path of salvation, to enter into the same without delay; that they may not rest in a mere delightful prospect of the land of *Canaan*, nor be for ever excluded by their unbelief from the eternal enjoyment of it.

*Given at Halle, July 10th, 1727.*

JOHN JACOB RAMBACH

*S. Theol. Prof. Ordinarius.*



# Conquest over Death.

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## THE INTRODUCTION.

**I** PERSUADE myself that none of you are unacquainted with that mournful Providence that calls me to the service of this day.\* The words which were borrowed from the lips of the dying, I am desired to improve for the instruction and comfort of those that live. They are written in

1 COR. xv. 26.

*The last Enemy that shall be destroyed, is Death.*

**W**HEN a nation hath lain for whole ages under the power of some mighty tyrant, and has suffered perpetual ravages from his hands, what gladness runs through the land, at the sure prediction of his ruin; and how is every inhabitant pleased while he hears of the approaching downfall of his

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\* Nov. 9th, 1711, the Lady Hartopp died, and this discourse was delivered at Stoke-Newington, Nov. 25th following.

*great enemy?* “For this is he that hath slain my father or my mother, my children or my dearest relatives, and is still making havoc of the remnant of my friends, while I myself stand in hourly danger.” This pleasure grows up into more perfect joy, when we are assured this is the *last tyrant* that shall arise, the *last enemy* that shall afflict us, for he shall have no successor, and we shall be for ever free. Such should be the rejoicing of all the saints, when they hear so desirable and divine a promise as the words of my text; *the last enemy that shall be destroyed, is death.*

To improve this glorious proposition, let us consider these four things, with a reflection or two upon each of them.

I. How *death* appears to be an *enemy* to the saints.

II. Why it is called *the last enemy*, or the *last that shall be destroyed*.

III. How it is to be *destroyed*, and what are the steps or gradual efforts towards its *destruction*.

IV. *What* are the *advantages* that the saints receive by the *destruction* of this last enemy.

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## SECT. I.

### *Death an Enemy even to Good Men.*

The first enquiry is, “how, or in what sense death appears to be an enemy to the saints.”

That it is in general an enemy to human nature, is sufficiently evident from its first introduction into the world ; for it was brought in as an execution of the first threatening given to *Adam* in paradise, Gen. ii. 17. *In the day thou eatest, thou shalt die.* It came in as a punishment for sin, and every punishment in some respect opposes our interest, and our happiness. When it seized on man at first, and planted the seeds of mortality in his nature, he then began to be deprived of that peace and health, that vigour and immortality which he possessed before his fall, till at last it brought him down to the dust ; and ever since all the sons of *Adam* have found and felt it an enemy to their natures.

To sinners indeed it is an enemy in a more dreadful sense, and its attendants are more terrible a thousand-fold. For besides all the common miseries of the flesh which they sustain, it delivers over their spirits into everlasting misery ; it finishes their reprieve, and their hope for ever ; it plunges them at once into all the terrors of a most awakened conscience, and cuts them off from all the amusements and cares of this life, which laid their guilt and their conscience asleep for a season. Death consigns over a sinner to the chains of the grave, and the chains of hell together, and binds and reserves him a prisoner of despair for the most complete torments of the second death.

But I would confine my discourse here only to believers, so it is with respect to them this chapter is written. I know *death* is often called *their friend*, because it puts an end to their sins and sorrows ; but this benefit arises only from the covenant of grace, which sanctifies it to some good purposes to the children of God. It is constrained to become their friend

in some instances, contrary to its own nature and its original design: but there is reason enough, if we take a survey of its own nature, and its present appearances, to call it *an enemy* still, upon these following accounts.

1. "Death has generally many terrible attendants and forerunners when it comes; terrible to nature and the flesh of the most exalted christians."

Here should I begin to describe the long and dismal train of death, the time would fail me. Shall I mention the sickness and the pain, the sharp anguish of the body, and sometimes the sharper methods of medicine to relieve it, all which prove useless and vain in that day? Shall I recount the tedious and uneasy hours, the tiresome and sleepless nights; when the patient longs for the slow return of the morning; and still when the light breaks, he finds new uneasiness, and wishes for the shadow and darkness again? Shall I speak of the dulness of the natural spirits, and the clogs that hang heavy upon the souls in those hours; so that the better part of man is bound and oppressed, and shut up, and cannot exert itself agreeable to the character of an intellectual being?

Besides, all the designs of the mind are interrupted and broken in death: all that the saint intended to do for God, is cut off at once, and his holy purposes are precluded, which often adds to the trouble of a dying christian, Psal. cxlvi, 4. *When man returns to his earth, in that very day his thoughts perish.*

Shall I put you in mind of the sighs and sorrows of dearest friends that stand around the bed all in tears, and all despairing? Shall I speak of the last convulsions of nature, the sharp conflict of the extreme moments, and the struggling and painful

efforts of departing life, which none can know fully but those that have felt them, and none of the dead come back to give us an account? Is it possible for us to survey these scenes of misery, and not to believe that the hand of an enemy has been there? The bodies of the saints are *the temples of the Holy Ghost, and the members of Christ*, 1 Cor. vi. 15, 19. Death murders these bodies, these members of the Lord, and ruins these temples to the dust, and may well be called their enemy upon this account.

2. *Death* acts like an enemy, when it makes a *separation* between the *soul* and the *body*. It divides the nature of man in halves, and tears the two constituent parts of it asunder.

Though this becomes an advantage to the soul of the saint through the covenant and appointment of grace, yet to have such an intimate union dissolved between flesh and spirit, carries something of terror in it; and there may be an innocent reluctance in the nature of the best Christian against such an enemy as this: therefore St. *Paul* in 2 Cor. v. 4. does not directly desire *to be unclothed, but rather to be clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life*; that is, to be translated at once into an immortal state. The soul and body have been long acquainted with each other, and the soul has performed almost all its operations by the use of the senses and the limbs: it sees by the eye, it hears by the ear, it acts by the hand, and by the tongue it converses. Now to be separated at once from all these, and to be at once conveyed into a new strange world, a strange and unknown state both of being and action, has something in it so surprising,

that it is a little frightful to the nature of man, even when he is sanctified and fitted for heaven.

And as the soul is dismissed by death into a state of separation, so the body, like a fallen tabernacle, is forsaken, lies uninhabited and desolate. Shall I lead your thoughts back to the bed where your dear relatives expired, and give you a sight of the dead, whose beauty is turning apace into corruption, and all the loveliness of countenance fled for ever? The body, that curious engine of divine workmanship, is become a moveless lump: death sits heavy upon it, and the sprightliness and vigour of life is perished in every feature and in every limb. Shall we go down to the dark chambers of the grave, where each of the dead lie in their cold mansions, in beds of darkness and dust? The shadows of a long evening are stretched over them, the curtains of a deep midnight are drawn around them, *the worm lies under them, and the worm covers them.*

A saint is no more exempted from all these frightful attendants of death, than a sinner is. Those *eyes* that have been perpetually lifted up to the God of heaven in prayer, lie closed under ground. That *tongue* that has spoken much for God in the world, lies silent in death. Those *hands* that have ministered to the necessities of the saints, and those *feet* that have gone often to the house of God, death has confined them in his chains. Those *natural powers* that have been active in the service of the gospel, can speak, can move, can act no more. But I need not recite these things to you, the images of them are too fresh and painful, and sit too heavy upon your remembrance.

3. *Death* is an enemy to the saint, so far as it hinders him from the enjoyment of his perfect heaven, for it keeps one part of him in the grave for many years or ages.

Let us think of the dust of the antient martyrs, the dust of the apostles, and the holy prophets: let us look many ages backward to the dust of *David* and *Abraham*, and *Noah*, to the dust of *Adam* the first of men: how long have their souls waited in heaven, as it were in a widowed estate? How long has their flesh been mingled with common earth, and lain confined under the bands of death, useless to all the glorious purposes of their formation, and their being? A tedious extent of time! Four or five thousand years, wherein they have done nothing for God in the body, and in the body received nothing from God? For death hinders a believer from some of the *business* of heaven, and some of the *blessedness* of it.

(1.) From some of the *business* of heaven: it is only the soul that is then received to glory, and dwells there alone for a season, while death keeps the body prisoner in the grave; it is only the soul that glorifies its Maker in that upper world, the world of spirits for the flesh lies silent in the dust: *the grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee, O Lord*, Isa. xxxviii. 18. The body is redeemed with the blood of Christ, as well as the soul; but death puts fetters upon it, and forbids it to serve its Redeemer.

(2.) The believer is restrained also by death from some of the *blessedness* of heaven; it is only the soul enjoys the delight; and that too only in its abstracted nature, and pure intellectual capacity;

it is cut off by death from all that rich variety of pleasure which rises from its communion with so noble a frame as the body of man is. It has no senses to receive the satisfactions that arise from the material part of heaven : it has no eyes to behold the glorified flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ ; no ears to hear his voice ; no tongue to converse with its Saviour. And though we are sure there is a holy correspondence between Christ Jesus and separate souls, for we are said *to be present with the Lord, when we are absent from the body*, 2 Cor. v. 8. yet this correspondence cannot be so complete and glorious, as it shall be, when *with our eyes we shall see God* in the form of a man.

It is granted, that in the separate heaven of souls is abundant pleasure, beyond what we can now conceive or express ; and our friends, departed in the faith, enjoy the delightful presence of their Lord, and the heavenly converse of their fellow-spirits. That honoured and deceased saint, whom we this day mourn, dwells with that Jesus, with whom she had long been acquainted : she converses with him in heaven, whom she loved much upon earth : she finds herself safe for ever in his hands, to whose care she committed her immortal concerns ; and she rejoices in the sight of him above, with whom she held many hours of sweet correspondence by faith here below. Doubtless also, she holds sweet conversation with the holy souls that went to heaven before her. A soul so greatly desirous of spiritual discourse as she was, so constantly prepared for pious conference and mutual communications of sacred knowledge, must needs enjoy that privilege, and that pleasure, in that upper world, where there

is nothing all-around her but what is holy and divine. But it is certain she cannot enjoy that perfection of humble society with Christ in his glorified human nature, nor with fellow-saints, while she is deprived of one part of herself, her body lying silent and motionless in the prison of the grave: and she yet waits for the more complete satisfaction of all her hopes, when *death her last enemy shall be destroyed*, and her body redeemed from the dust, together with the bodies of all the saints. This leads me to the next particular.

4. "Death is an enemy to believers, because it divides them for a season from the company of their known and valuable friends, and parts the dearest relatives asunder."

Though dying saints be transmitted into better company, even to the *Spirits of the just made perfect*, yet it is a mournful thought to be separated so long from those whom they loved with so strong and just an affection. It adds a sharpness even to the last agonies, when we think we must leave parents, children, or friends behind us, whom we love so tenderly; that we must leave them amidst the sorrows and the temptations of a vain world and a corrupt age; that we must leave them struggling with all the difficulties, the hardships, and the dangers that attend a christian in his travels through this wilderness, and not see their faces again in the flesh, nor converse with them in the manner we were wont to do, *till the heavens be no more*.

Upon this account also death is a worse enemy to those that survive, for they sustain the biggest loss: it deprives them of their dear and delightful relatives without any recompence, for the world grows so much

the more undesirable to a saint by the death of every friend. Children are torn away from the embraces of their parents, and the wife is seized from the bosom. This is, as it were tearing the flesh asunder of those whose hearts are joined ; this gives occasion to bitter sorrows, to long and heavy complaints. How suddenly are we sometimes deprived of the desires of the eyes, and the comforts of life, the ornaments and the supports of our earthly state ? And we have lost all their love, and their counsel, and their care ; all their sweet sympathy of joys and sorrows, all their agreeable conversation and heavenly advice. What a tedious way have we to walk through without such a guide or helper ? We have lost the benefit of their watchful eye, their holy jealousy for our souls, their fervent and daily prayers. But there are records in heaven, where all the prayers of the saints are kept ; and God often turns over his register, and, in distant successive years, pours down blessings upon the posterity, and multiplies his graces amongst them, in answer to the requests that were offered upon earth by the saints that are now with God.

5. The last reason I shall mention to prove death an enemy to the saints, is the terror that it fills the mind with long before-hand. There are but few that, in their best estate on earth, are got quite above these terrors, and there are none can say, “ I have been always free from them :” so that in the younger days of their christianity at least, all have been afraid of death ; and these fears are enemies to our peace. Some spend all their lives in this bondage of fear, and that upon different accounts.

A christian of weaker faith cries out within himself, “ how shall I pass that awful moment that sets my

soul naked before the eyes of a holy God, when I know not whether I am clothed with the righteousness of his Son or no, whether I shall stand the test in that day? I dread that solemn, that important hour that shall put me into an unchangeable state of miseries that are infinite, or of infinite blessedness. How shall I that am a sinner, stand before that tribunal and that Judge in whose sight no mortal can be innocent? My evidences from heaven are dark and cloudy, that I cannot read them; they have been often sullied with fresh guilt, and I doubt whether I am new-born or no, or reconciled to God. And what if I should be mistaken in this affair of the greatest moment? The mistake can never be rectified; therefore I shake at the thoughts of death, that hour of decision; for my faith is weak."

Another saint, of a strong and lively faith, but of a timorous temper, cries out, "How shall I bear the agonies and the pangs of death? I am not afraid to enter into eternity: the grace of Christ and his gospel, have given me hope and courage enough to be dead; but I am still afraid of dying: it is a hard and painful work, how shall I sustain the sharp conflict? I shiver at the thoughts of venturing through that cold flood that divides betwixt *this* wilderness and the promised land."

Another christian is too much unacquainted with the world of spirits, with the nature of the separate heaven, with the particular business and blessedness of holy souls departed; and he is afraid to venture out of this region of flesh and blood, into a vast and unknown world. Though he has good hope through grace, that he shall arrive safe at heaven; yet the heavenly country is so unknown a land, and the

valley of entrance to it so dark, that he fears to pass through the shadow of death.

Another is terrified at the thoughts of death, because he knows not how to part with his dear relatives in the flesh, and to leave them exposed to an unkind age and a thousand dangers. "If I had none to leave behind me, I could die with cheerfulness; but while I think of such a separation, the thoughts of death has terror in it."

Thus upon various accounts a good man may have fearful apprehensions of dying; and that which carries so much terror about it, may well be called an enemy.

Before we proceed any further, let us make two reflections on the first general head.

REFLECTION I. If death be an enemy to the best of men in so many respects, then we may infer *the great evil of sin*: for it was sin that brought death into this our world; Rom. v. 12. *By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.*

We are too ready to conceive a slight opinion of the evil of sin, because it is so common to the best of men, and so constant an attendant on human nature daily and hourly; we entertain too gentle and harmless thoughts of it, because its biggest evil is of a spiritual kind, and invisible; we see not that infinite majesty which it dishonours, that spotless holiness of God which it offends, the glory and perfection of that law which is broken by it: we can take but short and scanty notices of the injury that it does to God the supreme spirit, while we are shut up in tabernacles of flesh. But here in these

scenes of death, we may survey the sensible and mighty injury that sin has done to the nature of man, and thence infer how offensive it is to God. By our eyes and our ears we may be terribly convinced, that it is no little evil that could occasion such spreading and durable mischief.

We cannot frame a just notion of what man was in his state of perfect innocency, in his original beauty, and honour, and immortal frame; and therefore we cannot so well judge of the vastness of the loss we sustain by sin; but we can see and feel the formidable attendants of death, and learn and believe that it is a root of unknown poisoned bitterness, that has produced such cursed fruit: especially if we remember that all the sorrows before described, fall upon the saints themselves, even where sin is pardoned, and death has lost its sting. But if we descend in contemplation to the endless and unknown misery that waits upon the death of a sinner, and say, "All these are the effects of sin;" how inexpressibly dreadful will the cause appear? The wise man has pronounced them *fools*, by inspiration, that *make a mock* at such mischief, Prov. xiv. 9.

REFLECTION II. We may here learn the greatness of the love of Christ that would venture into the land of death and conflict with this mighty enemy, and yield to the power of it for a season, for our sakes. *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends*, John xv. 13. *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he died for us*; 1 John iii. 16. Rom. v. 8.

Many terrible attendants of death did our Lord meet and struggle with, beyond what any of his

saints can feel. Death, like a lion, ran furious upon him, as it does upon a sinner, its proper prey. He met death in its full strength and dominion, for he had all our sins upon him; and death had its own sharp sting when our Lord entered the combat. There was the wrath of God which was threatened in the broken law to mingle with his pangs and agonies of nature; this made his soul exceeding sorrowful; all his inward powers were amazed, and his heart oppressed with heaviness: Mark xiv. 33, 34. He was almost overwhelmed in the garden, before the thorns or the nails came near him; and on the cross he complains of the forsakings of God his almighty friend, when death his mighty enemy was just upon him; *and all this* (saith he to every believer) *I bore for thy sake: my love was stronger than death.*

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## SECT. II.

### *Death is the last Enemy.*

I PROCEED now to the *second* general proposed, and that is to inquire, in what sense death is said to be the last enemy, or the last that shall be destroyed: for we may join this word *last*, either to *death*, or to *destruction*; and in each sense it affords comfort to the saints.

1. It is the last enemy that the saints have to grapple with in this world. The three great adversaries of a Christian are the *flesh*, the *world*, and the *devil*. and they assault him often in this life.

*Death* comes behind, and brings up the rear; the saint combats with this enemy, and finishes all the war. Every believer has listed himself under the banner of Christ, who is the captain of his salvation. When he first gives himself up to the Lord, he renounces every thing that is inconsistent with his faith and hope, he abandons his former slavery, undertakes the spiritual warfare, and enters the field of battle.

It is a necessary character of the followers of Christ, that they fight with the flesh, subdue corrupt nature, suppress their irregular appetites, give daily wounds to the body of sin, Col. iii. 5. Rom. viii. 13. They fight against this world; they refuse to comply with the temptations of it, when it would allure them astray from the path of duty; they defy its frowns and discouragements, and break through all its oppositions in their way to heaven, James iv. 4. They resist Satan when he tempts them to sin, and vanquish him by the *sword of the spirit, the word of God*, Eph. iv. 11, 12, 17. and when he accuses them, and attempts to bring terror into their souls, they *overcome him, and cast him down by the blood of the Lamb*, Rev. xii. 10, 11. They are made conquerors over these adversaries in the strength of Christ. Now the pangs of death are the last troublers of their peace, death is the last enemy that attacks them, and some have very terrible conflicts with it.

It was in these agonies, in this sharp contention, the words of my text were uttered by that honoured saint whose memory will be always precious, and whose loss we this day mourn. This cheerful language of hope among many other scriptures, broke

out from her lips. Thus lively was her faith in a dying hour. Methinks I hear her speaking the words with a firm trust in the promise; *the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.* And this encouraged her onward through the few remaining struggles of life and pain. It is as if she had said, "I have given myself up long ago to *Christ*, I engaged myself young in his service, I have fought with sin, I have learned to subdue flesh and sense, and to live by the faith of the Son of God: I have not courted the flatteries of the world, the vain shews of life; and I have been enabled to despise the frowns of it, and been kept stedfast in my profession, in the most discouraging and the darkest times. Through the grace of *Christ* I have overcome the evil one; there remains but one enemy more, whose name is *Death*; and I trust in the same grace still to obtain complete victory." Rejoice, ye dear relatives, let all the friends of the deceased rejoice, her name is now written down in heaven amongst the overcome.

2. *Death* may be called the *last enemy*, because it is not utterly destroyed till the resurrection, till *Christ* hath done all his work upon earth, till he has subdued all his other adversaries, and made use of death as his slave to destroy many of them. It is, in this sense especially that the words of my text are written by *St. Paul*, 1 Cor. xv. 24, 25. *Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority, and all power; for he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.*

With regard to each particular Christian, all other enemies are destroyed when he dies, for whither he goes they cannot come; he puts off the body of flesh and of sin, together; he leaves every corruption behind him, when he ascends to the company of the spirits of the just made perfect. The smiles and the frowns of this vain and vexing world, are too far off to influence the inhabitants of heaven; and satan the tempter and accuser, is for ever forbid entrance at the gates of that holy city. But death holds one part of the saint in his prison, the grave: and though the departed soul has overcome the terrors of this enemy, and triumphs in this expression, *O death, where is thy sting?* yet the body is confined as a prisoner under his power: *but the hour is coming, when those that are dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and live.* All the prisons of the saints shall be broke to pieces, and burnt up, and the keeper destroyed for ever.

Let us make these two reflections on the second general head of this discourse.

REFLECTION I. What abundant encouragement may we derive from hence, to engage us betimes in a war with all the other enemies of our salvation, that having overcome them, we may be assured *death is the last enemy* we shall meet with: and then also we may face death with a braver courage, may conflict with it with better success, may vanquish it by a lively faith, and rejoice in the prospect of its final destruction. The same armour of God, the same divine weapons, and the same Almighty assistances by which we have subdued our former adversaries, *Sin, Satan, and the World,* shall be sufficient to gain this conquest too. We cannot

begin the holy warfare too soon ; none of us are too young to be assaulted by death ; but let it come never so early in the morning of our days, it is the last enemy that we can fear, if we are listed in the army of Christ, and have begun the glorious war.

I would address myself to the younger branches of the mourning house, and say, have ye had such a noble example of victory over sin and death in vain? Will ye basely submit to the slavery of the flesh, and yield tamely to the oppositions of this world, which were so bravely resisted by her that is gone before you? Will ye love this world, which is at enmity with God, and has ever been at enmity with all the saints? Are ye content to have your names for ever excluded from that honourable list of conquerors, where the names of your ancestors shine before the throne of God, and are recorded with honour in the memory of his churches? Think how dreadful a moment that will be, when you shall look death in the face, if ye have not begun to wage war with sin and satan before! how dreadful to have many enemies at once assaulting you! the lusts of your own heart, raging desires after the enjoyments of this world, the horrors of conscience, the buffetings of the devil, and the pangs of death. What will ye do in the day of such a visitation? And remember that though death be the last enemy of the saints it is not thus with sinners; it does but transmit them into the world of damned spirits, where enemies multiply upon them, and grow more outrageous. Besides the bitter anguish of their own conscience, they have the wrath of a God whom they have long provoked, and the malice of evil angels their tormentors, to conflict with to all eternity.

*But we nope better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak, Heb. vi. 9.*

REFLECTION II. What divine comfort is there in my text for aged Christians and dying saints, who have been watchful and vigorous in their war with sin, and gained many victories over this world and satan, who is called the god of it? What a delightful view such persons have, when upon the borders of life! Bear up with divine boldness, ye heirs of glory! for you have but one adversary more to fight with: let your faith, and patience, and holy courage, hold out a little longer, and victory and triumph are yours for ever. There is no enemy lies in ambush behind the tomb, when you have passed the bar of death, you are out of the reach of all adversaries. Beyond the grave the coast is all clear for ever: the country flows with rich and untasted pleasures; every inhabitant is an inward friend, and peace and joy and love smile in every countenance.

Will an old saint complain that he finds many infirmities attend his age, that his senses are feeble, that his eyes are dim, that satan now and then arises from hell and casts a gloom and darkness around his soul, and buffets him sorely in that darkness? Will he complain that his natural spirits are heavy, that the world is troublesome to him, and every thing in life is painful? Methinks it is a consolation equal to all these sorrows, that he is just entering into the last field of battle: the last hour of controversy is begun; a few strokes more will decide the strife, and make him an eternal conqueror. *Behold I come quickly, saith our Lord, hold fast that which thou hast gained, that no man take thy crown, Rev. iii. 11.*

## SECT. III.

*The Destruction of Death*

THE *third* thing we are to enquire, is, How death is destroyed, and what are the steps, or gradual efforts towards its destruction.

The person that has this honour put upon him to subdue this universal tyrant, is our Lord Jesus Christ: so the words inform us all round my text. Though his mediation for sinners was sufficient to have prevailed with God to destroy death at once, yet it was agreed upon in the eternal counsels, that for wise ends and purposes it should be done by degrees. His blood was of sufficient value to have procured for his elect a deliverance from every enemy at once, and a translation to heaven as soon as they were born; but it was wisely concerted betwixt the Father and the Son, that we should pass through temptations, difficulties, and death itself; that by feeling the sharp assaults of our enemies, we might be better acquainted with the greatness of our salvation, and pay a larger tribute of thanks and honours to our deliverer.

The steps whereby death is destroyed, are these:

1 It is subdued by the death of Christ; its sting was then taken away, that is, the guilt of sin, 1 Cor. xv. 55, 56, 57. *The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law: but thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.* Which verses may be thus explained: death was the punishment threatened by the law for sin, but Christ, as our Surety, having sustained

the execution of that threatening, and answered the law by a satisfaction equal to the offence, death has no more power over him. *God has raised him up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it, Acts ii. 24.* And as *Christ* by his dying is said to *finish transgression, and make an end of sin*, because he has taken away its power to condemn believers, though he has not yet utterly destroyed its being, so he is said to *have abolished death, 2 Tim. i. 10.* Because he has so far diminished and made void its power, that it shall not do any final mischief to the saints. It is like a serpent whose sting is taken away, and whose teeth are broken out: it may fright us, and do us some injury, but it cannot inflict a venomous or fatal wound. Now the believer, by a lively faith, shares in this victory of *Christ* over death, and gives thanks to God for it. He knows that though it may hurt his body, and bring it down to the grave for a season, yet it cannot send the soul to destruction, nor confine the body to the dust any longer than *Christ* shall permit.

2. Death is taken captive and enslaved by *Christ* at his resurrection and ascension, and made to serve his holy purposes, *Psal. lxxviii. 18. Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive.* This is spoken of our Lord Jesus, who has taken into his own dominion, death and the devil, who led the world captive. The enemy is not escaped out of the hands of this conqueror, but is put under his yoke, and constrained into his service.

*Death*, in its first character, was the very threatening and curse of the law of God, and includes in it all misery; but *Christ* having borne the curse, has re-

*deemed* his people from it, Gal. iii. 13. And now he has taken as many as he pleases of the threatenings and terrors of the law into his own new covenant, the covenant of grace ; and has sanctified their nature, and made them become blessings to the saint ; *He has turned the curse into a blessing*, Deut. xiii. 5. so that afflictions, and pains, and sorrows, and death itself, are no longer a curse to them, for they are ordained by the wisdom and grace of Christ to promote their best interest.

**D***Death*, in its original design, was the under servant of God's avenging justice : it was the jailor to bring the soul out of the body before the divine tribunal, there to receive its condemnation to hell. It was the executioner both to torment and to destroy the flesh, and send the spirit into everlasting misery. But Christ having answered all the demands of this avenging justice, has also purchased the sovereignty over death ; and though sometimes, when it seizes a saint, it may for the present signify his displeasure, as in 1 Cor. xi. 30. yet it always fulfils the designs of his love, and conveys them into his own delightful presence : therefore as soon as we are *absent from the body*, we are said to be *present with the Lord*, 2 Cor. v. 8. and when *we depart* from the flesh, it is *to be with Christ*, Phil. i. 23. Death was ordained at first to be a slave to satan ; by the righteous appointment of God, both death and the devil are executioners of his wrath ; and satan is said to have some *power over death*, Heb. ii. 14. But Christ, by dying, has subdued satan, spoiled him of his destroying weapons, has made void his authority, especially with regard to believers ; he has **taken** death out of his power, and manages it himself :

and thus he delivers them *who through fear of death were held in a long and painful bondage*, ver. 15.

It is in such views as these that the apostle says to the *Corinthian* believers, *all things are yours, things present, and things to come, this world in the joys or sorrows of it, life and death, all are yours, and ye are Christ's*, 1 Cor. iii, 22, 23. You have an interest and a share in the possessions and the power of Christ over all things, so far as may promote your happiness: Christ makes *all things* (even death itself) *work together for the good* of his people, Rom. viii. 28. By death he puts an end to the body of sin, and frees the soul from all those ruffing passions, those inquietudes of the blood, and disorders of nature! those strong and perverse appetites that cost the christian so much toil to subdue, and brought him so often under guilt, darkness and sorrow. By death he delivers the believer from the pains and infirmities of the body, the perpetual languishings of a weakly constitution, and the anguish of acute diseases. He constrains death to give the weary saint release from all the miseries of the present state, and to hide him from the fury of the oppressor. The grave is God's hiding-place from the storms and tumults of the world; *there the weary are at rest, and the wicked cease from troubling*: and instead of consigning us over to the full malice of the devil, death is made a means to convey us away from all his assaults and translate us into that country where he has no power to enter. And when the soul is dismissed into the bosom of a reconciled God by the ministry of death; the body is put to rest in the grave; the grave which is sanctified into a bed of rest for all the followers of *Christ*, since their Lord and master has lain there

In the gospel of Christ, the name of *death* is altered into *sleep*. Christ, who has subdued it, seems to have given it this *new name*, that it might not have a frightful sound in the ears of his beloved. Though it was sometimes called *sleep* in the Old Testament, yet that chiefly regarded the silence, and darkness, and inactivity of that state; whereas in the New Testament, in the 12th of Dan. it is called *sleep*, to denote that there is an *awaking time*. The antient Christians upon this account, called the *church-yard* where they buried the dead, a *sleeping-place*. And though the grave may be termed the prison of death, yet death is not lord of the prison; he can detain the captives there but during the pleasure of Christ, for he who is *alive for evermore*, *has the keys of death and hell*, that is, *of the separate state*, Rev. i. 18.

Now this is the true reason why Christians have spoken so many kind things of death, which is the *king of terrors* to a natural man. They call it a release from pain and sin, a messenger of peace, the desired hour, and the happy moment. All this is spoken while they behold it with an eye of faith in the hands of Christ, who has subdued it to himself, and constrained it to serve the designs of his love to them.

3. When it has done all Christ's work, it shall be utterly destroyed. After the resurrection, there shall be no more dying. The saints shall rise immortal and dwell in heaven for ever, in the complete enjoyment of all that is included in the name of life. As the angel in prophecy lifts up his hand, and swears by him that lives for ever and ever, that *time shall be no longer*, Rev. x 6. so Christ Jesus,

the Lord of angels, shall as it were, pronounce with a sovereign voice, that *death shall be no more*. He shall send the great archangel with the trumpet of God; it shall sound through the deepest caverns of the grave, and shall summon death from its inmost recesses. The tyrant shall hear and obey, and restore all his captives out of prison; *the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and live*, John v. 25, 28, 29. *They that have done good, to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation*. After this our Lord has no employment for death, his slave; the bodies of men shall die no more; there shall be no more any state of separation between the flesh and spirit, Rev. xx. 14. *And death and hell [or Hades] were cast into the lake of fire*; that is, there shall be no more death, no grave, no separate state of souls, all these shall be for ever destroyed.

REFLECTION I. We may infer from this *third* general head, the great power and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ; we may learn the honour that is due to him from mortals; it is he that has subdued death, and that by his own dying. A wondrous method of victory! A surprising conquest! and he lives for ever to destroy it in his appointed time. How great and honourable must he be in the eyes of all mankind, who has vanquished so universal a conqueror? How desirable is his person, and how delightful the sound of his name to every believer! For he suppresses all their enemies, and shall destroy them even to the last. How well does he fulfil the great engagement! Hosea xiii. 14. *I will ransom them from the power of the grave: I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy*

*plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction; Repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.* Let us salute him *the Prince of life*, Acts iii. 15. and adore him under that character. He dispossesses death of all its dominions. He approves himself a complete Saviour of all his saints, and a Redeemer of his captive friends.

II. REFLECTION. We may learn also from this head of discourse, the power and excellency of the gospel of Christ, for it discovers to us how this great enemy is vanquished, and when it shall be destroyed; and thus it lays a foundation for courage at death, and gives us assurance of a joyful rising-day. *Death being abolished by the mediation of Christ, immortality and life are brought to light by his gospel*, 2 Tim. i. 10. that is, there is a brighter discovery of the future state, and of everlasting happiness, than ever before was given to the world.

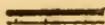
Here in the name of Christ, and of his gospel, we may give a challenge to all other religions, and say, which of them has borne up the spirit of man so high above the fears of death as this has done? or has given us so fair, so rational, and so divine an account how death has been overcome by one man, and how by faith in his name we may all be made overcomers? How vain are the trifles with which the heathen priests and their prophets amused the credulous multitude? What silly and insipid fables do they tell us of souls passing over in a ferry-boat to the other world, and describe the fields of pleasure, and the prisons of pain in that country of ghosts and shadows, in so ridiculous a manner, that the wise men of their own nations despised the romance, and few were stupid enough to believe it all. If we

consult the religion of their phiosopners, they give us but a poor, lame, and miserable account of the state after death. Some of them denied it utterly, and others rave at random in mere conjectures, and float in endless uncertainties. The courage which some of their heroes professed at the point of death, was rather a stubborn indolence, than a rational and well-founded valour; and not many arrived at this hardiness of mind, except those that supposed their existence ended with their life, and thought they should be dissolved into their first atoms. *Aristotle*, one of the greatest men amongst them, tell us, that "futurity is uncertain," and calls death *the most terrible of all terribles*.

If we search into the religion of the Jews which was a scheme of God's own contrivance and revelation to men, we find the affairs of a future world lay much in the dark; their consciences were not so thoroughly purged from the guilt of sin, but that some terrors hung about them, as appears from Heb. x. 1—3. and having so faint and obscure notices, of the separate state of souls, and of the resurrection, these were the persons who in a special manner, *through the fear of death, were all their life-time subject to bondage*, Heb. ii. 15.

But christianity lays a fair and rational foundation for our confidence and triumph in the dying hour. It shews how guilt is removed by an all-sufficient sacrifice; and makes it evident that no hell, no vengeance, no shadows of misery await the believer in that invisible world. This makes the christian venture into it with a certain boldness, and a becoming presence of mind. The doctrine of Christ shews us how the sting of death is taken away, and calls us to fight

with a vanquished enemy, a serpent without a sting : it gives us assurance that we shall rise again from the dust with bodies fresher and fairer, glorious in their frame, and their constitution immortal ; for death shall be no more. Exalted by so sublime a hope, what is there in death sufficient to depress our spirits, if our faith were but equal to this admirable doctrine ? The holy apostles are witnesses, the noble army of martyrs are witnesses, and many a saint in our day is a witness to this truth, and gives honour to this gospel. How many thousands have met death, and all its frightful attendants, with a steady soul, and a serene countenance ; and have departed to heaven with songs of praise upon their lips, a smile upon their faces, and triumph in their eyes ? And this was not owing to any extravagant flights of enthusiasm, nor the fires of an enflamed fancy, but it has been performed often, and may be done daily, by the force of a regular faith, on the most solid and reasonable principles ; for such are the principles of the gospel of Christ.



#### SECT. IV.

##### *Blessings gained by the Destruction of Death.*

THE *fourth* and last general head of discourse, is an enquiry into the advantages which the saints receive by the destruction of this last enemy.

This is a large and endless field, for it includes a great part of their final happiness in heaven. But I shall attempt to mention briefly a few of the

*benefits* that attend my text, and that without a nice distinction of particulars.

When death is destroyed, we shall share in the joy and triumph of Christ for absolute conquest over all his enemies; for there is scarce any glory given to Christ, considered as man, but the saints are said to be humble partners in it, or at least to enjoy the resemblance. Is he *appointed the Judge of all*? It is promised also to the saints that they *shall judge angels, and the twelve tribes of Israel. Do we suffer with him? We shall also reign with him.* If we conquer death by faith, we shall rise and triumph. Here we labour and fight with many adversaries, and we think we have routed them, but they rally again, and give us fresh vexation, so that we hardly know how to attempt a song of victory on this side the grave. Besides, *death* still remains for our trial and conflict: but there we shall rejoice over all our enemies, subdued, destroyed, and abolished for ever.

Then *God will be all in all to his saints.* This is a consequent which St. Paul mentions in the verses where my text is: God will manage the affairs of his heavenly kingdom in a more immediate way, than he has managed his kingdom on earth. Christ having destroyed all the enemies of his church, and presented it safe before the Father, has finished all those divine purposes for which the mediatorial kingdom was entrusted with him: then he shall resign his commission to the Father again; and the ever-blessed God shall in a more immediate and absolute manner reign over all the creation. He shall more immediately impress devils and damned spirits with a sense of infinite wrath; and with

a more immediate sense of his love and eternal favour, shall he for ever bless all the inhabitants of heaven. So much as this seems to be implied in the words of the apostle, 1 Cor. xv. 24, 25, &c. But it is impossible that in this state we should know either the full extent, or the just limitations of that promise, *God shall be all in all*. Our honoured and departed friend had these words dwelling upon her heart; these were often in her lips in the days of her faith and hope, and in the hours of her passage through the dark valley: she enjoys part of the pleasure of them in her present heaven, and with pleasure she expects the more absolute accomplishment, when the resurrection shall complete the blessedness of all the saints.

Another consequent of the destruction of death, is the employment of all the powers of human nature in the service of God, and they shall be neither weak nor weary. For all the inconveniences that attend mortality shall be swallowed up and lost for ever.

Alas, how poor and imperfect is the service which our bodies yield to God in this world! How heavily do our souls complain of the clog of this flesh, and move onwards heavily in the discharge of duty! and in the grave the body is quite cut off from all service. But when death shall be dispossessed, when we shall arise from the dust, and put on bodies of glory; then with our whole natures, and with all their powers, we shall do honour to God our creator, our redeemer, and our king. The time will come when we shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; and the refreshments of sleep shall be no more necessary to support life. When death shall be destroyed, sleep, the image and picture of

death, shall be destroyed too. There shall be nothing that looks like death in all that vital world that world of immortality. *We shall serve the Lord day and night in his temple; that is, continually, for there shall be no night there, Rev. vii. 15, 16. and xxi. 25.*

Then we shall taste all the true blessedness that human nature is capable of, and that without danger of excess or sin. When God first united these two pieces of his workmanship, the soul and body, and composed a man, he designed him the subject of various pleasures, wherein each part should have been subservient to the other, to render the felicity of the creature perfect. It is sin and death that have entered into our natures, and prevented this noble design in our present state: but the counsel of the Lord shall stand. And when he raises up the body from the grave, it shall leave all the seeds of death behind it. The faculties and the senses shall awake in all their original sprightliness and vigour, and our future heaven shall be furnished with objects suited to entertain those powers, and to convey intense pleasure to glorified minds, without danger of satiety or weariness. When the time comes that *there shall be no more death, God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes; there shall be no sorrow nor crying, nor any more pain: for the former things are passed away; and he that sits upon the throne shall say behold I make all things new!* Rev. xxi. 4, 5.

Then shall we enjoy the constant society of our best friends, and dearest acquaintance; those that have arrived at the new Jerusalem themselves, and have assisted us in our travels thither. And we

shall delightfully entertain, and be entertained with the mutual narratives of divine grace, and the wise and holy methods of providence, whereby we have been conducted safe through all the fatigues and dangers of the wilderness to that heavenly country.

And that which shall add an unknown relish to all the former blessings, is the full assurance that we shall possess them for ever. For every one of our enemies are then destroyed, and the last of them is death. Here on earth it is a perpetual pain to the mind to think, that those whom we love are mortal; the next moment may divide them from us far as the distance of two worlds. They are seized on a sudden from our eyes, and from our embraces; and this thought allays the delight that we take in their company, and diminishes the joy; but in that world all our friends are immortal, *we shall ever be with the Lord*, and ever with one another too, 1 Thess. iv. 17.

May I be permitted here to make a short reflection on that mournful providence that has joined two lovely relatives in\* death, and given occasion for the sad solemnities of this day? The pious mother led the way to heaven but a few days before the pious daughter followed, each of them the parent of a reputable family, and the descendants from a progenitor†, whose name is in honour among the churches. As mutual affection joined their habitations

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\* The Lady *Hartopp*, daughter of *Charles Flectwood*, Esq. and wife to *John Hartopp*, of *Newington*, Baronet, died *November 9th*, 1711. Mrs. *Gould*, their daughter and wife to Mr *Gould*, (now Sir *Nathaniel Gould* of *Newington*) died six days after, viz. *Nov. 15th*, and left their households behind them oppressed with double sorrow.

† *Charles Flectwood*, of *Norfolk*, Esq.

in life, so the care of surviving friends has laid them to rest in their beds of earth together. We trust they are also joined in the world of blessed spirits on high, and they shall be joined again in the world of glorified saints in the morning of the resurrection. Death, their common enemy, has taken them both captives together, has bound in his chains the mother and the daughter: but they are prisoners of hope, and together they shall obtain a glorious release.

I would copy a line from that most beautiful elegy of David, and apply it here with more justice than the Psalmist could to Saul and Jonathan, 2 Sam. i. 23. *Lovely and pleasant were they in their lives, and in death they were not divided.* Silent were they, and retired from the world, and unknown except to their intimate friends; but God was a witness of their hours of divine retirement. The graces of christianity, and the virtues of domestic life (which are the proper ornaments of the sex) were the mark of their utmost aim and ambition: nor did they seek the flatteries of the court, or the city, nor affect the gaieties of a degenerate age. Humble they were, and averse from public shew and noise: nor will I disturb their graves by making them the subject of public praise. In the hearts of their families, their memory, their image, and their example will live. O may the brightest and best part of their image and example live in the character and practice of all that are left behind.

What a dreadful and overwhelming thought is it to suppose, that any of that honoured and numerous household should be divided asunder at the last day! Give all diligence then, my worthy friends, to make your calling and your election sure; devote yourselves

to the God of your predecessors ; trust in the same Saviour ; tread in the same paths of holiness ; and pursue the same glory. What a joy will it be to that pious lady that is gone before, to find, that those that were dear to her as her own soul have overcome sin and death, and in a blessed succession arrive at the same heaven ! Let me entreat you to give her this satisfaction, and not disappoint her prayers and her hopes. Let your venerable surviving parent (who is now confined at home under sorrows and sharp pains) obtain this pleasure. Let that dear partner of her joys and cares behold the power of religion appearing and reigning in all your hearts before his eyes are closed in death. Give both of them this consolation at the appearance of Christ, that they may say, “ Lord, here we are, and the children that thou hast given us. Here we are with our ancestors, and our offspring, and our kindred around us, adoring thy rich grace together, and entering together into the state of perfect glory which thou hast prepared.”

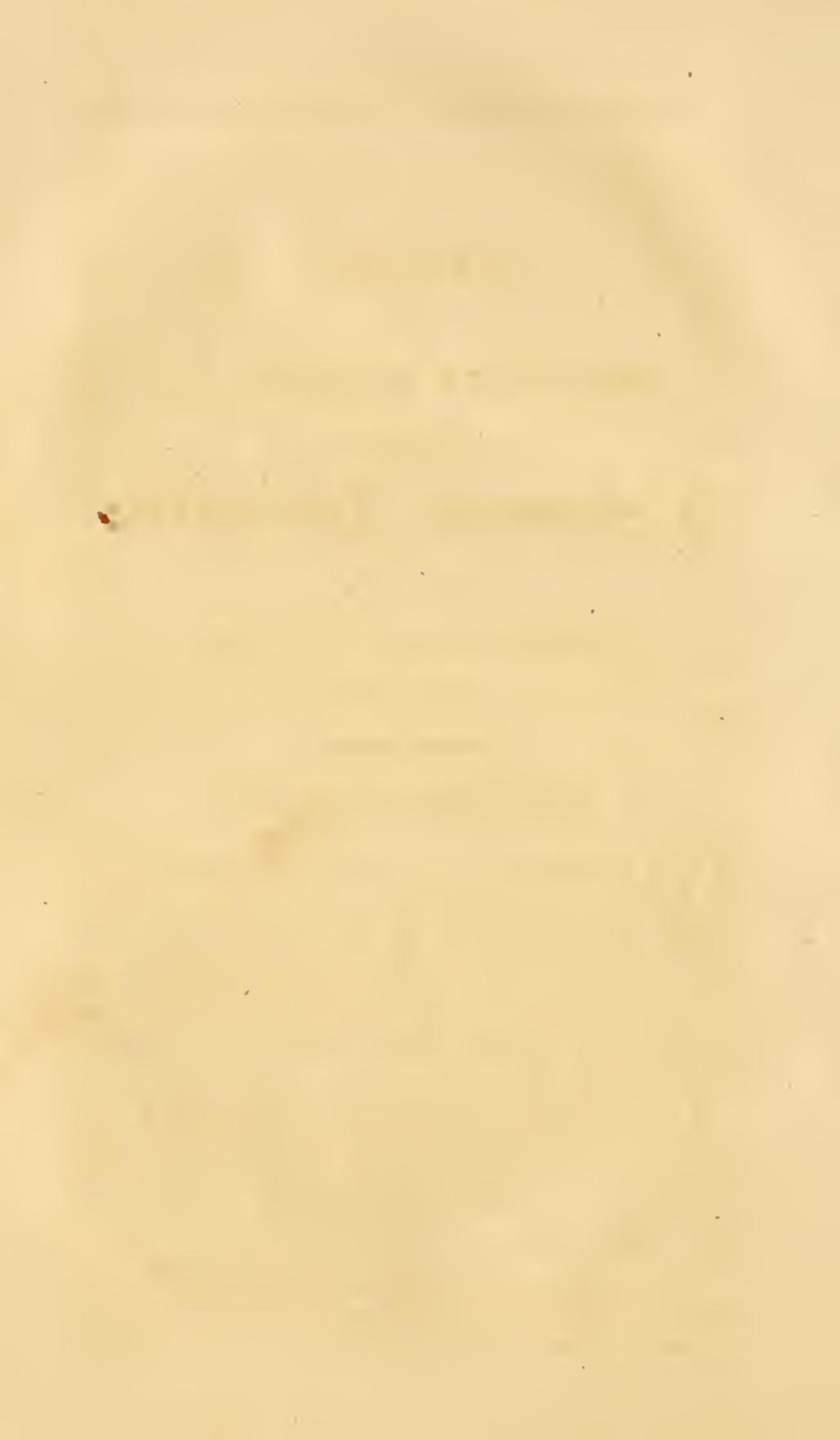
It remains only that I should propose some reflections on the last head of discourse for the meditation of this whole assembly, and especially for those that are engaged in the spiritual warfare, and proceed to daily conquests.

Shall death, with all its attendants, be destroyed for ever ? And are these the blessings that shall succeed ? Then *enter into this joy beforehand by a lively faith*, and begin the song of triumph—*O death where is thy sting ? O grave where is thy victory ?* 1 Cor. xv. 55. *Rejoice not over me, O mine enemy, when I fall, I shall arise,* Mic. vii. 8.

After you have fought many battles with satan, subdued many sins, and encountered a thousand temptations with success, perhaps you find new adversaries still arising; look forward then to this joyful hour, and say, "But I shall one day be for ever free from all these toils and labours of war, for all my enemies shall be overcome, since death the last of them shall be subdued."

When you feel the infirmities of this mortal body hang heavy upon your spirits, and damp your devotion, read the words of this promise, and rejoice; "these pains, and these languors of nature, shall one day vanish and be no more; for death, with all its train, must be destroyed."

When some of your dearest friends are seized by this tyrant, and led away to the grave in his chains, while you are wounded to the very soul, remember that Christ your captain, and your saviour, shall revenge this quarrel upon your last enemy; for he has appointed the hour of his destruction. *Mourn not, therefore, for the dead, as those that sorrow without hope, for those that sleep in Jesus, the Lord shall bring with him when he comes; 1 Thess. iv. 13.* And he shall join you together in a blessed and durable friendship, where it shall be eternally impossible for enemies to break in upon your peace; for death, the last of them, shall be then destroyed. And the Lord has left us this comfort in the end of his sacred writing, *surely I come quickly.* Let each of us with a cheerful heart reply, *even so, come, Lord Jesus.* Amen.



THE  
HAPPINESS  
OF  
*SEPARATE SPIRITS, &c.*

ATTEMPTED IN  
**A Funeral Discourse**

IN MEMORY OF  
*Sir JOHN HARTOPP, Bart.*

DECEASED.

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THE INTRODUCTION.

**I**T is a solemn and mournful occasion that has brought me to this place this day\*. Divine providence, and the will of surviving relatives, call me to pay the last sacred and pious respect to the memory of the deceased ; a *worthy Gentleman*, and an *excellent Christian*, who has lately left our world in a good old age.

It is something more than ten years since I was engaged in the same service to the memory of his honoured and pious lady, when by a double and

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\* *Sir John Hartopp* died *April 1st, 1722*, in the 85th year of his age ; and the substance of this discourse was delivered briefly at *Stoke-Newington, April 15th*, following.

painful stroke the mother and the daughter were joined in death; when the two kindred families were smitten in the tenderest part, and each of them sustained a loss that could never be repaired\*.

This *town* was the place which they had all honoured with their habitation, and spent the largest part of their lives amongst you; but they are now become inhabitants of the *heavenly city*, they dwell in the world of blessed spirits, and I would lead your devoutest thoughts to follow them thither. Come then, let our meditations take their rise from those words of the great apostle, in

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\* See a particular account, page 222, of the foregoing discourse in the margin.

## HEB. XII. 23.

— *The Spirits of just Men made perfect.*

**I**T is a much sweeter employment to trace the souls of our departed friends into those upper and brighter regions, than to be ever dwelling upon the dark prospect, and fixing our eyes upon death, and dust, and the grave : and that not only because it gives us a comfortable view of the persons whom we mourn, and thus it relieves our most weighty and smarting sorrows ; but because it leads us to consider our own best interest, and our highest hopes, and puts us in mind of the communion that we have with those blessed spirits in heaven, while we belong to the church on earth. *We are come*, says the apostle, ver. 22. *We, in the gospel-state, are come to mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, to the innumerable company of angels, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.*

What sort of communion it is that good men here below maintain with those exalted spirits, is not my present business to describe ; therefore I apply myself immediately to the words of my text, and confine myself to them only.

And here I shall consider these four things :

I. Who are particularly designed by the spirits of the just ; and here I shall make it evident the apostle intends not merely the spirits of good men, but such good spirits as are dismissed from their mortal bodies.

II. We shall enquire, wherein consists the perfection to which they have arrived, and what are the excellencies in which they are made perfect

III. What sort of perfection it is they enjoy, and what are the peculiar characters of it

IV. How they arrive at this perfect state, and what influence the dismissal from their bodies has towards their attainment of it.

And then conclude with a few remarks for our instruction and practice, suitable to the present providence.



## SECT. I.

### *Of the Spirits of the Just.*

OUR first enquiry is, “Whom are we to understand by the spirits of the just here spoken of?”

The name of just or righteous men, taken in a large and general sense, as it is often used in scripture, signifies all those *who fear and love God, and are accepted of him*. In the New Testament they are frequently called *saints, believers, or children of God*: but in both parts of the Bible they are often described by the name of just, or righteous, and they are properly called so upon these three accounts.

I. Their persons are made righteous in the sight of God having their sins forgiven, and their souls justified through the death and righteousness of Jesus Christ. So the word is used, Rom. v. 18. *By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous*. They have seen themselves all guilty and

exposed to the wrath of God, they have fled to lay hold on the hope set before them, they have mourned before God and been weary of sin, they have received the great atonement, they have committed their case by a living faith to Jesus the righteous, the surety and the saviour of perishing sinners; and that God hath received them into his favour, and has imputed righteousness to them, even that God *who is just, and the justifier of them who believe in Jesus*. Now this sense cannot reasonably be excluded from the character of a saint, though the word *righteous* is more frequently taken in the following senses.

II. Their natures are made righteous, and sanctified by the spirit of grace. They have a principle of grace and holiness wrought in them; so the word signifies, Eph. iv. 24. *The new man which is created after the image of God in righteousness and true holiness*. They were once sinners, disobedient, and unholy, as they were born into this world; but they are born again, and made new creatures by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Their understandings are enlightened to see the dreadful evil of sin, and the divine beauty of holiness. Their wills are turned from folly and vanity, from the love of earth, and sense, and sin, to a holy contempt of the world, and a hatred of all that is sinful; from a neglect of religion to desires after God, and a delight in him; from a mere formal profession of the gospel, to the faith and love of Christ, and a zealous pursuit of holiness; and they place their highest hopes and their joys in things divine, spiritual, and eternal.

III. Their lives are righteous and conformable to the will of God revealed in his word. So the term

*righteous* signifies, 1 John iii. 7. *He that does righteousness is righteous.* The just man makes it the business of his life to do works of righteousness, taken in the largest sense; to worship God, to seek his glory, to obey his will, which is the rule of righteousness; to do him all the service on earth that his station and circumstances admit of, and to deal faithfully and justly among men, and to do them all the good that lies in his power.

These are the just men whose spirits are spoken of in my text.

Now it is evident the apostle here means their spirits which are in heaven, and departed from these mortal bodies, because the train of blessed companions, which he describes just before, leads our thoughts to the invisible world.

If we can suppose any part of these two verses to refer to earth, and our present state, it must be when he says, *ye are come to mount Zion, to the city of the living God,* that is, the visible church of Christ under the gospel dispensation. But then he adds, *you are come also to the heavenly Jerusalem,* which may probably include all the inhabitants of heaven in general; and descending to particulars, he adds, *to an innumerable company of angels, and to the general assembly and church of the first-born, who are written in heaven:* whereby we must understand the whole invisible church of God among men, if we do not confine it to those who are already of the church triumphant: and next he leads us to *God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect;* that is, spirits released from flesh and blood, who have stood before God their judge, and are determined to a state of perfection in heaven.

Besides, when St. Paul speaks of fellow-Christians here on earth, it is not his manner to call them spirits, but men, or brethren, or saints, &c. therefore by the naked and single term *spirits*, he distinguishes these persons from those who dwell in mortal bodies, and raises our thoughts to the world of blessed souls, released from the wretched ties and bondage of flesh and blood, the spirits of good men departed from this earth, and dwelling in the better regions of heaven.

I would here take notice also, that the apostle perhaps in this place chuses rather to call them just or righteous men, which is a term used frequently both in the Old and New Testament, that he might include the patriarchs and the Jewish saints as well as the souls of departed Christians. *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Noah, Daniel, and David, Job, Moses, and Elijah*, dwell in that happy world, with a thousand other spirits of renown in the antient church, as well as the spirits of those that have seen the Messiah, and believed in Jesus of *Nazareth*. What a noble and wondrous assembly! What an amazing and blissful society of human souls, gathered from various nations, and from all ages, and joined together in the heavenly *Jerusalem*, the family of God above!

I shall proceed now to the second thing I proposed.

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## SECT. II.

*Of their Perfection in Knowledge, Hotness, and Joy.*

THE second enquiry is this, "Wherein consists the perfection at which these spirits are arrived?"

The word *perfect* cannot be taken here in its most extensive, absolute and sublime sense, for in that sense it can belong only to God; he is and must be the sum and centre of all perfection for ever; all excellency and all blessedness in a supreme degree meet in him; none beside him can pretend to absolute perfection.

Nor is the word used here in its most sublime sense in which it may be applied to a creature; for when the spirits of just men are made never so perfect, the blessed soul of our Lord Jesus Christ will be more perfect than they; for *in all things he must have the pre-eminence*, Col. i. 18.

*Perfection* therefore is taken in a comparative sense here, as in many other places in scripture. So St. Paul calls those Christians on earth *perfect*, who are advanced in knowledge and christianity far above their fellows; as in 1 Cor. ii. 6. *I speak wisdom among them that are perfect.* Phil. ii. 15. *Let as many as are perfect be thus minded.* So that blessed souls above are only perfect in a comparative sense. They are advanced in every excellency of nature, and every divine privilege, far above all their fellow-saints here on earth.

I desire it also to be observed here, that

The word perfection doth not generally imply another sort of character than what a man possessed before; but a far more exalted degree of the same character which he was before possessed of.

The perfection then of the spirits of the just in heaven, is a glorious and transcendant degree of those spiritual and heavenly qualifications and blessings which they enjoy here on earth in a lower measure; implying also, a freedom from all the

defects and disorders to which they were here exposed, and which are inconsistent with their present felicity

If I were to branch it into particulars, I would name but these three, namely, (1.) A great increase of knowledge, without the mixture of error. (2.) A glorious degree of holiness, without the mixture of the least sin. (3.) Constant peace and joy, without the mixture of any sorrow or uneasiness.

Let us consider them distinctly.

1. A great increase of knowledge without the mixture of error; and in this sense it is perfect knowledge.

Part of the happiness of spirits consists in contemplation; and the more excellent the object is which we contemplate, and the more perfect our acquaintance with it, the greater is our happiness. Therefore the knowledge of God, the infinite and eternal spirit, is the true felicity of all the ranks of created spirits in the upper and lower worlds. What unknown and unrivalled beauties are contained in the attributes of his nature! What a heavenly pleasure is it to lose ourselves amongst the boundless perfections of his self-sufficiency and eternal existence, his wisdom, his power, his justice, his holiness, his goodness, and his truth! and what a divine harmony amongst them all!

How does the philosopher entertain and feast himself with daily discoveries of new wonders amongst the works of God, and beholds the print of the hands of his Creator on them all! What superior glories are seen by the enquiring Christian amongst the greater wonders of his grace! and he receives the discovery of them with superior delight,

for his eternal life is in them, John xvii. 3. *This is life eternal, that they may know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.* To know the Father and the Son according to the revelation which they have given of themselves in the gospel, is not only the *way* to obtain life eternal, and consequently the business of the saints below; but the knowledge of this Son and this Father in their natural glories, in their personal characters, in their sublime and mysterious relations to each other, and in their most amazing contrivances and transactions for the recovery of lost sinners, may be matter of the most pleasing enquiry, and delicious contemplation, to angels themselves, 1 Pet. i. 12. *These are the things which the angels desire to look into.* And the spirits of the just made perfect are employed in the same delightful work; for which they have much more concern, and a dearer interest in it.

We know something of God by the light of nature. The reason that is within each of us, shines like a slender candle in a private room, and gives us some twinkling and uncertain notions of our Creator. The notices that we obtain by the light of grace, or the gospel here on earth, are far brighter and surer, like the moon at midnight shining upon a dark world, or like the rise of the morning star, and the dawning of the day. But the knowledge which departed spirits obtain of their Creator and their Redeemer in the light of glory, is far superior to that of nature and grace, as the lustre of the meridian-sun exceeds the pale moon-beams, or the glimmering twilight of the morning.

This is what the apostle describes, 1 Cor. xiii. 9-12. *For we know but in part, and we prophesy*

*in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.* The imperfection of our knowledge in this world consists much in this, that we are liable to perpetual mistakes. A thousand errors stand thick around us in our enquiries after truth, and we stumble upon error often in our wisest pursuits of knowledge; *for we see but through a glass darkly, but then we shall know even as we are known, and see face to face;* that is, we shall have a more immediate and intuitive view of God and Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, without such mediums as are now necessary for our instruction; we shall know them in a manner something akin to the way whereby God knows us, though not in the same degree of perfection; for that is impossible: yet in these respects our knowledge shall bear some resemblance to the knowledge of God himself, namely, that it shall be not merely a rational knowledge, by inferences drawn from his works, not merely a knowledge by narration, or report and testimony, such as we now enjoy by his word; but it shall be such a sort of knowledge as we have of a man when we see his face, and it shall also be a certain and unwavering knowledge, without remaining doubts, without error, or mistake. O happy spirits that are thus divinely employed, and are entertaining themselves and their fellow-spirits with those noble truths and transporting wonders of nature and grace, of

God and Christ, and things heavenly, which are all mystery, entanglement and confusion to our thoughts in the present state !

II. This perfection consists in a glorious degree of holiness, without the mixture of the least sin ; and in this sense it is perfect holiness.

All holiness is contained and summed up in the love and delightful service of God and our fellow-creatures.

When we attempt to love God here on earth, and by the alluring discoveries of grace try to raise our affections to things of heaven, what sinful damps and coldness hang heavy upon us ? What counter-allurements do we find towards sin and the creature, by the mischievous influence of the flesh and this world ? What an estrangedness from God do the best of Christians complain of ? And when they get nearest to their Saviour in the exercises of holy love, they find perpetual reason to mourn over their distance, and they cry out often with pain at their hearts ; “ What a cursed enemy abides still in me, and divides me from the dearest object of my desire and joy ! ” But the spirits of the just made perfect, have the nearest views of God their Father, and their Saviour ; and as they see them face to face, so (may I venture to express it) they love them with a union of heart to heart ; *for he that is joined to the Lord* in the nearest union in heaven, may well be called one Spirit with him, since the apostle says the same thing of the saints on earth, 1 Cor. vi. 17.

As our love of God is imperfect here, so is all our devotion and worship.

While we are in this world, sin mingles with all our religious duties : we come before God with our

prayers and our songs, but our thoughts wander from him in the midst of worship, and we are gone on a sudden to the ends of the earth. We go up to his temple, and we try to serve him there an hour or two; then we return to the world, and we almost forget the delights of the sanctuary, and the God we have seen there. But the spirits of the just made perfect are *before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple*, 'Rev. vii. 15. And though they may not be literally engaged in one everlasting act of worship, yet they are ever busy in some glorious services for him. If they should be sent on any message to other worlds, yet they never wander from the sight of their God; for if the guardian angels of children *always behold the face of our heavenly Father*, Matt. xviii. 10. even when they are employed on their divine errands to our world; much more may we suppose the spirits of just men made perfect never lose the blissful vision, whatsoever their employments shall or can be.

And as our acts of worship on earth, and converse with God, are very imperfect, so is our zeal and activity for God extremely defective; but it shall be ever bright and burning in the upper world.

When we would exert our zeal for God on earth, how many corrupt affections mix with that zeal and spoil it! Dead flies, that cause that noble ointment to send forth a stinking savour! How much of self, and pride, and vain ambition too often mingles with our desire to serve Christ and his gospel! Some have preached Christ out of vain-glory or envy; and a mixture of those vices may taint our pious ministrations. When we seem to drive furiously like Jehu to the destruction of the priests and the

worship of Baal, too often the wild-fire of our lusts and passions, our envy and wrath and secret revenge join together to animate our chariot-wheels. When we are ready to say with him, *Come and see my zeal for the Lord*, perhaps God espies in our hearts too much of the same carnal mixture; for Jehu exalted the true God, that he might establish himself a king, 2 Kings x. 16. But the spirits of the just are perfect in zeal, and pure from all mixtures. Their very natures are like the angels, they are so many flames of sacred and unpolluted fire, the ministers of God that do his pleasure, and then hide their faces behind their wings; when they have done all for God, they fall down and confess they are nothing.

Temptation and sin have no place in those happy regions. These are the evils that belong to earth and hell; but within the gates of heaven *nothing must enter that tempteth, nothing that defileth*, Rev. xxi. 37. It is the mixture of sinful thoughts and idle words, sinful actions and irregular affections, that makes our state of holiness so imperfect here below. We groan within ourselves, being burdened; we would be rid of these criminal weaknesses; these guilty attendants of our lives: but the spirits above are under a sweet necessity of being for ever holy; their natures have put on perfection; the image of God is so far completed in them, that nothing contrary to the divine nature remains in all their frame; for they see God in all the fairest beauties of his holiness, and they adore and love. They behold him without a veil, and are *changed into the same image from glory to glory*, 2 Cor. iii. 18. If these words are applicable to the state of grace. much

more to that of glory. They see *Christ as he is*, and they are *made* completely *like him*, 1 John iii. 2. which is true concerning the state of separate spirits, as well as the hour of resurrection.

As their love to God is perfect, so is their love to all their fellow-saints.

We try to love our fellow-creatures and fellow-christians here on earth; but we have so many corrupt passions of our own, and so many infirmities and imperfections belong to our neighbours also, that mutual love is very imperfect. *Love is the fulfilling of the law*, Rom. xiii. 10. But we shall never fulfil that law perfectly till we are joined to the spirits of the just in glory, where there is no inhabitant without the flame of sacred love, no single spirit unlovely or unbeloved.

In those happy mansions there is no envy raised by the <sup>r</sup>perfections or the honours of our neighbour spirits; no detracting thought is known there, no reproachful word is heard in that country; and, perhaps, no word of reproach is to be found in the whole heavenly language. Malice, and slander, and the very names of infamy, are unknown in those regions; and wrath and strife are eternal strangers. No divided opinions, no party quarrels, no seeds of discords are sown in heaven. Our little angry jars and contentions have no place there, and the noise of war and controversy ceases for ever. There are no offences given, and none are taken in that world of love. Neither injury, nor resentment, is ever known or practised there, those bitter and fatal springs of revenge and blood. Universal benevolence runs through the whole kingdom; each spirit wishes well to his neighbour as to himself; and till

we arrive there, we shall never be made perfect in love, nor shall we see the blessed characters of it described in the scriptures, fully copied out in living examples.

In that holy world dwells God himself, who is original love; there resides our Lord Jesus Christ, who is love incarnate; and from that sacred head flows an eternal stream of love through every member, and blesseth all the inhabitants of that land with its divine refreshments. Holiness is perfect among the spirits of the just, because love is perfect there.

*Objection.* But are there not several graces and virtues that belong to the saints on earth that are finished at death, and can have no room in heaven? How then can perfection of holiness in heaven consist in an increase of the same graces we practised on earth?

*Answer.* Yes, there are several such virtues and such graces, as faith and repentance and godly sorrow, patience, and forbearance, love to enemies, and forgiveness of injuries, &c. But all these arise from the very imperfections of our present state, from the sins or follies of ourselves or our fellow-creatures. Faith arises from the want of sight; repentance from the returns of guilt; godly sorrow from the workings of sin in us; patience owes its very nature and exercise to the afflictions we sustain from the hand of God; and forbearance and forgiveness respects the injuries that we receive from our fellow-creatures. But in heaven, faith, so far as it regards the absence of God and Christ, is lost in sight and enjoyment, as the light of a glimmering taper is lost in the blaze of sun-beams. Repentance

of old sins, so far as it is attended with any painful or shameful passions, ceases for ever in heaven; and there is no new guilt for us to repent of: there shall be no evil working in us to give pain to the spirit; no affliction from God to demand a patient submission; no injuries from men to be borne or forgiven.

But there is the same pious temper still continues in the spirits of the just made perfect, which was the spring of those graces on earth: and could the objects or occasions of them return, every spirit there would exercise the same grace, and that in a more glorious and perfect manner, for their very natures are all over holy.

III. The last thing I shall mention, wherein the perfection of the saints above consists, is their constant peace and exalted joy, without any mixture of sorrow or uneasiness; and this is joy and peace in perfection.

If our knowledge, our love, and our holiness are imperfect on earth our joys must be so. The mistakes and the follies to which we are liable here below, the guilt, that pains the conscience, and the sin that is restless and ever working within us, will bring forth fruits of present sorrow, where they do not produce the fruit of eternal death. A saint in this world will groan under these burdens; and it is very natural for him to cry out, *O wretched man! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* Rom. vii. 24.

Thus there are many things that are within us, and that belong to us in this world, that forbid the perfection of our joys. And besides all these, we are attached and tied down to many other uneasinesses, while we dwell on earth.

This world is a fair theatre of the wisdom and power of God, but it is hung round and replenished with temptations to fallen man, proper for a state of trial; soft and flattering temptations that by the senses are ever drawing away the soul from God and heaven, and breaking in upon its divine repose and joy: and while we are surrounded with a thousand dangers, we cannot be said to dwell in perfect peace. The follies and the crimes of others afflict the soul of a good man, and put him to pain, as the *righteous soul of Lot was vexed in Sodom from day to day with their unlawful deeds*, 2 Pet. ii. 8. The greater vexations, and little teasing accidents of life that attend us, disturb the sacred rest of the saint, and ruffle or wound his spirit. And the best of men on this account are sometimes ready to cry out with David, Psal. cxx. 5, 6. *Wo is me that I dwell in Meshech, and sojourn in the tents of Kedar: my soul hath long dwelt with them that hate peace. O that I had wings like a dove, for then I would fly away, and be at rest*, Psal. lv. 6.

And sometimes God himself is absent from the soul that longs after him; he hides his face, and then who can behold it? we are smitten with a sense of sin, and the conscience is restless. We wander from thing to thing in much confusion of spirit; we go from providences to ordinances, from one word in the Bible to another, from self-examination and inward guilt to the blood of Christ and the mercy of the Father; and it may be outward sorrows fall on us at the same time, guilt and judgment attend us at once: the deep of affliction calls to the deep of sin *at the noise of the floods of divine anger*, Psal. xlii. 7. We are kept in the

dark for a season, and we see not the light of his countenance, nor know our own interest in his love. *We go forward as Job did, but he is not there, and backward but we cannot perceive him, &c.* All the comfort that a good man hath at such a season, is to appeal to God, that *he knoweth the way that I take; when he hath tried me, I humbly hope I shall come forth as gold,* Job xxiii. 8, 9, 10.

But the spirits of the just made perfect, are in peaceful and joyous circumstances; they know God, for they see his face; they know that they love him, for they feel and enjoy it as the warmest and sweetest affection of their hearts: and they are sure God loves them too; for every moment they taste his love, and live upon it in all the rich varieties of its manifestation.

O! what unknown and endless satisfactions of mind arise from a full assurance of the love of God! What tongue can express, or what heart can conceive the sacred pleasure that fills every soul in heaven, under the immediate impressions of divine love! When the poor, trembling, doubting believer, that knew himself to be infinitely unworthy of the favour of God, or of the meanest place in his house, shall be acknowledged as a son in the midst of his father's court on high, and amongst millions of congratulating angels!

No cloud shall ever interpose, no melancholy gloom, no shadow of darkness shall ever arise in those regions; for the countenance of God, like the sun in its highest strength, shall shine and smile upon them for ever. And through the length of all their immortality, there shall not be the least interruption

of the sweet intercourse of love, on God's side, or on theirs.

In that world there is no sorrow, for there is no sin; the inhabitants of that city, of the heavenly Jerusalem, *shall never say I am sick; for the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity,* Isa. xxxiii. 24. When the righteous are dismissed from this flesh, they enter into peace, their bodies rest in their beds of earth, and their spirits walk in heaven, *each one in his own uprightness,*, Isa. lvii. 2.

And as there is no sin within them to render them uneasy, so there is no troublesome guest, no evil attendant without them, that can give them fear or pain; no sinners to vex them, no tempter to deceive them, no spirit of hell to devour or destroy: Isa. xxxv. 9, 10. "No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there: but the redeemed shall walk there. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

God himself shall never be absent, and then they cannot be unhappy. They *behold his face in righteousness, and they are satisfied when they awake with his likeness,* Psal. xvii. ult. When they leave this world of dreams and shadows, and awake into that bright world of spirits, they behold the face of God, and are made like him, as well as when their bodies shall awake out of the dust of death in the morning of the resurrection, formed in the image of the blessed Jesus. That glorious scripture in Rev. xxi. 3, 4. (be the sense of it what it will) can never be fulfilled

in more glory on earth than belongs to the state of heaven: "The tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

The saints above see their blessed Lord and Saviour in all his exalted glories, and they are with him where he is, according to his own prayer and his own promise, John xvii. 24. and xiv. 3. They are *absent from the body, and present with the Lord*. They have esteemed him on earth above all things, and longed after the sight of his face, *whom having not seen they loved*, 1 Pet. i. 8. but now they behold him, the dear Redeemer that gave his life and blood for them, they rejoice with joy much more unspeakable and full of superior glory.

Thus I have shewn wherein this perfection of spirits in heaven consists. It is a high and glorious degree of all those excellencies and privileges they were blessed with on earth without any mixture of the contrary evil. It is a perfection of knowledge, holiness and joy.

And canst thou hear of all this glory, O my soul, and meditate of all this joy, and yet cleave to the earth and dust still? Hast thou not often mourned over thy ignorance, and felt a sensible pain in the narrowness, the darkness, and the confusion of thy ideas, after the utmost stretch and labour of thought? How little dost thou know of the essence of God, even thy God, and how little of the two united natures of Jesus thy beloved Saviour? How small

and scanty is thy knowledge of thyself, and of all thy fellow-spirits, while thou art here imprisoned in a cottage of clay? And art thou willing to abide in this dark prison still, with all thy follies and mistakes about thee? Does not the land of light above invite thy longing eyes and awaken thy desires: those bright regions where knowledgè is made perfect, and where thy God and thy Redeemer are seen without a veil?

And is not the perfect holiness of heaven another allurement to thee, O my soul? Dost thou not stretch thy wings for flight at the very mention of a world without temptation and without sin? How often hast thou groaned here under the burden of thy guilt, and the body of death? How hard hast thou wrestled with thy inbred iniquities? An hourly war, and a long toilsome conflict? How hast thou mourned in secret, and complained to thy God of these restless inward enemies of thy peace? And art thou so backward still to enter into those peaceful regions where these enemies can never come, and where battle and war are known no more, but perfect and everlasting holiness adorns the inhabitants, and crowns of victory and triumph.

O the shattered and imperfect devotion of the best saints on earth! O the feeble fluttering efforts of praise! What poor hallelujahs we send up to heaven on notes of discord, and, as it were, on broken strings? Art thou not willing, O my soul, to honour thy God and thy Saviour with sweeter harmony? and yet what a reluctance dost thou shew to enter into that world of joy and praise, because the dark shadow of death hangs over the passage? Come awake, arise, shake off thy fears; and let the

sense and notice of what the spirits of the just above enjoy, raise thy courage, and excite thee to meet the first summons with sacred delight and rapture.

But I fear I have dwelt too long upon these three last particulars, because they are matters of more obvious notice, and more frequent discourse; yet they are so entertaining, that I knew not how to leave them. But I would not spend all my time on common topics, while I am paying honour to the memory of an uncommon Christian.

I proceed therefore to the next general head.



### SECT. III.

#### *Of the various Kinds and Degrees of the Employments and Pleasures of Heaven.*

HAVING shewn that by the spirits of just men in my text, we are to understand the souls of all the pious and the good that have left the body; and having described their perfection as a state of complete knowledge, holiness, and joy; the third thing I am to consider, is, what sort of perfection this is, or what are some of the special characters of it. And here I beg your attention to some pleasing speculations which are agreeable to the word of God, and to the nature and reason of things, and which have often given my thoughts a sacred entertainment.

I. It is such a perfection as admits of great variety of employments and pleasures, according to the various turn and genius of each particular spirit.

For the word perfection does not necessarily imply a state of universal and constant uniformity.

That the mind of every man here on earth has a different turn and genius, and peculiar manner of thought, is evident to every wise observer. And why should not every pious mind or spirit carry to heaven with it so much of that turn and manner, as is natural and innocent?

I grant it is a possible thing, that many different geniuses of men on earth may perhaps be accounted for by the different constitution of the body, the frame of the brain, and the various texture of the nerves, or may be ascribed to the coarser or finer blood, and corporeal spirits; as well as to different forms of education and custom, &c. These may be able to produce a wondrous variety in the tempers and turns of inclination, even though all souls were originally the same: but I dare not assert that there is no difference betwixt the souls themselves at their first creation and union with the body. There are some considerations would lead one to believe, that there are real diversities of genius among the spirits themselves in their own nature.

God, the great creator, hath seemed to delight himself in a rich variety of productions in all his worlds which we are acquainted with. Let us make a pause here, and stand still and survey the overflowing riches of his wisdom, which are laid out on this little spot of his vast dominions, this earthly globe on which we tread; and we may imagine the same variety and riches overspreading all those upper worlds which we call planets or stars.

What an amazing multiplicity of kinds of creatures dwell on this earth? If we search the animated

world and survey it, we shall find there are some that fly, some that creep or slide, and some walk on feet, or run : and every sort of animals clothed with a proper covering ; some of them more gay and magnificent in their attire than Solomon in all his glory ; and each of them furnished with limbs, powers, and properties fitted for their own support, convenience, and safety. How various are the kinds of birds and beasts that pass daily before our eyes ! The fields and the woods, the forests and the deserts, have their different inhabitants. The savage and the domestic animals, how numerous they are ! and the fowls both wild and tame ! What riches of dress and drapery are provided to clothe them in all their proper habits of nature ? What an infinite number of painted insects fill the air and overspread the ground ? What bright spangles adorn their little bodies and their wings, when they appear in their summer livery ? What interwoven streaks of scarlet beauty mingled with green and gold ? We behold a strange profusion of divine wisdom yearly in our own climate, in these little animated crumbs of clay, as well as in the animals of larger size. And yet there are multitudes of new strange creatures that we read of in the narratives of foreign countries : and what a vast profusion of entertainments for them all ? How are the mountains and meadows adorned with a surprising plenty of grass and herbs, fruits and flowers almost infinite, for the use of man and meaner animals ?

In the world of waters a thousand unknown creatures swim and sport themselves, and leap with excess of life even in the freezing seas : millions of inhabitants range through that liquid wilderness,

with swiftest motion, and in the wonders of their frame and nature proclaim the skill of an almighty Maker. Others of the watery kind are but half alive, and are tossed from place to place by the heaving ocean. Think of the leviathan, the eel, and the oyster, and tell me if God has not shewn a rich variety of contrivance in them; and as various as their nature is, so various is the means of their life; proper beds of lodging are provided for them, and variety of food suited to uphold every nature.

Mankind is a world of itself, made up of the mingled or united natures of flesh and spirit. What an infinite difference of faces and features among the sons and daughters of men? And how much more various are the turns of their appetites, tempers and inclinations, their humours and passions? And what glorious employment hath divine wisdom ordained for itself, in framing these millions of creatures with understandings and wills of so inconceivable a variety, so vast a difference of genius and inclination, to be the subjects of its providential government? And what a surprising harmony is there in the immense and incomprehensible scheme of divine counsels, arising from the various stations and businesses of men so infinitely diversified and distinct from one another, and centering in one great end, the divine glory? An amazing contrivance, and a design worthy of God.

Nor is the pure intellectual world alone destitute of this delightful variety? Is the nature of spirits utterly incapable of this diversity and beauty, without the aids of flesh and blood? Hath the wisdom of God displayed no riches of contrivance there? And must there be such a dull uniformity no where

but in the country where spirits dwell, spirits, the noblest part of God's creation and dominion? Has he poured out all the various glories of divine art and workmanship in the inanimate and brutā or animal world, and left the higher sort of creatures all of one genius and one turn and mould, to replenish all the intellectual regions? Surely it is hard to believe it.

In the world of angels we find various kinds and orders, St. Paul tells us of *thrones, and dominions, and principalities*, Col. i. 16. and St. Peter speaks of *angels and authorities and powers*, 1 Pet. iii. 22. and in other parts of the word of God we read the names of an archangel, a seraph, and a cherub. And no doubt, as their degrees and stations in the heavenly world differ from each other, so their talents and geniuses to sustain those different stations are very various, and exactly suited to their charge and business. And it is no improbable thought, that the souls of men differ from each other as much as angels.

But if there were no difference at first betwixt the turn and genius of different spirits in their original formation, yet this we are sure of, that God designed their habitation in flesh and blood, and their passage through this world as the means to form and fit them for various stations in the unknown world of spirits. The souls of men having dwelt many years in particular bodies, have been influenced and habituated to particular turns of thought, both according to the various constitutions of those bodies, and the more various studies and businesses, and occurrences of life. Surely then we may with reason suppose the spirits departing from flesh to carry with them some

bent and inclination towards various pleasures and employments.

So we may reasonably imagine each sinful spirit that leaves the body, to be more abundantly inflamed with those particular vices which it indulged here, whether ambition, or pride, or covetousness, or malice, or envy, or aversion to God and to all goodness: and their various sorts of punishments may arise from their own variety of lusts, giving each of them a peculiar inward torment.

And why may not the spirits of the just made perfect have the same variety of taste and pleasure in that happy world above, according as they are fitted for various kinds of sacred entertainments in their state of preparation, and during their residence in flesh and blood? *He that has wrought us for the self-same thing is God, 2 Cor. v. 5.*

In the world of human spirits made perfect, David and Moses dwell: both of them were trained up in feeding the flocks of their fathers in the wilderness, to feed and to rule the nation<sup>s</sup> of Israel, the chosen flock of God. And may we not suppose them also trained up in the arts of holy government on earth, to be the chiefs of some blessed army, some sacred tribe in heaven? They were directors of the forms of worship in the church below under divine inspiration: and might not that fit them to become leaders of some celestial assembly, when a multitude of the sons of God above come at stated seasons to present themselves before the throne? Both of them knew how to celebrate the praise of their Creator in sacred melody; but David was the chief of mortals in this harmonious work: and may we not imagine that he is or shall be a master of heavenly music, before or

after the resurrection, and teach some of the choirs above to tune their harps to the Lamb that was slain ?

But to come down to more modern times, is there not a Boyle\* and a Ray† in heaven? Pious souls who were trained up in sanctified philosophy; and surely they are fitted beyond their fellow-saints, to contemplate the wisdom of God in the works of his hands. Is there not a More‡ and a Howe||, that have exercised their minds in an uncommon acquaintance with the world of spirits? And doubtless their thoughts are refined and improved in the upper world, and yet still engaged in the same pursuit. There is also a Goodwin§, and an Owen\*\*, who have laid out the vigour of their inquiries in the glories and wonders of the person of Christ, his bloody sacrifice, his dying love, and his exalted station at the right hand of God. The first of these, with a penetrating genius, traced out many a new

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\* The Honourable *Robert Boyle*, Esq. a most pious enquirer into nature, and an improver of the experimental philosophy.

† Mr. *John Ray*, one of the ministers ejected for nonconformity 1662; he employed most of his studies afterwards in the cultivation of natural philosophy, in collections and remarks on the variety of plants, birds, beasts, fishes, &c. and wrote several Treatises to improve natural philosophy in the service of religion.

‡ Dr. *Henry More*, a great searcher into the world of spirits, and a pious divine of the church of *England*.

|| Mr. *John Howe*, a name well known and highly honoured for his sagacity of thought, his exalted ideas, and converse with the spiritual world, as appears in his writings.

§ Dr. *Thomas Goodwin*: And,

\*\* Dr. *John Owen*, two famous divines of prime reputation among the churches in the last century.

and uncommon thought, and made rich discoveries by digging in the mines of scripture. The latter of them humbly pursued and confirmed divine truth; and both of them were eminent in promoting faith and piety, spiritual peace and joy, upon the principles of grace and the gospel. Their labours in some of these subjects, no doubt, have prepared them for some correspondent peculiarities in the state of glory. For though the doctrines of the person, the priesthood, and the grace of Christ, are themes which all the glorified souls converse with and rejoice in; yet spirits that have been trained up in them with peculiar delight for forty or fifty years, and devoted most of their time to these blessed contemplations, have surely gained some advantage by it, some peculiar fitness to receive the heavenly illuminations of these mysteries above their fellow-spirits.

There is also the soul of an antient Eusebius\*, and the later spirits of an Usher† and a Burnet‡, who have entertained themselves and the world with the sacred histories of the church, and the wonders of divine providence in its preservation and recovery. There is a Tillotson||, that has cultivated the subjects of holiness, peace and love, by his pen

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\* *Eusebius*, one of the fathers of the Christian church, who wrote the history of the primitive ages of Christianity.

† *Dr. John Usher*, in the last century Archbishop of *Ardmagh*, whose Chronological writings and his piety have rendered his name honourable in the world.

‡ *Dr. Gilbert Burnet*, late Bishop of *Salisbury*, whose serious religion and zeal to promote it among the clergy, made him almost as famous as his *history of the English Reformation*.

|| The name of *Dr. John Tillotson*, late Archbishop of *Canterbury*.

and his practice : there is a Baxter\*, that has wrought hard for an end of controversies, and laboured with much zeal for the conversion of souls, though with much more success in the last than in the first.

Now though all the spirits in heaven enjoy the general happiness of the love of God and Christ, and the pleasurable review of providence ; yet may we not suppose these spirits have some special circumstances of sacred pleasure, suited to their labours and studies in their state of trial on earth ? For the church on earth is but a training school for the church on high, and as it were a tiring room, in which we are drest in proper habits for our appearance and our places in that bright assembly.

But some will reprove me here, and say, what must none but ministers, and authors, and learned men have their distinguished rewards and glories in the world of spirits ? May not artificers, and traders, and pious women be fitted by their character and conduct on earth for peculiar stations and employments in heaven ?

Yes doubtless, their zeal for the honour of God, their fervent love to Christ, their patience under long trials, and the variety of their graces exercised according to their stations on earth, may render them peculiarly fitted for special rewards on high : the wisdom of God will not be at a loss to find out distinguishing pleasures to recompense them all ;

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\* Mr. *Richard Baxter*, a divine of great note among the Protestant Dissenters, need no farther Paraphrase to make them known.

though where the very station and business of this life is such as makes a nearer approach to the blessedness and business of heaven, it is much easier for us to guess at the nature of that future recompence.

Let me ask my own soul then, "soul, what art thou busy about? What is thy chief employment during thy present state of trial? I hope thou art not making provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof; for then thou art fit for no place in heaven, the doors will be for ever shut against thee. But what special works of the spirit art thou engaged in? Dost thou redeem what hours thou art able, from the necessary business of life, to do more immediate service for God, to converse with things heavenly? Art thou seeking to gain a proper meetness for the sublimer employments of that upper world, and a relish of the most refined pleasures?"

But I proceed to the second particular.

II. The perfection of the spirits above, not only admits of a rich variety of entertainments, according to the various relish and inclination of the blessed, but it is such a perfection as allows of different degrees even in the same blessedness, according to the different capacities of spirits, and their different degrees of preparation. The word perfection does not always require equality.

If all the souls in heaven were of one mould, and make, and inclination, yet there may be different sizes of capacity even in the same genius, and a different degree of preparation for the same delights and enjoyments: -therefore though all the spirits of the just were uniform in their natures and pleasures, and all perfect: yet one spirit may possess more

happiness and glory than another, because it is more capacious of intellectual blessings, and better prepared for them. So when vessels of various sizes are thrown into the same ocean, there will be a great difference in the quantity of the liquid which they receive, though all might be full to the brim, and all made of the richest metal.

Now there is much evidence of this truth in the holy Scripture. Our Saviour intimates such differences of rewards in several of his expressions, Matt. xix. 28. He promises the apostles that they *shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel*. And it is probable this may denote something of superior honour or dignity above the meanest of the saints. And even among the apostles themselves he seems to allow of a difference; for though he would not promise *James and John to sit next to him, on his right hand and his left in his kingdom*, Matt. xx. 20, &c. yet he does not deny that there are such distinct dignities, but says, *it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of his Father*, ver. 23.

Again, our Lord says, Matt. x. 41, 42. *He that receives a prophet*, and entertains him as a prophet, *shall have a prophet's reward*; and he that entertains a righteous man, agreeable to his character, and from a real esteem of his righteousness, shall have a righteous man's reward: and even the meanest sort of entertainment, a cup of cold water given to a disciple, for the sake of his character, shall not go without some reward. Here are three sorts or degrees of reward mentioned, extending to the life to come, as well as to this life: now though neither of them can be merited by works, but all are entirely

conferred by grace, yet as one observes here, “the Lord hath fixed a proportion between the work and the reward; so that as one has different degrees of goodness, the other shall have different degrees of excellency.”

Our Saviour assures us, that the torments of hell shall admit of various degrees and distinctions; some will be more exquisite and terrible than others; it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, who never sinned against half so much light, than it shall be for Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, where Christ himself had preached his gospel, and confirmed it with the most evident miracles, Matt. xi. 21—24. And the *servants who did not the will of their Lord, shall be beaten with more or fewer stripes*, according to their different degrees of knowledge and advantages of instruction, Luke xii. 47, 48. Now may we not by a parallel reasoning, suppose there will be various orders and degrees of reward in heaven, as well as punishment in hell; since there is scarce a greater variety among the degrees of wickedness among sinners on earth, than there is of holiness among the saints?

When the apostle is describing the glories of the body at the great resurrection, he seems to represent the differences of glory that shall be conferred on different saints, by the difference of the great luminaries of heaven, 1 Cor. xv. 41, 42. *There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another in glory; so also is the resurrection of the dead.*

The prophet Daniel led the way to this description, and the same spirit taught the apostle the same

language, Dan. xii. 2, 3. *And many of them, that sleep in the dust of the earth, shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt; and they that be wise shall shine, with common glory, as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, shall have a peculiar lustre as the stars, for ever and ever.* And if there be a difference in the visible glories of the saints at the resurrection, if those who turn many to righteousness shall sparkle, in that day, with brighter beams than those who are only wise for their own salvation; the same reason leads us to believe a difference of spiritual glory in the state of separate spirits, when the recompense of their labour is begun.

So, 1 Cor. iii. 8. *He that planteth, and he that watereth are one, and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.* If all be rewarded alike, the apostle would not have said, *each man shall receive according to his own labour.* Surely since there is a distinction of labours, there will be a distinction of rewards too.

And it is with this view that the same apostle exhorts the Corinthians, 1 Epistle. xv. ult. *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.* Now that great labour and diligence, that stedfastness in profession, and that zeal in practice, to which the apostle exhorts them, might seem to be in vain, if those who were far less laborious, less zealous, and less stedfast, should obtain an equal recompense.

It is upon the same principle that he encourages them to holy patience under afflictive trials, 2 Cor.

iv. 17. when he says, *our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not to the things that are seen, and temporal, but to the things invisible and eternal.* Now if the saint, who was called to heaven almost as soon as he was made a Christian, and went through no sufferings, should possess the same weight of glory with the martyrs and confessors, under the long and tedious train of cruelties which they sustained from men, or painful trials from the hand of God: I cannot see how their afflictions could be said to work for them a far more exceeding weight of glory.

He urges them also to great degrees of liberality from the same motive, 2 Cor. ix. 6. *This I say, he that soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully, shall also reap bountifully.* Which words may reasonably be construed to signify the blessings of the life to come, as well as the blessings of the present life; for this apostle, speaking of the same duty of liberality, expresses the same encouragement under the same metaphors, Gal. vi. 6, 7, 8, 9. *Let him that is taught in the word, communicate to him that teacheth in all good things. Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap: for he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.* When God distributes the riches of his glory amongst the saints in heaven, he pours them out in a large and bountiful manner upon those who have distributed the good things of this

life bountifully to the poor; but he rewards the narrow-souled Christian with a more sparing hand.

With the same design does the apostle encourage Christians to great watchfulness against sin and heresy, as well as ministers to a solicitous care of their doctrine and preaching; 1 Cor. iii. 12, 13, 14, 15. *If any man build gold, silver, or precious stones upon the true foundation Jesus Christ, and raise a glorious superstructure of truth and holiness, he shall receive a reward answerable to his skill and care in building; for his work shall stand, when it is tried by the fire of the judgment day: but if he build wood, hay, and stubble upon it, evil inferences, and corrupt practices, or trifles, fruitless controversies, idle speculations, and vain ceremonies, his works shall be burnt, and he shall suffer loss, shall obtain a far less recompense of his labour: yet, since he has laid Christ for the foundation, and has taught and practised the fundamental doctrines and duties of Christianity, though mingled with much folly and weakness, he himself shall be saved; yet in so hazardous a manner as a man that is saved by fire, who loses all his goods, and just escapes with his life.*

When you hear St. Paul, or St. John, speaking of the last judgment, they give hints of the same distinction of rewards, 2 Cor. v. 10. *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.* Eph. vi. 8. *Whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.* Rev. xxii. 12. *And behold. I come quickly, and my reward is with me,*

*to give every man according as his work shall be.* Though the highest and holiest saint in heaven can claim nothing there by the way of merit, (for it is our Lord Jesus Christ alone, who has purchased all those unknown blessings) yet he will distribute them according to the different characters and degrees of holiness which his saints possessed on earth; and those larger degrees of holiness were also the free gift of God our Saviour.

I have often represented it to my own thoughts under this comparison. Here is a race appointed; here are a thousand different prizes, purchased by some prince to be bestowed on the racers: and the prince himself gives them food and wine, according to what proportion he pleases, to strengthen and animate them for the race. Each has a particular stage appointed for him; some of shorter, and some of longer distance. When every racer comes to his own goal, he receives a prize in most exact proportion to his speed, diligence, and length of race; and the grace and the justice of the prince shine gloriously in such a distribution. Not the foremost of the racers can pretend to have merited the prize; for the prizes were all paid for by the prince himself; and it was he that appointed the race, and gave them spirit and strength to run; and yet there is a most equitable proportion observed in the reward, according to the labours of the race. Now this similitude represents the matter so agreeable to the apostle's way of speaking, when he compares the Christian life to a *race*, 1 Cor. xi. 24, &c. Gal. v. 7. Philip. iii. 14. 2 Tim. iv. 7. Heb. xii. 17. that I think it may be called almost a Scriptural description of the present subject.

The reason of man, and the light of nature, entirely concur with Scripture in this point. The glory of heaven is prepared for those who are prepared for it in a state of grace. Rom. ix. 23. It is God who *makes each of us meet for our own inheritance among the saints in light*, Col. i. 12. and then he bestows on us that inheritance. As grace fits the soul for glory, so a larger degree of grace advances and widens the capacity of the soul, and prepares it to receive a large degree of sorrow. The work of grace is but the means, the reward of glory is the end : now the wisdom of God always fits and adjusts the means in a due proportion to answer the end he designs ; and the same wisdom ever makes the end answerable to the means he useth ; and therefore he infuses more and higher glories into vessels more enlarged and better prepared.

Some of the spirits in heaven may be trained up by their stations and sacred services on earth for more elevated employments and joys on high. Can we imagine that the soul of David, the sweet Psalmist, the prophet, and the king of Israel, is not fitted by all his labours and trials, all his raptures of faith, and love, and zeal, for some sublimer devotion and nobler business than his own infant child, the fruit of his adultery? And yet our divines have generally placed this child in heaven, because David ceased to mourn for him at his death, and said, that he himself should go to him, 2 Sam. xii. 20, 23. *Deborah*, the prophetess, judged Israel, she animated their armies, and sung their victories : is not Deborah engaged in some more illustrious employment among the heavenly tribes, than good Dorcas may seem to be capable of, whose highest character upon record

is, that she *was full of alms-deeds, and made coats and garments for the poor?* Acts ix. 36, 39. And yet perhaps Dorcas is prepared too for some greater enjoyments, some sweeter relish or mercy, or some special taste of the divine goodness above Rahab the harlot; Rahab, whose younger character was lewd and infamous, and the best thing that we read of her is, that her faith under the present terror of the armies of Israel taught her once to cover and conceal their spies; and unless she made great advances afterward in grace, surely her place is not very high in glory.

The worship of heaven, and the joy that attends it, may be exceedingly different in degrees according to the different capacity of spirits; and yet all may be perfect and free from sinful defects. Does not the sparrow praise the Lord its maker upon the ridge of a cottage, chirping in its native perfection? And yet the lark advances in her flight and her song as far above the sparrow, as the clouds are above the house-top.

Surely superior joys and glories must belong to superior powers and services.

Can we think that Abraham and Moses, who were trained up in converse with God face to face, as a man converses with his friend, and who followed him through the wilderness and unknown countries in a glorious exercise of faith, were not prepared for a greater intimacy with God, and nearer views of his glory in heaven, than Sampson and Jephthah those rude heroes, who being appointed of God for that service, spent their days in bloody work, in hewing down the Philistines and the Ammonites? For we read little of their acquaintance with God

or converse with him, beside a petition now and then, or a vow for victory and for slaughter; and we should hardly have charity enough to believe they were saved, if St. Paul had not placed them among the examples of faith in his eleventh chapter to the Hebrews. Can we ever believe that the thief upon the cross, who spent his life in plundering and mischief, and made a single though sincere profession of the name of Jesus just in his dying hour, was prepared for the same high station and enjoyment in paradise, so near the right hand of Christ, as the great apostle Paul, whose prayers and sermons, whose miracles of labour and suffering filled up and finished a long life, and honoured his Lord and Saviour more than all the twelve apostles besides? Can we imagine that the child that is just born into this world under the friendly shadow of the covenant of grace, and weeps and dies, and is taken to heaven, is fit to be possessor of the same glories, or raised to the same degree there, as the studious, the laborious, and the zealous Christian, that has lived above fourscore years on earth, and spent the greatest part of his life in the studies of religion, the exercises of piety, and the zealous and painful services of God and his country? Surely if all these which I have named must have equal knowledge and joy in the future world, it is hard to find how such an exact equity shall be displayed in distribution of final rewards, as the word of God so frequently describes.

*Objection:* But in the parable of the *labourers hired to work in the vineyard*, Matt. xx. 9—12. does not every man receive his penny, they who were called at the first and third hour, and they who

were called at the last? Were not their rewards all equal, those who had wrought but one hour, and those who had borne the burden and heat of the day?

*Answer.* It is not the design of this parable to represent the final reward of the saints at the day of judgment, but to shew that the nation of the Jews, who had been called to be the people of God above a thousand years before, and had borne the burden and heat of the day, i. e. the toil and bondage of many ceremonies, should have no preference in the esteem of God above the Gentiles who were called at the last hour, or at the end of the Jewish dispensation; for it is said, v. 16. *the last shall be first, and the first last, i. e.* The Gentiles, who waited long ere the gospel was preached to them, shall be the first in receiving it; and the Jews, to whom it was first offered, from an inward scorn and pride shall reject it, or receive it but slowly: and Christ adds this confirmation of it, for many be called but few chosen, i. e. though multitudes of Jews were called to believe in Christ, that few accepted the call.

There is another reason why this parable cannot refer to the *final rewards of heaven*; because v. 11. it is said, *some of them murmured against the good man of the house.* Now there shall be no envy against their fellow-saints, nor murmuring against God in the heavenly state. But the Jews, and even the Jewish converts to Christianity, were ready often to murmur that the gospel should be preached to the Gentile world, and that the heathens should be brought into privileges equal with themselves.

Thus it sufficiently appears from the frequent declarations of Scripture, as well as from the reason

and equity of things, that the rewards of the future world shall be greatly distinguished according to the different degrees of holiness and service for God, even though every spirit there shall be perfect ; nor is there any just and reasonable objection against it.

It is certain then, that heaven has various degrees of happiness in it, and shall my spirit rest contented with the meanest place there, and the least and lowest measure ? Hast thou no sacred ambition in thee, O my soul, to sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob ? Or dost thou not aspire at least to the middle ranks of glorified saints, though perhaps thou mayest despair of those most exalted stations which are prepared for the spirits of chief renown, for Abraham, and Moses of antient time, and for the martyrs and the apostles of the Lamb ? Wilt thou not stir up all the vigour of nature and grace within thee, to do great service for thy God and thy Saviour on earth, that thy reward in heaven may not be small ? Wilt thou not run with zeal and patience the race that is set before thee, looking to the brightest cloud of witnesses, and reaching at some of the richer prizes ? Remember that Jesus thy judge is coming apace : he has rewards with him of every size, and the lustre and weight of thy crown shall most exactly correspond to thy sweat and labour.

But I must not dwell always on this head : I proceed therefore to the next.

III. The spirits of the just in heaven enjoy such a perfection as is consistent with perpetual changes of business and delights even in the same person or

spirit. They may be always perfect, but in a rich and endless variety.

It is only God who possesses all possible excellencies and powers, and happinesses at once, and therefore he alone is incapable of change: but creatures must possess and enjoy their delights in a succession, because they cannot possess and enjoy all that they are capable of at once. And according to this consideration the heavenly state is represented in Scripture in various forms both of business and blessedness.

Sometimes it is described by seeing God, Matt. v. 8. by *beholding him face to face*, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. by *being present with the Lord*, 2 Cor. v. 8. by *being where Christ is, to behold his glory*, John xvii. 24. Sometimes the saints above are said *to serve him as his servants*, Rev. xxii. 3. Sometimes they are represented as *worshipping before the throne*, as being fed with the *fruits of the tree of life*, and drinking the *living fountains of water*, Rev. vii. 15, 17. and xxii. 1, 2. and let it be noted, that *twelve manner of fruits* grew on this tree, and they were *new every month* also. Sometimes they are held forth to us as *singing a new song to God, and to the Lamb*, Rev. xiv. 3. And at another time they are described as *wearing a crown of righteousness and glory*, of *sitting on the throne of Christ*, of *reigning for ever and ever*, and *ruling the nations with a rod of iron*, 2 Tim. iv. 8. 1 Pet. v. 4. Rev. xxii. 5. Rev. ii. 26, 27. And in another place our happiness is represented as *sitting down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven*, Matt. viii. 11. Now surely this rich variety of language, whereby

the heavenly state is proposed to us in Scripture, must intend a variety of entertainments and employments, that may in some measure answer the glory of such expressions.

It is not only the powers of our understanding that shall be regaled and feasted in those happy regions with the blissful vision of God and Christ, but our active powers shall doubtless have their proper entertainments too. When angels are so variously and delightfully employed in service for God, in his several known and unknown worlds, we cannot suppose the spirits of just men shall be eternally confined to a sedentary state of unactive contemplation.

Contemplation indeed is a noble pleasure, and the joy of it rises high when it is fixed on the sublimest objects, and when the faculties are all exalted and refined. But surely such a sight of God and our dear Redeemer as we shall enjoy above, will awaken and animate all the active and sprightly powers of the soul, and set all the springs of love and zeal at work in the most illustrious instances of unknown and glorious duty.

I confess heaven is described as a place of rest, i. e. rest from sin and sorrow, rest from pain and weariness, rest from all the toilsome labours and conflicts that we endure in a state of trial; but it can never be such a rest as lays all our active powers asleep, or renders them useless in such a vital and active world. It would diminish the happiness of the saints in glory to be unemployed there. Those spirits who have tasted unknown delight and satisfaction in many long seasons of devotion, and in a thousand painful services for their blessed Lord

on earth, can hardly bear the thoughts of paying no active duties, doing no work at all for him in heaven, where business is all over delight, and labour is all enjoyment. Surely his servants shall serve him there, as well as worship him. They shall serve him perhaps as priests in his temple, and as kings, or viceroys, in his wide dominions; for they are made *kings and priests unto God* for ever, Rev. v. 10.

But let us dwell a little upon their active employments, and perhaps a close and attentive meditation may lead us into an unexpected view and notice of their sacred commissions and embassies, their governments, and their holy conferences, as well as their acts of worship and adoration.

That heaven is a place or state of worship, is certain, and beyond all controversy; for this is a very frequent description of it in the word of God. And as the great God has been pleased to appoint different forms of worship to be practised by his saints and his churches under the different economies of his grace; so it is possible he may appoint peculiar forms of sacred magnificence to attend his own worship in the state of glory. Bowing the knee, and prostration of the body, are forms and postures of humility practised by earthly worshippers. Angels cover their faces and their feet with their wings, and cry, *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts!* Isa. vi. 2, 3. But what unknown and illustrious forms shall be consecrated by the appointment and authority of Christ, for the unbodied or the bodied saints in heaven to adorn their sacred offices, is above our reach to describe or to imagine.

Let us consider now what parts of worship the blessed are employed in

The various parts of divine worship that are practised on earth, at least such as are included in natural religion, shall doubtless be performed in heaven too; and what other unknown worship of positive and celestial appointment shall belong to the heavenly state, is as much above our present conjecture, as the forms of it are.

Heaven is represented as full of praises. There is the most glorious and perfect celebration of God the Father and the Saviour in the upper world: and the highest praise is offered to them with the deepest humility.

The crowns of glory are cast down at their feet, and all the powers and perfections of God, with all his labours of creation, his cares of providence, and the sweeter mysteries of his grace, shall furnish noble matter for divine praise.

This work of praise is also exhibited in Scripture, as attended with a song and heavenly melody. What there is in the world of separate spirits to answer the representations of harps and voices, we know not. It is possible that spirits may be capable of some sort of harmony in their language, without a tongue, and without an ear, and there may be some inimitable and transporting modulations of divine praise without the material instruments of string or wind. The soul itself by some philosophers is said to be mere harmony; and surely then it will not wait for it till the body be raised from the dust, nor live so long destitute of all melodious joys, or of that spiritual pleasure which shall supply the place of melody, till our organs of sense shall be restored to us again.

But is all heaven made up of praises? Is there

no prayer there? Let us consider a little : what is prayer, but the desire of a created spirit in an humble manner made known to its Creator? Does not every saint above desire to know God, to love and serve him, to be employed for his honour, and to enjoy the eternal continuance of his love and its own felicity? May not each happy spirit in heaven exert these desires in a way of solemn address to the divine Majesty? May not the happy soul acknowledge its dependence in this manner upon its Father and its God? Is there no place in the heart of a glorified saint for such humble addresses as these? Does not every separate spirit there look and long for the resurrection, when it is certain that embodied spirits on earth *who have received the first fruits of grace and glory groan within themselves, waiting for the redemption of the body?* Rom. viii. 23. And may we not suppose each holy soul sending a sacred and fervent wish after this glorious day, and lifting up a desire to its God about it, though without the uneasiness of a sigh or a groan? May it not under the influence of divine love breathe out the requests of its heart, and the expressions of its zeal for the glory and kingdom of Christ? May not the church above join with the churches below in this language, *Father, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven?* Are not the souls of the martyrs that were slain, represented to us as *under the altar, crying with a loud voice, How long, O Lord, holy and true?* Rev. vi. 9, 10. This looks like the voice of prayer in heaven.

Perhaps you will suppose there is no such service as hearing sermons, that there is no attendance upon the word of God there. But are we sure there are

no such entertainments? Are there no lectures of divine wisdom and grace given to the younger spirits there, by spirits of a more exalted station? Or may not our Lord Jesus Christ himself be the everlasting teacher of his church? May he not at solemn seasons summon all heaven to hear him publish some new and surprising discoveries, which have never yet been made known to the ages of nature, or of grace, and are reserved to entertain the attention, and exalt the pleasure of spirits advanced to glory? Must we learn all by the mere contemplation of Christ's person? Does he never make use of speech to the instruction and joy of saints above?

Moses and Elijah came down once from heaven to make a visit to Christ on mount Tabor, and the subject of their converse with him was his *death and departure from this world*, Luke ix. 31. Now since our Lord is ascended to heaven, are these holy souls cut off from this divine pleasure? Is Jesus for ever silent? Does he converse with his glorified saints no more? And surely if he speak, the saints will hear and attend.

Or it may be that our blessed Lord (even as he is man) has some noble and unknown way of communicating a long discourse, or a long train of ideas and discoveries to millions of blessed spirits at once, without the formalities of voice and language; and at some peculiar seasons he may thus instruct and delight his saints in heaven.

Thus it appears there may be something among the spirits of the just above that is analagous to prayer and preaching as well as praise.

O how gustful are the pleasures of celestial worship! what unknown varieties of performance, what

sublime ministrations there are, and glorious services, none can tell. And in all this variety, which may be performed in sweet succession, there is no wandering thought, no cold affection, no divided heart, no listless or indifferent worshipper. What we call rapture and extacy here on earth, is perhaps the constant and uninterrupted pleasure of the church on high in all their adorations.

But let the worship of the glorified spirits be never so various, yet I cannot persuade myself that mere direct acts or exercises of what we properly call worship, are their only and everlasting work.

The Scripture tells us, there are certain seasons when the angels, those *sons of God come to present themselves before the Lord*, Job i. 6. and ii. 1. It is evident then, that the intervals of these seasons are spent in other employments: and when they present themselves before God, it does not sufficiently appear that mere adoration and praise is their only business at the throne. In the very place which I have cited, it seems more natural to suppose that these angelic spirits came thither rather to render an account of their several employments, and the success of their messages to other worlds. And why may we not suppose such a blessed variety of employment among the spirits of men too?

This supposition has some countenance in the holy Scripture. The angel or messenger who appeared to St. John, and shewed him various visions, by the order of Christ, forbids the apostle to worship him: for *I am thy fellow servant*, said he, *and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book*, Rev. xxii. 8, 9. These words naturally lead one to think, that though he appeared

as a messenger from Christ, and in the form of an angel, yet he was really a departed saint, a brother, a fellow-prophet, perhaps the soul of David, or Isaiah, or Moses, who would count it an honour even in their state of glory to be thus employed by their exalted Lord; and they also keep or observe and wait for the accomplishment of the sayings of that book of the revelation, as well as the churches of their brethren, the saints on earth.

I freely allow immediate divine worship to take up a good part of their everlasting day, their sabbath; and therefore I suppose them to be often engaged, millions at once, in social worship: and sometimes acting apart, and raised in sublime meditation of God, or in a fixed vision of his blissful face, with an act of secret adoration, while their intellectual powers are almost lost in sweet amazement: sometimes they are entertaining themselves and their fellow-spirits with the graces and glories of the man Christ Jesus, the *Lamb that was slain in the midst of the throne*: but at other times they may be making a report to him of their faithful execution of some divine commission they received from him, to be fulfilled either in heaven or in earth, or in unknown and distant worlds.

There may be other seasons also when they are not immediately addressing the throne, but are most delightfully engaged in recounting to each other the wondrous steps of providence, wisdom and mercy, that seized them from the very borders of hell and despair, and brought them through a thousand dangers and difficulties to the possession of that fair inheritance. When the great God shall unravel the scheme of his own counsels, shall unfold every

part of his mysterious conduct, and set before them the reason of every temptation they grappled with, and of every sorrow they felt here on earth, and with what divine and successful influence they all wrought together to train them up for heaven, what matter of surprising delight and charming conversation shall this furnish the saints with in that blessed world? And now and then in the midst of their sacred dialogues, by a sympathy of soul, they shall shout together in sweet harmony, and join their exalted songs to him that sits upon the throne and to the Lamb. "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy power, to thy wisdom, and to thine abounding mercy, be renown and honour to everlasting ages."

Nor is it improper or unpleasant to suppose that among the rest of their celestial conferences, they shall shew each other the fair and easy solution of those difficulties and deep problems in divinity, which had exercised and perplexed them here on earth, and divided them into little angry parties. They shall look back with holy shame on some of their learned and senseless distinctions, and be ready to wonder sometimes what trifles and imperinencies had engaged them in dark and furious disputes. Darkness and entanglement shall vanish at once from many of those knotty points of controversy, when they behold them in the light of heaven: and the rest of them shall be matter of delightful instruction for superior spirits to bestow upon those of lower rank, or on the souls lately arrived at the regions of light.

In short, there is nothing written in the books of nature, the records of providence, or the sacred

volumes of grace, but may minister materials at special seasons for the holy conference of the saints on high. No history nor prophesy, no doctrine nor duty, no command nor promise, nor threatening in the Bible, but may recal the thoughts of the heavenly inhabitants, and engage them in sweet conversation. All things that relate to the affairs of past ages and past worlds, as well as the present regions of light and happiness where they dwell, may give them new themes of dialogue and mutual intercourse.

And though we are very little acquainted, while we are on earth, with any of the planetary worlds besides that which we inhabit, yet who knows how our acquaintance may be extended hereafter amongst the inhabitants of the various and distant globes? And what frequent and swift journeys we may take thither, when we are disencumbered of this load of flesh and blood, or when our bodies are raised again active and swift as sun-beams? Sometimes we may entertain our holy curiosity there, and find millions of new discoveries of divine power and divine contrivance in those unknown regions; and bring back from thence new lectures of divine wisdom, or tidings of the affairs of those provinces to entertain our fellow-spirits, and to give new honours to God the creator and the sovereign. So a pious traveller in our lower world visits Africa or both the Indies: at his return he sits in a circle of attentive admirers, and recounts to them the wondrous products of those climates, and the customs and manners of those distant countries; he gratifies their curiosity with some foreign varieties, and feasts their eyes and their ears at once: then at the end of every

story he breaks out into holy language and adores the various riches and wisdom of God the Creator.

To proceed yet one step farther. Since there are different degrees of glory, we may infer a variety of honours as well as delights prepared for the spirits of the just made perfect.

Some part of the happiness of heaven is described in Scriptures by crowns and thrones, by royalty and kingly honours : why may we not then suppose that such souls, whose sublimer graces have prepared them for such dignity and office may rule the nations, even in a literal sense ? Why may not those spirits that have past their trials in flesh and blood, and come off conquerors, why may they not sometimes be appointed visitors and superintendants over whole provinces of intelligent beings in lower regions, who are yet labouring in their state of probation ? or perhaps they may be exalted to a presidency over inferior ranks of happy spirits, may shine bright amongst them as the morning star, and lead on their holy armies to celestial work or worship. The Scripture itself gives us a hint of such employments in the angelic world, and such presidences over some parts of our world, or of their own. Do we not read of Gabriel and Michael, and their management of the affairs of Persia, and Greece and Judea, in the book of Daniel ? and it is an intimation of the same hierarchy, when some superior angel led on a multitude of the heavenly host to sing an hymn of praise at Bethlehem, when the Son of God was born there, Luke ii. 9, 13. Now if angels are thus dignified, may not human spirits unbodied have the same office ? Our Saviour when he rewards the

faithful servant that had gained *ten pounds*, bids him *take authority over ten cities*; and he that had gained *five*, had *five cities* under his government, Luke xix. 17, &c. So that this is not a mere random thought, or a wild invention of fancy, but patronised by the word of God.

Among the pleasures and engagements of the upper world, there shall be always something new and entertaining; for the works and the dominions of God are vastly beyond all our comprehensions. And what a perpetual change, what a glorious but improving rotation of businesses and joys shall succeed one another through the ages of eternity, we shall never know till we come amongst them. This thought leads me to the last particular, namely,

IV. The perfection which the blessed spirits enjoy, gives room for large additions and continual improvement.

Their knowledge and their joy may be called perfect, because there is no mixture of error or sorrow with it; and because it is sufficient every moment for the satisfaction of present desires, without any uneasiness of mind. But it may be doubted whether any creature ever was, or ever will be so perfect, that is, not capable of addition or growth in any excellency or enjoyment.

The man Christ Jesus, in his present glorified state, has not such a perfection as this. He waits daily to see his Father's promises fulfilled to him; he waits till *all things are put under him*, and *his enemies shall be made his actual footstool*: but we know that *all things are not yet put under him*, Heb. ii. 8. that is, all the nations are not yet subject to his spiritual kingdom, nor become obedient to his

gospel. As fast as his kingdom grows on earth, so fast his honours and his joys arise ; and he waits still for the complete union of all his members to himself the sacred head : he waits for the morning of the resurrection, when he shall be glorified in the bright and general assembly of his saints, and *admired in all them that believe*, 2 Thess. i. 10.

O that illustrious and magnificent appearance ! That shining hour of jubilee, when the bodies of millions of saints shall awake out of the dust and be released from their long dark prison ! When they shall encompass and adore Jesus their Saviour and their God, and acknowledge their new life and immortal state to be owing to his painful and shameful death : when Noah, Abraham, and David, and all his pious progenitors, shall bow and worship Jesus their son and their Lord : when the holy army of martyrs, springing from the dust with palms of victory in their hands, shall ascribe their conquest and their triumph to the Lamb that was slain : when he shall present his whole church before the presence of his own and his Father's glory, without spot, and faultless, with exceeding joy ! Can we imagine that Christ himself, even the man Jesus, in the midst of all this magnificence and these honours, shall feel no new satisfaction, and have no relish of all this joy, above what he possessed while his church lay bleeding on earth, and this illustrious company were buried under ground in the chains of death ? And yet you will say Christ in heaven is made perfect in knowledge and in joy, but his perfection admits of improvement.

Now if the head be not above the capacity of all growth and addition, surely the members cannot

pretend to it. But I shall propose several more arguments for this truth in the following section.

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#### SECT. IV.

*Of the Increase of the Saints above in Knowledge, Holiness, and Joy.*

THAT there is and hath been, and will be continual progress and improvement in the knowledge and joy of separate souls, may be easily proved many ways; namely, from the very nature of human reason itself: from the narrowness, the weakness and limitation even of our intellectual faculties in their best estate: from the immense variety of objects that we shall converse about: from our peculiar concern in some future providences, which it is not likely we should know before they occur: and from the glorious new scenes of the resurrection.

1. We may prove the increase of knowledge amongst the blessed above, from the very nature of human reason itself, which is a faculty of drawing inferences, or some new propositions and conclusions, from propositions or principles which we knew before. Now surely we shall not be dispossessed of this power when we come to heaven. What we learn of God there, and the glories of his nature, or his works, will assist and incline us to draw inferences for his honour, and for our worship of him. And if we could be supposed to have never so many propositions or new principles of knowledge crowded into our minds at the first

entrance into heaven, yet surely our reasoning faculty would still be capable of making some advance by way of inference, or building some superstructure upon so noble a foundation. And who knows the intense pleasure that will arise perpetually to a contemplative mind, by a progressive and infinite pursuit of truth in this manner; where we are secure against the danger of all error and mistake, and every step we take is all light and demonstration.

Shall it be objected here, that our reason shall be as it were lost and dissolved in intuition and immediate sight, and therefore it shall have no room or place in that happy world?

To this I would reply, That we shall have indeed much more acquaintance with spiritual objects by immediate intuition, than we ever had here on earth; but it does not follow thence, that we shall lose our reason. Angels have immediate vision of God and divine things; but can we suppose they are utterly incapable of drawing an inference, either for the improvement of their knowledge, or the direction of their practice? When they behold any special and more curious piece of divine workmanship, can they not further infer the exquisite skill or wisdom of the Creator? And are they not capable of concluding, that this peculiar instance of divine wisdom demands an adoring thought? Thus intuition or immediate sight in a creature, does not utterly exclude and forbid the use of reason.

I reply again; can it ever be imagined, that being released from the body, we shall possess in one moment, and retain through every moment of eternity, all the innumerable ranks, and orders, and

numbers of propositions, truths, and duties, that may be derived in a long succession of ages by the use of our reasoning powers? But this leads me to the second argument, namely,

2. The weakness and narrowness of human understandings in their best estate, seems to make it necessary that knowledge should be progressive.

Continual improvement in knowledge and delight among the spirits of the just made perfect, is necessary for the same reason that proved their variety of entertainments and pleasures, namely, because creatures cannot take in all the vast and infinite variety of conceptions in the full brightness and perfection of them at once, of which they are capable in a sweet succession. Can we ever persuade ourselves, that all the endless train of thoughts, and ideas, and scenes of joy, that shall ever pass through the mind of a saint through the long ages of eternity, should be crowded into every single mind the first moment of its entrance into those happy regions? And is a human mind capacious enough to receive and strong enough to retain such an infinite multitude of ideas for ever? Or is this the manner of God's working among his intellectual creatures? Surely God knows our frame and pours in light and glory as we are able to bear it. Such a bright confusion of notions, images, and transports, would probably overwhelm the most exalted spirit, and drown all the noble faculties of the mind at once. As if a man who was born blind, should be healed in an instant, and should open his eyes first against the full blaze of the noon-day sun; this would so tumultuate the spirits, and confound the organs of sight, as to reduce the man back again to his first

blindness, and perhaps might render him incurable for ever.

3. This argument will be much strengthened, if we do but take a short view of the vast and incomprehensible variety of objects that may be proposed to our minds in the future state, and may feast our contemplation, and improve our joy.

The blessed God himself is an infinite being: his perfections and glories are unbounded: his wisdom, his holiness, his goodness, his faithfulness, his power and justice, his all-sufficiency, his self-origination, and his unfathomable eternity, have such a number of rich ideas belonging to each of them, that no creature shall ever fully understand. Yet it is but reasonable to believe that he will communicate so much of himself to us by degrees, as he sees necessary for our business and blessedness in that upper world. Can it be supposed that we should know every thing that belongs to God all at once, which he may discover to us gradually as our capacities improve? Can we think that an infant-soul that had no time for improvement here, when it enters into heaven shall know every thing concerning God, that it can ever attain to through all the ages of its immortality? When a blessed spirit has dwelt in heaven a thousand years, and conversed with God and Christ, angels and fellow-spirits during all that season, shall it know nothing more of the nature and wondrous properties of God than it knew the first moment of its arrival there\*?

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\* God himself hath infinite goodness in him, which the creature cannot take in at once; they are taking of it in eternally. The

But I add further, the works of God shall doubtless be the matter of our search and delightful survey, as well as the nature and properties of God himself. His works are *honourable and glorious, and sought out of all that have pleasure in them*, Psal. cxi. 2, 3. In his works we shall read his name, his properties, and his glories, whether we fix our thoughts on creation or providence.

The works of God and his wonders of creation in the known and unknown worlds, both as to the number, the variety and vastness of them, are almost infinite; that is, they transcend all the limits of our ideas, and all our present capacities to conceive. Now there is none of these works of wonder, but may administer some entertainment to the mind of man, and may richly furnish him with new matter for the praise of God in the long successions of eternity.

There is scarce an animal of the more complete kind, but would entertain an angel with rich curiosities, and feed his contemplation for an age. What a rich and artful structure of flesh upon the solid and well-compacted foundation of bones! What curious joints and hinges, on which the limbs are moved to and fro! What an inconceivable variety of nerves, veins, arteries, fibres, and little invisible parts, are found in every member! What various fluids, blood and juices, run through and agitate the innumerable slender tubes, the hollow strings and strainers of the body! What millions of fold-

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saints see in God still things fresh, which they saw not in the beginning of their blessedness. Dr. T. Goodwin.

ing-doors are fixed within, to stop those red or transparent rivulets in their courses, either to prevent their return backwards, or else as a means to swell the muscles and move the limbs! What endless contrivances to secure life, to nourish nature, and to propagate the same to future animals! What amazing lengths of holy meditation would an angel run upon these subjects! And what sublime strains of praise would a heavenly philosopher raise hourly to the almighty and all-wise Creator! And all this from the mere brutal world!

But if we survey the nature of man, he is a creature made up of mind and animal united, and would furnish still more numerous and exalted materials for contemplation and praise; for he has all the richest wonders of animal nature in him, besides the unknown mysteries of mind or spirit. Surely it will create a sacred pleasure in happy souls above, to learn the wonders of divine skill exerted and shining in their own formation, and in the curious workmanship of those bodily engines in which they once dwelt and acted.

Then let them descend to herbs and plants. How numerous are all the products of earth upon her green surface! And all within her dark bowels! All the vegetable and the mineral kingdoms! How many centuries would all these entertain a heavenly enquirer!

The worlds of air, and the worlds of water, the planetary and the starry worlds, are still new objects rich with curiosities; these are all monuments of divine wisdom, and fit subjects for the contemplation of the blessed. Nor can we be supposed to have for ever done with them all when we leave this

body ; and that for two reasons ; one is, because God has never yet received the honour due to his wisdom and power, displayed in the material creation, from the hands or tongues of men. And the other is, because the spirits of the just shall be joined to bodies again, and then they shall certainly have necessary converse with God's material works and worlds ; though perhaps they have more acquaintance with them now in their separate state, than we are apprized of.

And besides all these material works of God, what an unknown variety of other wonders belong to the world of pure spirits, which lie hid from us, and are utterly concealed behind the veil of flesh and blood ! What are their natures, and the reach of their powers ! What ranks and orders they are distributed into ! What are their governments, their several employments, the different customs and manners of life in the various and most extensive regions of that intellectual world ! What are their messages to our earth ! or the other habitable globes, and what capacities they are endowed with to move or influence animate or inanimate bodies ! All these, and a thousand more of the like nature, are made known doubtless to the inhabitants of heaven. These are things that belong to the provinces of light and immortality, but many of them are mysteries to us who dwell in these tabernacles : they lie far beyond our ken, and are wrapt up in sacred darkness, that we can hardly do so much as shoot a guess at them.

Now can we suppose that the meanest spirit in heaven has a full and entire survey of all these innumerable works of God, from the first moment of

its entrance thither, throughout all the ages of immortality, without the change of one idea, or the possibility of any improvement? This would be to give a sort of omniscience to every happy spirit, which is more than is generally allowed to the man Christ Jesus. And, if there be such a thing as degrees of glory among the saints above, we may be well assured that the lowest rank of blessed spirits is not advanced to this amazing degree.

Is there no new thing neither under nor above the sun, that God can entertain any of his children with in the upper world, throughout the infinite extent of all future ages? Are they all made at once so much like God, as to know all things? Or if each of them have their stinted size of knowledge, and their limited number of ideas at their first release from the body, then they are everlastingly cut off from all the surprises of pleasure that arise from new thoughts, and new scenes, and new discoveries. Does every saint in heaven read God's great volume of nature through and through the first hour he arrives there? Or is each spirit confined to a certain number of leaves, and bound eternally to learn nothing new, but to review perpetually his own limited lesson? Dares he not, or can he not turn over another leaf, and read his Creator's name in it, and adore his wisdom in new wonders of contrivance? These things are improbable to such a high degree; that I dare almost pronounce them untrue.

The book of providence is another volume wherein God writes his name too. Has every single saint such a vast and infinite length of foreknowledge given him at his first admission into glory, that he knows beforehand all the future scenes of providence, and

the wonders which God shall work in the upper and lower worlds? I thought the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root and the offspring of David, had been the only person in heaven or earth that was *worthy to take the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof*. Rev. v. 5. Surely the meanest of the saints does not foreknow all those great and important counsels of God, which our Lord Jesus Christ is intrusted with. And yet we may venture to say, that the spirits of the just in heaven shall know those great and important events that relate to the church on earth, as they arise in successive seasons, that they may give to God and to his Son Jesus Christ revenues of due honour upon this account, as I shall prove immediately.

And indeed if the limits of their knowledge in heaven were so fixed at their first entrance there, that they could never be acquainted with any of these successive providences of God afterwards, we here on earth have a great advantage above them, who see daily the accomplishment of his divine councils, and adore the wonders of his wisdom and his love; and from this daily increase of knowledge, we take our share in the growing joys and blessings of Zion.

But this thought leads me to the fourth argument for the increase of knowledge in heaven.

4. There have been, and there are many future providences on earth, and transactions in heaven, in which the spirits of the just have a very great and near concernment, and therefore they must know them when they come to pass; and yet it is by no means probable, that they are known in all their

glorious circumstances beforehand by every spirit in heaven.

Let us descend a little to some particular instances, and see whether we cannot make it appear from Scripture with most convincing evidence, that the saints in heaven obtain some additions to their knowledge, by the various new transactions in heaven and in earth.

When our blessed Lord had fulfilled his state of sorrows and sufferings on earth, and ascended into heaven in his glorified human nature, with all the scars of honour, and the ensigns of victory about him; when the Lamb appeared in the midst of the throne with the marks of slaughter and death upon him, and presented himself before God in the midst of angels and antient patriarchs, with the accomplishment of all the types and promises about him written in letters of blood; did not those blessed angels, did not the spirits of those patriarchs learn something more of the mysteries of our redemption, and the wondrous glories of the Redeemer, than what they were acquainted with before? And did not this new glorious scene spread new ideas, new joys and wonders through the heavenly world? Can the principalities and powers in heavenly places gain by the church on earth any farther discoveries of the *manifold wisdom of God*? Eph. iii. 10. And can we believe that when Christ, the Head of the church, entered into heaven in so illustrious a manner, that these powers, principalities and blessed spirits, got no brighter discoveries of divine wisdom? To what purpose do they *look and pry into these things*, 1 Pet. i. 12. if after all their searches they

make no advances in knowledge? And must angels be the only proficient in these sublime sciences, while human spirits make no improvement? Can it be supposed that those antient fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to whom the promises were made, that all the nations should be blessed in their seed, had no transporting pleasures when they first beheld that promised seed crowned with all his glory? When they saw their Son *Jesus ascending on high, and leading captivity captive,* and the *chariots of God* that attended him *were twenty thousand even an innumerable company of angels,* Psal. lxxviii. 17, 18.

If upon this occasion we may talk in the language of mortals, may we not suppose those antient fathers raising themselves on high, and overlooking the walls of paradise, to gaze downward upon this ascending triumph? May we not imagine them speaking thus to each other in the holy transport? “And is this our great descendant? Is this our long-expected offspring? How divine his aspect! How God-like his air! How glorious and adorable all the graces of his countenance! Is this (saith holy David) my son and my Lord? the King of glory, for whose admission I called the gates of heaven to be lifted up, and opened the everlasting doors for him in an antient song? Is this the man, whose hands and whose feet they pierced on earth, as I once foretold by the spirit of prophecy? I see those blessed scars of honour; how they adorn his glorified limbs! I acknowledge and adore my God and my Saviour. I begun his triumph once on my harp in a lower strain, and I behold him now ascend-

ing on nigh: awake my glory; he comes, he comes with the sound of a trumpet, and with the pomp of shouting angels; sing praises, all ye saints, unto our God, sing praises, sing praises unto our King, sing praises. Is this, (saith Isaiah, the child born, of whom I spoke? Is this the Son given, of whom I prophesied? I adore him as the mighty God, the Father of ages, and the Prince of Peace. I see the righteous branch, (adds the prophet Jeremy,) the righteous branch from the stem of David, from the root of Jesse. This is the King whom I foretold should reign in righteousness: **THE LORD MY RIGHTEOUSNESS** is his name: I rejoice at his appearance, the throne of heaven is made ready for him. This, (saith Daniel,) is the Messiah, the Prince who was cut off, but not for himself: the seventy weeks are all fulfilled, and the work is done. He hath finished transgression, and made an end of sin, and hath brought in everlasting righteousness for all his people. But was this the person, (saith Zachary the prophet,) whom they sold for thirty pieces of silver? Vile indignity and impious madness! Behold he now appears like the man who is fellow, or companion to the Lord of hosts. It is he, (saith Malachi,) it is he, the messenger of the covenant, who came suddenly to his own temple. There I held him in my withered arms (saith aged Simeon) and rapture and prophecy came upon me at once, and I expired in joy and praises."

And we hope our mother Eve stood up among the rest of them, and beheld and confessed the promised seed of the woman. "O blessed Saviour, that didst break the head of the serpent, though thy

heel was bruised ; and hast abolished the mischief that my folly and his temptation had brought into thy new created world !”

Now could we ever suppose all this to be done in the upper regions, with no new smiles upon the countenances of the saints, no special increase of joy among the spirits of the just made perfect? God himself stands in no need of the magnificence of these transactions : Christ Jesus receives the new honours, and all the old inhabitants of heaven taste new and unknown satisfaction in the honours they pay to their exalted Saviour.

Some of the antients were of opinion that the souls of the fathers before the ascension of Christ were not admitted into the holy of holies, or the blissful vision of God ; but that it was our Lord Jesus, our great High Priest, at his ascent to the throne, led the way thither ; he rent the veil of the lower heaven, and carried with him the armies of patriarchal souls into some upper and brighter, and more joyful regions, whereas before they were only admitted into a state of peace and rest. Whether this be so or no, the Scripture does not sufficiently declare : but whatsoever region of heaven they were placed in, we may be well assured from the very nature of things, that such transactions as the triumphant ascent of Christ, could never pass through any of the upper worlds without enlarging the knowledge and the joy of the blessed inhabitants.

When our Lord Jesus Christ sat down at the right hand of God, he prevailed to open the book of divine counsels and decrees, Rev. v. 5. and to acquaint himself with all the contents ; and this was necessary, that he might manage and govern the

affairs of the church and the world in the several successive ages according to the counsels of the Father. He therefore, and he alone among creatures, knows the end from the beginning, as I hinted before. But as the seals of this book are opened by degrees, and the counsels of God are executed in the lower world, doubtless the angels, that are ministers of the providence of Christ, carry tidings to heaven of all the greater changes that relate to the church; and Jesus the Son of God, the king of saints and of nations, receives the shouts and honours of the heavenly world, as fast as the joyful tidings arrive thither.

Nor is this spoken by mere conjecture, for the Scripture informs us of the certainty of it. We have frequent accounts in the book of Revelation, of new special honours that were paid to him that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb at certain special periods of time.

When he first took upon him the execution of his father's decrees, *The living creatures and elders fell down before the Lamb, and they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; and ten thousand times ten thousand angels echoed to the song with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, &c.* Rev. v. 8, 9, 11. So when the servants of God were sealed in their foreheads, the innumerable multitude of saints shouted salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb, Rev. vii. 3, 9, 10. So when the seventh angel sounded, there were great voices in heaven, saying, *the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever; and the*

*four and twenty elders fell upon their faces, and worshipped and gave thanks, Rev. xi. 15, 16. Again, when the old dragon and his angels were cast out of heaven, there was a loud voice, saying, Now is come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ; for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, Rev. xii. 9, 10. So upon the fall of Babylon, ch. xiv. and the victory of the saints, ch. xv. and the final destruction of Antichrist, ch. xix. there are new honours done by the saints to God the Father and his Son Jesus. There are new songs addressed to them at these surprising revolutions on earth, these wondrous turns of judgment to the world, and mercy to the church; all which supposes that the heavenly inhabitants are acquainted with them, and thus their knowledge and their joys increase.*

*Objection.* But does not the prophet Isaiah say in the name of the church of Israel, *Abraham is ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledges us not? Isa. lxiii. 16.*

*Answer 1.* The words knowledge and acknowledgment often signify a friendly and beneficial care manifested in special acts of kindness and benefits conferred. Therefore the tribe of Levi is said “neither to have seen his father or his mother, nor to acknowledge his brethren, nor to know his own children, Deut. xxxiii. 9. because the sons of Levi slew every man his brother, and every man his neighbour, to execute the vengeance of the Lord upon them,” Exod. xxxii. 26—29. So Abraham and Israel, in heaven, in the same sense, know not their posterity on earth, when they approve of the anger of God let out upon them, and afford them

no defence. This interpretation perfectly agrees with the context. But it does not follow that Abraham and Israel were utterly unacquainted with all the greater events of providence towards the Jewish nation, though perhaps they might not know the lesser and more minute circumstances of their afflictions or their deliverances.

*Answer 2.* If we could suppose that the souls of the antient patriarchs were ignorant of the affairs of their posterity before the coming of the Messiah, yet since Christ in our nature now dwells in the midst of them, and has taken the book of divine counsels into his own hands, since the great God-man rules all things in the upper and the lower worlds, it is not probable that Abraham and Israel are so ignorant of the affairs of the church, as they were in the days of Isaiah.

And not only the greater and more extensive dispensations that attend the church on earth, are made known to the spirits of the just made perfect; but even some lesser and particular concerns are very probably revealed to them also.

Is it not said, that *when one sinner on earth repents, there is joy among the angels in heaven?* Luke xv. 7, 10. for every such convert is a new trophy of divine grace. And when the spirits of the just in heaven shall in successive seasons behold one and another of their old relatives and acquaintance on earth entering in at the gates and received into heaven, can we imagine there is no new joy amongst them? Do the pleasures of angels increase when they see a man brought into the state of grace, and shall not the souls of men testify their exultation and delight, when they see one of their fellow-souls,

perhaps a dear and inward friend, translated to the state of glory? Surely every increase of that happy world shall diffuse increasing joy through the Holy Ones that dwell in it; and those shall have the sweetest taste of this joy, that had the nearest concern in it. O the transporting and celestial gratulations that pass between two souls of infinite endearment at their first meeting there!

The last argument that I shall use, and it is also the last instance I shall mention, wherein the knowledge and the pleasure of glorified saints must receive addition and improvement, is, the great resurrection day.

The spirits of men are formed on purpose for union with bodies, and if they could attain complete happiness in the highest degree without them, what need would there be of new-creating their bodies from the dust? Upon this supposition the resurrection itself must seem to be almost in vain. But it is evident from the word of God, that the spirits of the just with all the perfections that belong to a separate state, wait yet for greater perfection when their bodies shall be restored to them; for as they suffered pain and agony in the body, they shall have a recompence of pleasure in the body too. "All the days of their appointed time they wait, till this blessed change shall come, Job xiv. 14. God shall call, and the dust of the saints shall answer; God the Creator will have a desire again to the work of his own hands," ver. 15. and the happy souls will have a desire to be rejoined to their old companions.

O glorious hour! O blessed meeting-time! A magnificent and divine spectacle, worthy to attract the eyes of all the creation: when the long-divided

parts of human nature shall be united with unknown powers and glories! When these bodies shall be called out of their long dark dungeon, all fashioned anew, and all new dressed in immortality and sun-beams! When these spirits shall assume and animate their limbs again, exulting in new life and everlasting vigour!

Now can we suppose it possible that all this vast and amazing change shall be made by the conflagration of the earth and the lower heavens, by the awful and illustrious splendors and solemnities of the last judgment, by the bodies of millions of saints and sinners arising into a painful or joyful immortality, and yet no new ideas hereby communicated to the happy spirits; no increase of their knowledge, or improvement of their joys?

Shall the apostles and the prophets, the confessors and the martyrs, stand at the right hand of Christ, and be owned and acknowledged by him with divine applause in the sight of the whole creation, and yet have no new transports of pleasure running through their souls? Shall they be absolved and approved by the voice of God, with thousands of applauding angels, in the face of heaven, earth, and hell, and all this without any advancement of their knowledge or their blessedness? Shall St. Paul meet the Thessalonian converts in the presence of his Lord Jesus, those souls who were once his labour and his hope, and shall they not at that day appear to be his glory and his joy? Does not he himself tell them so in his first epistle, chap. ii. ver. 19, 20? And can we believe that he or they shall be disappointed? Shall that great apostle see the immense fruits of his labours, the large harvest of

souls which he gathered from many provinces of Europe and Asia, all appearing at once in their robes of light and victory, and shall he feel no new inward exultations of spirit at such a sight? and doubtless many thousand souls, whom he never knew on earth, shall be made known to him at that day, and own their conversion to his sacred writings. And shall all this make no addition to his pleasures? The very mention of so absurd a doctrine refutes and condemns itself

The saints at that day, shall as it were, be brought into a new world, and he that sits upon the throne shall make all things new; and as he crowns his happy followers with new and unknown blessings, so shall he receive the homage of new and unknown praises. This is a new heaven and a new earth indeed, beyond all our present apprehensions; and the magnificent language of prophecy shall be fulfilled in its utmost force and brightness.

Doubtless there are pleasures to be enjoyed by complete human nature, by unbodied souls, which a mere separate spirit is not capable of. Is it not part of the blessedness of human spirits, to enjoy mutual society and hold a pleasing correspondence with each other? But whatsoever be the means and methods of that correspondence in a separate state, surely it wants something of that complete pleasure and sensible intimacy, which they shall be made partakers of, when they shall hold noble communion in their bodies raised from the dust, and refined from every weakness. Is it not the happiness of the saints in heaven to see their glorified Saviour? But even this sight is and must be incomplete, till they are endued with bodily organs

again. What converse soever the spirits of the just have with the glorified man Jesus, while they are absent from the body, yet I am persuaded it is not, nor can it be so full and perfect in all respects, as it shall be at the general resurrection. They cannot now see him face to face in the literal sense, and they wait for this exalted pleasure, this immediate and beatific sight. Job himself yet waits, though *the worms have destroyed his body*, till that glorious hour, when *in his flesh he shall see God*, Job xix. 26. *even God, his Redeemer, who shall stand at the last day on the earth*, ver. 25.

Not only all the saints on earth, who *have received the first fruits of the Spirit*, wait for the adoption, that is, *the redemption of the body*, Rom. viii. 23. But the saints in heaven also live there, waiting till the body be redeemed from the grave, and their adoption shall appear with illustrious evidence; then they shall all look like the sons of God, like Jesus the first beloved and the first-born. The spirits above, how perfectly soever they are in the joys of the separate state, yet wait for those endless scenes of unkuown delight that shall succeed the resurrection.

And there is abundant reason for it to be drawn from the word of God; for the Scripture speaks but very little concerning the blessedness of separate souls, in comparison of the frequent and large accounts of the glory and triumph that shall attend the sound of the last trumpet and the great rising-day. It is to this blessed hour that the apostles in their writings are always directing the hope of the saints. They are ever pointing to this glorious morning, as the season when they shall receive their reward and

their prize, their promised joy and their crown; as though all that they had received before, in their state of separation, were hardly to be named in comparison of that more exceeding and eternal weight of additional glory.

What new kind of sensations shall entertain us in that day, what a rich variety of scenes we shall enjoy, what well appointed and immortal organs we shall be furnished with, instead of our present feeble eyes and ears, and what glorious and transporting objects shall surround us in those unknown worlds, and fill the enlarged powers of the soul with sensible as well as intellectual delights: these are wonders too sublime even for our present conjecture, and are all reserved in the counsels of God, to complete the final felicity of the saints.

Thus we have made it appear, that the knowledge and joy that belongs to the spirits of the just made perfect, may admit of large increase\*.

But can their holiness be increased too? Can perfect holiness receive any improvement?

I will not assert any thing in this matter, lest the manner of expression should offend weaker minds: but I desire leave to enquire, whether those who know most of God, do not love him best? Whether those who have the brightest and fullest visions of him, are not most transformed into his image, and made most nearly like to him? Now if the separate

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\* There is a little Treatise, called, *The Future State, displaying the progressive knowledge of the blessed in heaven*, written by a country gentleman, published 1683, wherein are many ingenious thoughts on this subject.

spirits in heaven are advanced to different degrees of divine knowledge, may they not in this sense have different degrees of holiness too? Is it not possible that one saint should love God more intensely than another, and be more impressed with his likeness, as he beholds more of his beauty? Is it not possible that a soul shall grow in the strength and fervour of its love and zeal for God, and be more exactly assimilated to him, as it gets nearer to God, and grows up into higher measures of acquaintance with him? Has not the angel Gabriel, the apostle Paul, and the glorified human nature of Christ, in any respect more of holiness, or love, or likeness to God, than the meanest saint or angel in heaven? Is not their sublimer knowledge and nearness to God attended with proportionable rays of divine sanctity and glory? Is not the divine image in these exalted saints more complete than in the very lowest?

And yet we may boldly assert, that the meanest saint or angel there, is so perfect in holiness, as to be free from all sin : there is nothing to be found in any spirit there, contrary to the nature or the will of God. So a soul released from the body may perhaps grow in likeness and love to God perpetually ; and yet it may have no sinful defects either in its love or conformity to God from the first moment of its entrance into heaven.

I shall first illustrate this by two similitudes, and then propose a rational and clear account of it in a way of argument.

When the distant morning-sun shines on a piece of polished metal, the metal reflects the face of the sun in perfection, when the sun first rises on it.

But the same instrument coming directly under the meridian sun-beams shall reflect the same image brighter and warmer: and yet every moment of this reflection, from the morning to the highest noon, shall be perfect, that is, without spot, without blemish, and without defect. Such perhaps is the holiness of all the saints in heaven.

Or shall I rather borrow a similitude from Scripture, and say, the holiness of the spirits in heaven is compared to fine linen? Rev. xix. 8. *The fine linen clean and white, is the righteousness of the saints.* Now though a garment may be perfectly clean, without the least spot or stain, yet fine linen may grow whiter hourly, as it is bleached by the constant influence of the heavens. So though every spirit be perfectly cleansed and purified from all sin and defilement, yet it is not impossible that the degrees of its grace and holiness, or conformity to God, may grow brighter, and much improve by nearer approaches to God, longer acquaintance with him, and the continued influences of his majesty and love.

Now let me propose a rational account of this matter to the consideration of those, whose minds are raised above common prejudices.

The holiness of an innocent creature consists in attaining the knowledge of the nature and will of God, according to the utmost of its own present capacity, and the means of discovery which it enjoys, and the various exercises of love to God in an exact proportion to its knowledge: or, to express it briefly thus, an innocent creature is perfectly holy, when it knows and loves God to the utmost reach of its present powers. If this be done, there is no

sinful defect, no guilty imperfection; and yet there may be almost an infinite difference in the various degrees of power and capacity, of knowledge and love, amongst innocent spirits: one spirit may be formed capable of knowing much more of his Maker than another, and may be favoured with richer discoveries. Now if every new divine discovery raise an equal proportion of love in the soul, then it is possible that any soul might be perfectly holy at its first entrance into heaven; and yet may make sublime advances in holiness hourly.

Can we suppose that innocent Adam, at his very formation in paradise, knew all the wonders of divine wisdom and goodness that ever he was designed to attain, had he lived sinless and immortal? And then can we believe, since his knowledge of his Maker's goodness and wisdom was to receive continual advances, that he should admire him no more, and love him no better after a thousand years converse with him, than he did at his first creation? Now the case of the saints in heaven is much the same. The rule and measure of their duty is their knowledge, and the rule and measure of their knowledge, is their own capacity and their means of discovery. They never fall short of their duty, and therefore they have no sin: and thus their holiness may be every moment perfect, and yet perhaps, every moment increasing, as their capacities are enlarged, and receive new discoveries through all the ages of their immortality.

Happy souls! whose aspiring knowledge, and love and zeal, move onward hourly, and get still nigher to their God! Surely, while they behold his face in the unveiled beauties of his holiness.

they shall love him with warmer zeal, and be more abundantly *satisfied with his likeness*, Psal. xvii. ult.

After all that I have said on this subject, some will insist on this objection, namely, "Can there be any such thing as imperfection in heaven? Is it not said to be a perfect state?" Now if the spirits above be always growing in excellency and holiness, then they always are defective and eternally imperfect; which is very hard to suppose concerning the saints in glory, and contrary to the very expression and letter of my text.

The answer to this is very easy to all that will give their reason leave to exercise itself upon just ideas, and to think and argue beyond the chime of words.

Perfection (as I told you before) is not to be taken here in an absolute, but in a comparative sense. Nothing is absolutely perfect but God; and in a comparison of God, the highest and most exalted of all creatures is, and will be eternally imperfect and defective: *the heavens are not pure in his sight, and he charges his angels with folly*, Job iv. 18. Even the man Christ Jesus shall for ever fall short of the perfection of the divine nature to which he is united; and in this sense will be imperfect for ever.

But where any creature has attained to such exalted degrees of excellency as are far superior to what others have attained, it is the custom of the Scripture to call them perfect, and that with a design to do honour to their character: so *Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generation*, Gen. vi. 9. Job also has this honour done him, *he was perfect and upright*, Job i. 1. And the saints on earth are called perfect in many parts of the word of God,

even while they are here on earth, and have many defects and imperfections. So though it be literally true that the saints in heaven are continually imperfect in comparison of God and Christ, and of what they themselves shall further attain; yet the Scripture, which delights to do honour to them, chuses rather to call them perfect, because of the sublime degree of excellency they possess above their fellow-saints on earth: and it is not fit for us to degrade them in our common language, by the diminishing and abasing names of defect and imperfection, though their present perfection and excellency admits of everlasting increase.

If any man, after he has read this Treatise thus far, and has duly weighed all the former arguments, can see force enough in this last objection to baffle or destroy them all, or can find terror enough in the mere sound of the word *imperfect* to forbid his assent; I desire he may not be disturbed in the possession of his own sentiments, till the sweet and surprising sensations of ever-growing felicity convince him that heaven is a place of glorious improvement.

This shall suffice for the third general Head of my Discourse, wherein I have shewn that the perfection of the spirits of the just is such a perfection as admits of a rich variety of employments and pleasures, according to the various taste and inclination of the blessed; it allows of their different degrees of felicity, according to their different capacities and preparations: it furnishes each blessed spirit with a frequent change of pleasures, and it gives room for perpetual increase.

## SECT. V.

*Of the Means of attaining this Perfection.*

MY fourth and last enquiry is this, "How do these good spirits of just men arrive at this perfection?"

I answer, "By the death of the body, and their departure from flesh and blood."

You will ask what reasons are there, why their departure from the body should bring them into the perfect state? I will content myself to mention these four.

I. Because at death their state of trial is ended, and the time of recompence begins by divine appointment: now all their imperfections must end with their state of trial.

This is the account of things in the Scripture, Heb. ix. 27. *It is appointed for all men once to die, and after death the judgment:* At the hour of death these words are spoken aloud in the most dreadful or most delightful language, Rev. xxii. 11. *He that is unjust or filthy, let him be so still: he that is righteous and holy, let him be so still.* And then upon the determination of the state, the reward or recompence follows, ver. 12. *My reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be.*

Many inconveniences, and imperfections, and difficulties, are proper for a state of trial, and by these methods we are trained up for glory. Christ himself was ignorant of many things in the day of his trial; his knowledge on earth was imperfect,

and his joys were so too: for *he grew in wisdom and knowledge; he was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. Though he was a Son, yet he learned obedience by the things that he suffered; and the captain of our salvation was made perfect through sufferings*, Heb. v. 8. and chap. ii. 10. But when the time of probation and suffering ceases, then perfection is come, and glory appears.

Hail, blessed spirits above, who have passed your state of trial well! You have run the laborious race under many burdens, and you have received the prize. You have fought with mighty enemies, you have overcome a thousand difficulties, and you enjoy the crown. No more shall you complain of the mixture of error with your knowledge, no more shall you groan under the perplexities of thought, the tumults of passion, the burdens of indwelling iniquity, nor cry out because of oppressing enemies or sorrows. The hour of your trial is finished. You have been sincere and faithful in your imperfect services, and you are arrived at the world of perfection.

II. At the hour of death the spirits of the just leave all the natural and the sinful infirmities of flesh and blood behind them, which are the causes and springs of a thousand imperfections.

The very natural circumstances and necessities of the body, and the inconveniences that attend it in this frail state, do very much embarrass and clog the spirit in its pursuit of knowledge, or holiness, or divine joy.

The flesh is a dark covering to the soul; it beclouds our ideas, confuses our conceptions, and prevents a clear and distinct knowledge of a thousand objects. It is a dull dark tabernacle for a

spirit's residence. It has windows indeed to let in the light, but those very windows, like a painted or curled glass, too often discolour the objects, or distort the shape of them. These very senses of ours frequently impose upon us in our searches after truth, and represent things, not as they are in themselves, and in their own nature, but as they are useful or hurtful to us; and often we pass a false judgment on the nature of things by their influence, and are led into many mistakes in our enquiries after knowledge.

Our fancy or imagination raises up false images of things, and we forsake the solid and real truth, to follow the shapes, and colours, and appearances of it painted upon fancy.

From our very infancy, our souls are imposed upon by the animal; we draw in early many false judgments, and establish them daily. We are nursed up in prejudice against a hundred truths both in the philosophical, the moral, and the religious life; and it is the labour of an age even for a wise and good man to wear off a few of them, and to judge with any tolerable freedom, evidence and certainty.

A great part of our life is spent in sleep, wherein the soul is bound up from exerting any regular thoughts, confined every night to a periodical delirium, subjected to all the flattering tyranny of the animal spirits, and dragged away into all the wild wanderings of dreaming nature; and indeed the thoughts of many of us always, and of all of us sometimes, even when we are awake, are but little better, because we perpetually dance after the motions of passion and fancy, and our reason seldom

judges without them. Alas! how imperfect is the best of us in knowledge here!

But knowledge is not the only good of which the body deprives the spirit. The necessities of the body, hunger and thirst, weakness and weariness, and drowsy spirits, sit very heavy upon the soul, and hinder it in the pursuit of holy and heavenly thoughts, break off many a divine meditation and interrupt and spoil many a delightful piece of worship. In sickness, or in old age, what long and weighty troubles, what tiresome infirmities clog the soul, and what restless pains of nature overwhelm the spirit, and forbid the lively exercises of devotion!

And also the sinful appetites and perverse affections of nature are very much seated in flesh and blood: so much that the apostle in many places calls the principles of sin by the general name of flesh. Read the latter end of the seventh chapter of his epistle to the Romans. How doth he complain of the flesh, and members of the body, which are fatal instruments of sin and Satan! Read the black catalogue of iniquities, Gal. v. 19, 20, 21. and hear them called *the works of the flesh*. Pride, and malice, and envy, and lust, and covetousness, and wrath, and revenge, are found secretly working in flesh and blood. O how much are the springs of these sinful evils seated in the very composition of depraved animal nature! And how is the poor labouring spirit of a saint dreadfully betrayed thereby into frequent actual guilt, even notwithstanding all its care and watchfulness! O wretched men that we are! who shall deliver us? Blessed be God, there is a time of release.

And as our knowledge and our holiness are rendered very imperfect, by reason of these sensible and corrupt engines of flesh and blood, so are the joys and satisfactions of the soul perpetually impaired and diminished thereby. The heart of the saint is in pain to feel sin working in it, and the conscience complains under the anguish of guilt. Blessed be God for the balm that is found in the blood of Christ to ease the anguish of conscience.

Besides, what spirit can enjoy perfect peace, while it is tied to so many thousand nerves, each of which may become an instrument of intense pain and torture? And the body itself has sharp humours enough in it to corrode those nerves, and fill the indwelling spirit with agonies. What millions of seeds of painful disease lurk in animal nature, that render this body a most uncomfortable dwelling! And how many thousand strokes and accidents are we liable to from abroad, whence new pains and sorrows are derived to the soul! The wind and the weather, the rain and the hail, and the scorching sun, the air, the water, and fire, and every element, may afflict the animal, and pain the unhappy spirit.

But O happy souls, that are free from all the cumbersome and mischievous influences of flesh and blood! From these instruments of iniquity, and springs of deadly guilt and torment! Happy souls, that are released from sick and languishing bodies, from feeble and burdensome limbs, and all the tiresome and painful disorders of dying nature! That are raised beyond the reach and injury of all these lower elements, these mediums of disease and pain! Rejoice and triumph, ye prisoners newly discharged, ye feel the pleasurable truths that we

guess at, but ye feel and enjoy them with a relish of sublime pleasure beyond all our conjectures. Rejoice and exult in your new liberty, like a bird released from the imprisoning cage, and sing with sweetest notes to the praise of your Redeemer. O worship and serve him in the full freedom of all your active powers; attend at his feet with intense delight, and love him with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

III. By the death of the body, and their release from it, these spirits of the just are free from all the tempting powers and the sinful influences of earth and hell.

This world of sensible allurements, and this world of sinful men, hath a mighty influence on the spirits of the saints while they dwell in flesh and blood. How often are we deceived into practices of iniquity by the enticing vanities of this life? How often tempted by evil companions, by flattering mischiefs, and ensnaring circumstances? And many times too the fear of men and the terror of their threatenings, fright us to a neglect of duty, or hurry us into the commission of some actual iniquity. Sometimes the pleasing enjoyments of life tie our hearts to the creatures by the bands of excessive love; and sometimes the injuries and reproaches we receive from them, kindle our fiery passions, and rouse up our sinful wrath and revenge.

This world also is much under the evil influences of the Prince of darkness; he is called the God of this world: it is greatly given up to the ravages of the roaring lion, and he worries the spirits of the saints while they dwell within his territories, though he is not suffered to destroy and devour them.

But at the moment of death the happy spirit is released from the senses, and thereby from the impressions of all sensible things.

All the flattering vanities of this lower world have no more power to entice the soul, than the grossest sensualities could entice a pure angel. Sinful companions can no more invite, and threatening tyrants have no more power to terrify.

The spirit is then got out of the territories of satan; he is prince of the power of the air, but his dominion reaches no farther. The heaven where Christ is, never admits him; Michael with his angels hath cast out the old dragon and his angels, and there is no more place found for them there. Happy spirits, delivered and secured from the devil and the world at once, and from all their tempting and destructive influences!

Now when a sanctified soul is thus released, both from its union to sinful flesh and blood, and from all possible assaults of the powers of earth and hell, it may be worth our enquiry, "Whether this release be not sufficient of itself to render the work of sanctification complete," and bring it to a state of perfection, supposing still the ordinary concurrence or influence of the sanctifying Spirit? Or "whether there must be an immediate, almighty and present change wrought in the soul by a new and extraordinary influence of the blessed Spirit at the very moment of death, by which sanctification is at once completed?" Which of these is true, I know not. I confess this last has generally been the opinion of our protestant writers; and perhaps it may be the truth: but the Scripture is silent.

Who can tell therefore whether a holy soul, that

hath received the divine seed of grace (which is called the divine nature) and is regenerated, and renewed, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit, hath not all its remaining sins and imperfections owing to its bonds of sinful flesh and blood? And whether its compliance with so many temptations, is not to be attributed to its close attachments to corrupt animal nature and sensible things? And therefore whether this sanctified nature would not become completely free from sin, when it is freed from all the influence of a tempting body and a tempting world? Whether the divine bent and bias that is given it by the spirit of God at first conversion, and by which it maintains continual opposition to sinful flesh, would not make its own way toward perfection without new and extraordinary operations? Whether this would not be sufficient to cause the soul for ever to ascend naturally toward God in desire, and love, and delight, when all clogs and embarrassments are removed? So a vessel filled with upper air, and dragged down by some heavy weight to the bottom of the sea, labours and wrestles with the uneasy burden, and hath a perpetual tendency towards this upper region: but if the weight be once taken off, it immediately of itself rises through the water, and never ceases its motion till it come to the surface.

I confess this is a nice speculation, and of doubtful evidence; though when St. Paul lays his sinful compliances and captivity so much to the charge of his flesh and members in the viith chapter to the Romans, and in other places of his writings, one would be ready to think St. Paul was of this opinion. However, this we are sure of, that a

sanctified soul released from the body shall be made free from every sin, and its absence from flesh and the world have a large if not sufficient influence to effect this freedom.

And if we should grant it that a soul just dismissed from this world is not perfectly sanctified by the mere influence of this release; yet this perfection is sufficiently secured by its dismissal from flesh; for when absent from the body, it is present with the Lord: and this leads me to the next particular, namely,

IV. At death the spirits of the just, released from bodies, enter into another state, a different world, where they have a thousand advantages for improvement in knowledge, and advances in holiness and joy, vastly beyond what any thing in this world could furnish them with.

They see God, and are for ever with him, they behold him face to face, as I have before explained it, in a more immediate and intuitive manner; and doubtless such a sight fills the spirit with a clearer and brighter idea of the nature and attributes of God, than all the former lessons, it had learnt in the books of nature and of Scripture could ever give it.

They see our Lord Jesus Christ, our glorified Saviour, in such a way and manner as glorified separate spirits can converse with spirits embodied; and one such view as this will perhaps lead us into more intimate acquaintance with his human nature and his united Godhead, than many years of converse with him by all the mediums of ordinances, those divine glasses, wherein we see him darkly, (as the apostle speaks) and whereby God and Christ represent and manifest themselves to saints on earth.

And as our knowledge shall receive immense and surprising improvements by these new methods of discovery, so I think it shall in due proportion advance our holiness, or conformity to God the Father, and his brightest image, Christ Jesus ; for we cannot behold them in such a manner without a glorious transformation into their likeness, as I have hinted already.

When a soul, that hath a new nature given it by sanctifying grace, is placed in the immediate view and presence of God the most holy, it will ever be growing into a greater degree of nearness and love ; and it will be powerfully changed more and more into the likeness of God himself, as a needle when placed within the reach of a loadstone's attractive power, ceases not its motion till it be joined in perfect union, and itself acquires the virtues of that wonderful mineral.

Nor is it possible in heaven that we should advance in knowledge and holiness without an equal improvement in felicity and joy. On earth indeed we are told, *he that will live godly, shall suffer persecution ; and he that increases knowledge, increases sorrow*, 2 Tim. iii. 12. and Eccles. i. 18. But as heaven is high above the earth, so are the customs and the blessings of that state superior to this ; for there are no present sorrows to be known, nor any future to be feared : and holiness has no enemy there. All things round the saint, shall have a tendency to promote his blessedness.

The spirit of a good man released from the body, and ascending to heaven, is surrounded with thousands, and ten thousands of blessed spirits of the human and angelic order : when it gets within the

confines of the heavenly country, it sweetly and insensibly acquires the genius and temper of the inhabitants; it breathes as it were, a new air, and lives, and thinks, and acts just as they do. It shines and burns with new degrees of knowledge, zeal and love, and exults in the transporting communications of the same joy.

How vastly shall our understandings be improved by the kind narratives and instructions of the saints that arrived at heaven before us, and by converse with the ministering angels?

You will say perhaps, that we shall have no need of their teaching when we get to heaven, for we shall be near to God himself, and receive all immediately from him.

But hath the Scripture any where excluded the assistance of our fellow-spirits? God can teach us here on earth immediately by his own Spirit, without the use of books and letters, without the help of prophets and ministers, men of like passions with ourselves; and yet he chuses rather to do it in an instrumental way, and makes his creatures in the lower world the means of our instruction under the superior influence of his own Spirit: and why may he not use the same methods to communicate knowledge to the spirits that newly arrive at that upper world?

There we shall see the patriarchs of the old world, and prophets of the old dispensation, as well as the apostles and evangelists of Christ and his gospel. There we shall be conversant with those blessed angels whom he has used as ministers of his vengeance, or his mercy, to persons and churches, families and nations: and they will not be unwilling

to inform us of those great and surprising transactions of God with men.

There we shall find a multitude of other eminent saints before and after Christ.

Adam doubtless will take a peculiar pleasure in acquainting all his happy posterity with the special form and terms of the covenant of innocency; he shall tell us the nature of the tree of knowledge and of life, and how fatally he fell, to the ruin of his unborn offspring. Unhappy father, deriving iniquity and death down to his children! But with what immense satisfaction and everlasting surprise he views the second Adam, his Son and his Saviour, and stands in adoration and transport while he beholds millions of his seed that he once ruined, now raised to superior glories, above the promises of the law of works, by the intervening influence of a Mediator? Enoch, the man that walked with God, and Elijah, the great reformer, shall instruct us how they were translated to heaven, and passed into a blessed immortality without calling at the gates of death. Noah will relate to his sons among the blessed, what was the wickedness of the old world before the flood, that provoked God their Maker to drown them all; he shall entertain us with the wonders of the ark, and the covenant of the rainbow in all its glorious colours. Abraham, the father of the faithful, and the friend of God, shall talk over again with us his familiar converse with God and angels in their frequent apparitions to him, and shall tell us how much the promised seed transcends all the poor low ideas he had of him in his obscure age of prophecy. For we cannot suppose that all intimate converse with our father Abraham

shall be forbidden us, by any of the laws or manners of that heavenly country, since heaven itself is described by our *sitting down* as at one table *with Abraham*, and *dwelling in his bosom*, Matt. viii. 11. and Luke xiv. 15. and xvi. 23.

There St. Paul and Moses shall join together to give us an account of the Jewish law, and read wondrous and entertaining lectures on the types and figures of that economy, and still lead our thoughts to the glorious antitype with surprising encomiums of the blessed Jesus. Paul shall unfold to us the dark places of his own writings, better than he himself once understood them; and Moses shall become an interpreter of his own law, who knew so little of the mystery and beauty of it on earth himself.

There we shall acquaint ourselves with some of the antient fathers of the Christian-church, and the martyrs, those dying champions of the faith, and honours of the Christian name. These will recount the various providences of God to the church in their several ages, and shew the visions of St. John in the Book of the Revelation, not in the morning twilight of prophecy, but as in the light of noon, as a public history, or as an evening rehearsal of the transactions of the day. The witnesses themselves shall tell us how they prophesied in sackcloth, and were slain by the man of sin; how they rose from the dead in three days and an half, and how the church was at last reformed from the Popish mysteries of iniquity and superstition. Cranmer and Ridley, Calvin and Luther, and the rest of the pious reformers, shall make known to us the labours and sufferings of their age, and the wonders of pure

Christianity, rising as it were out of the grave, and throwing off the chains, the darkness and defilements of Antichrist: and those holy souls who laboured in the reformation of Great Britain, while they relate the transactions of their day, shall perhaps enquire and wonder why their successors put a stop to that blessed work, and have made no further progress in a hundred and fifty years.

Did one of the elders near the throne give notice to the apostle John concerning the martyrs, Rev. vii. 14. *These are they which came out of great tribulations, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb;* and shall we not suppose that the happy spirits above tell one another their victories over sin and temptation, and the powers of this world? Shall not the martyrs, who triumphed in their own blood, and overcame Satan and Antichrist by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of their testimony, shall they not make it known to the inhabitants of the upper world, and tell it to the honour of Christ, their captain and their king, how they fought, and died, and conquered? Methinks I hear these noble historians rehearsing their sacred tragedy? how they entertain a bright circle of listening angels and fellow-spirits with their own glorious and dreadful story, dreadful to suffer, and glorious to relate.

Shall it be objected here, that all the glorified saints cannot be supposed to maintain immediate discourse with those blessed antients? Can those antients be imagined to repeat the same stories perpetually afresh, to entertain every stranger that is newly arrived at heaven?

I answer: that since one single spirit dwelling in

flesh can communicate his thoughts immediately to five or six thousand hearers at once by his voice, and to millions more successively by books and writing, it is very unreasonable to suppose, that spirits made perfect and glorified have not a power of communicating their thoughts to many more thousands by immediate converse; and it is past our reach to conceive what unknown methods may be in use amongst them, to transmit their ideas and narratives in a much swifter succession, than by books and writings, through all the courts of heaven, and to inform all the new comers, without putting each happy spirit to the everlasting labour of a tiresome repetition.

Though every saint in heaven should not be admitted to immediate and speedy converse with those spirits of renown in past ages, yet doubtless those glorious minds have communicated their narratives, and the memoirs of their age, to thousands of that blessed world already, and from them we may receive a repetition of the same wonders with faithfulness and exact truth. History and chronology are no precarious and uncertain sciences in that country.

It is very probable indeed, that we shall have more intimate nearness to, and more familiar communion with those spirits that were of the same age and place with ourselves, and of the same church or family; for we can more delightfully expatiate in our converse with them about the same providences and the same methods of grace, and agreeably entertain and improve each other with notices of the affairs of the upper and lower worlds.

Nor must we suppose such sort of historical converse among the blessed spirits is merely designed to fill the mind with new and strange ideas. This pleasure, considered by itself, is not sacred enough for the spirits of the just made perfect. There is not a narrative in the world, but shall disclose some wondrous instances of divine wisdom or mercy, power or faithfulness, patience and forgiveness, or wrath and justice: the speaker shall feel the workings with all proper reverence, zeal and love: and every hearer shall be impressed with correspondent affections, and join in adoration and holy wonder.

And while we speak of the means and advantages that glorified spirits enjoy for their improvement in all the parts of their felicity, surely we may expect the greatest and the best assistances, even those of the Holy Spirit, to render all these means more effectual. Is he not promised *to abide with us, to be in us, and dwell with us for ever*? John xiv. 16, 17. Is he not represented as dwelling in the spirits of the just made perfect, when it is said, *the spirit that dwelleth in them shall raise their mortal bodies from the dead*? Rom. viii. 11. May we not then reasonably infer, that that glorious Spirit, who hath been our enlightener, our comforter, and our sanctifier on earth, will be our perpetual enlightener, our eternal sanctifier, and our everlasting comforter? He that hath so wonderfully begun the divine work in us, and laid foundations of joy in knowledge and holiness, will he not finish and perfect his own work, and add the top-stone to crown the heavenly building?

O blessed state of spirits discharged from the prison of flesh and this world! This wicked world,

where satan the evil spirit has so wide a range, and so poisonous an influence, and where sinful men swarm on every side, and bear the largest sway! What divine advantages are you possessed of, for the improvement of all your sacred excellencies and joys! When we can raise our thoughts a little, and survey your privileges, we feel somewhat of an inward wish to dwell among you, and send a breathing meditation, or a glance of warm desire towards your world and your society. We poor prisoner-spirits, when we hear such tidings from the country at which you are arrived, we stretch our wings a little, and are ready to wish for the flight. But God our sovereign must appoint the hour; he sees that we are not yet refined enough. Keep our souls, O Father, in this erect posture, looking, reaching and longing for the celestial world, till thou hast completely prepared us for the promised glory, and then give us the joyful word of dismissal.

Thus I have endeavoured to make it appear on what accounts a dismissal from the body is both the season when, and the means whereby the spirits of the just arrive at this perfection. Their state of trial is ended at death, and therefore all inconveniences and imperfections must cease by divine appointment: by death the soul is released from all the troublesome and tempting influences of flesh and blood; it is delivered from this sinful world, it is got beyond the reach of satan the tempter and the tormentor; and it is surrounded with a thousand advantages for improvement in knowledge, holiness and joy.

## SECT. VI.

*Remarks on the foregoing Discourse.*

*Remark I.* ARE the spirits of the just made perfect at the death of the body? then we may be assured that they neither die nor sleep; for sleep and death are both inconsistent with this state of perfection which I have described.

The dead saints are not lost nor extinct. They are not perished out of God's world, though they are gone from ours. They are no more in the world that is enlightened by the sun and moon, and the glimmering stars: but they themselves shine gloriously, like stars of different magnitude, in the world where *there is no sun, nor is there any need of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God enlightens it, and the Lamb is the everlasting light thereof*, Rev. xxi. 23. They are lost from earth, but they are found in heaven. They are dead to us at present, but they are alive to God their Father, and to Jesus their Saviour; they are alive to the holy angels, and to all their fellow saints in that upper world.

If there had been any such thing as a soul sleeping or dying, our Saviour would never have argued thus with the Sadducees, Luke xx. 37, 38. nor have proved the doctrine of the resurrection from the doctrine of the separate state of souls: it is as if he had said, "Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are dead long ago: but God is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob still:" now God is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living; therefore the souls

of those patriarchs are yet alive, for they all live to God in the separate state, and they shall appear in their complete human nature, soul and body, at the resurrection. This is the language and the force of our Saviour's argument, and therefore I must believe the soul of Abraham is alive now.

When Jesus promises the penitent thief upon the cross, Luke xxiii. 43. *This day shalt thou be with me in paradise*; can we persuade ourselves that he intended no more than that the thief should be with him in the grave, or in a state of indolence and insensibility? Does he not assure him in these words, that there is a state of happiness for spirits dismissed from the body, whither the soul of our Lord Jesus was going, and where the dying penitent should find him?

So when the infidel Jews stoned Stephen the first martyr, Acts vii. 59. while he expressed his faith and hope in these words, *Lord Jesus receive my spirit*; was this spirit of his to be laid asleep till the resurrection? Can we suppose the dying saint would have made such a request upon so lethargic a principle, and in the view of such a stupid state? No, surely; for he expected, and desired, and prayed to be received to dwell where Christ is, and to behold that glory which he had a glimpse of in the agonies of death.

Would the apostle Paul have been so willing to be absent from the body, where he did much service for his Saviour, if he had not a joyful view of being *present with the Lord*? as he expresses it, 2 Cor. v. 8. What doth he mean by this blessed language of presence with the Lord, if his soul was to lie asleep in a senseless and unactive state till the second

coming of Jesus? Or would he have told the Philippians, chap. i. ver. 23. that he had *a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better*, if he had hoped no advantage for his spirit by it, but a mere stupid indolence and rest in the silent grave?

Besides, we are told of *rebellious spirits that are in prison*, 1 Pet. iii. 19, 20. and of *Sodom and Gomorrah suffering the vengeance of eternal fire*, Jude ver. 7. Whether this be material fire, or merely a metaphor to express torment, is not necessary to enquire here: but surely we can never imagine that the justice of God has provided the prison of hell and fiery torments for the souls of the wicked, separate from bodies, and yet that the mercy and goodness of God has provided no heaven of happiness for the spirits of those that have loved, honoured and obeyed him all the days they dwelt in the flesh. There is then, there is certainly a state of happiness prepared for holy souls immediately after death.

When we think of our pious friends departed, our foolish imagination is too ready to indulge and improve our sorrow. We sit solitary in the parlour or the chamber, we miss them there, and we cry, "They are lost." We retire melancholy to the closet and bewail a lost father, or a lost mother, or perhaps a nearer and dearer relative. We miss them in our daily conversation, we miss them in all their friendly offices, and their endearing sensible characters, and we are ready to say again, "Alas! they are lost." This is the language of flesh and blood, of sense and fancy. Come, let our faith teach us to think and speak of them under a more

cheerful and a juster representation : they are not utterly lost, for they are present with Christ and with God. They are departed our world, where all things are imperfect, to those upper regions where light and perfection dwell. They have left their offices and stations here among us, but they are employed in a far diviner manner, and have new stations and nobler offices on high. Their places on earth indeed know them no more, but their places in heaven know them well, even those glorious mansions that were prepared for them from the foundation of the world. Their place is empty in the earthly sanctuary, and on the days of solemn assembly ; but they appear above in the heavenly Jerusalem as fair pillars and ornaments in the temple of God on high, and shall for ever dwell with him there.

It is a very natural enquiry now, “ But where are these places of blessed spirits ? What part of the creation is it, in which they have their residence ? ” Is it above or below the sun ? Is their habitation in any of the planetary or starry worlds ? Or are they fled beyond them all ? Where is the proper place of their presence ?

Let me propose a brief answer to these curious questions, in a few propositions.

1. The chief properties of spirits are knowledge and activity ; and they are said to be present there, where they have an immediate perception of any thing, and where they lay out their immediate activity or influence. So our souls are said to be present with our bodies, because they have immediate consciousness or knowledge of what relates

to the body, and they move it, and act upon it, or influence it, in an immediate manner.

2. God the infinite Spirit, has an immediate and universal presence ; that is, he is immediately conscious of, and acquainted with every thing that passeth in all the known and unknown parts of the creation, and by his preserving and governing power manages all things. Wheresoever he displays his glory to separate spirits, that is heaven ; and where he exerts his vengeance, that is hell.

3. Finite spirits have not such an immediate and universal presence. Their knowledge and their activity are confined to certain parts of the creation : and wheresoever they are, if they are under the immediate influence of divine glory, they are in heaven ; if of his vengeance, they are in hell.

4. They are usually represented as having some relation to a particular place or places ; because while we dwell in flesh and blood, we know not how to conceive of their presence so well any other way : and therefore they may be described in Scripture or in common discourse, as being in heaven, and above the heavens, and in the third heaven, and as coming down to earth, &c. according as they are supposed to put forth any actions there, or to have any immediate cognisance of things that are done in those places ; for the chief notion we have of the presence of spirits, is their immediate consciousness and their immediate agency.

5. But if they are provided with any subtle ethereal bodies (which are called vehicles) in and by which they act as soon as they leave flesh and blood, then they may properly be said to reside in

those places where their vehicles are, even as our souls at present are said to be in a room, or a closet, or a field, because our bodies are there, in and by which they act.

6. There must be some place where the glorified body of Christ is, and the souls of departed saints are, in some sense, with him. There Enoch and Elijah are in their immortal bodies, and the other saints who rose at the resurrection of Christ. They may be (for ought we know) in or among some of the planets, or amongst the stars; though the distance of the stars is so prodigious and amazing, according to the exactest calculations of the new philosophy, that if the motion of a spirit or glorified body were no swifter than that of a cannon bullet, they would not get so far as the stars in a thousand ages; nor would the journey of so swift a traveller to any of the planets (except the moon) cost less than the labour of several years.

7. These things are so puzzling to our reason, so confound our imagination, and so far transcend the reach of our present faculties to enquire and determine, that it is sufficient for us to know and believe, that "the spirits of the just made perfect have an existence under the blissful influences of the grace and glory of God." And though we freely speak of them, and the scripture leads us to conceive of them as dwelling in a world of light, and in some special place of magnificence and apartments of glory, or as moving from one place to another; yet perhaps it is to be understood chiefly in condescension to the weakness of our present capacities, or in relation to vehicles to which they may be united. But our ignorance in these matters

shall be no hindrance to our arrival at heaven, if we tread the paths of faith and holiness, though we know not in what part of the creation it lies.

I proceed to the second remark.

*Remark II.* If all the spirits of the just that depart from this world are made perfect, then there is much better company above than there is below. The society in heaven is much more agreeable than the best society on earth.

Here we meet with a multitude of sinners; they are ready to mingle in all the affairs of life, and sometimes hypocrites join with us in the sacred ordinances of the sanctuary. The apostle himself hath told us, that in the civil concerns of this life we cannot avoid them; for if we keep no company with sinners, we must have nothing to do in this world; *we must needs go out of it*, 1 Cor. v. 10. But in the world above there are nothing but saints; no inhabitant there but what is holy. There are no persons there that will tempt or defile us, or lead us astray from the paths of purity and peace. *Holiness of the Lord* is inscribed on every soul there; nor is there *one Canaanite* in that upper house to the Lord of hosts, Zech. xiv. 21.

But this is not all. For there are many of the saints themselves here on earth that make but very indifferent companions. Some of them are shamefully ignorant, imprudent and foolish; and we have much ado to bear with their folly. Some of them are morose and contentious, captious and peevish, envious and censorious, and ready to take offence on the slightest occasions; a look or a smile placed wrong shall disoblige them, a mistaken word shall affront them for a month, and it is very hard work

to humour and please them : or we ourselves perhaps are foolish and imprudent, we are peevish and resenting, and our fellow-christians have as much to do to bear with us or to please us. There are some persons concerning whom we have reason to hope, that their hearts in the main are right with God, but either by the iniquity of their animal natures, or the power of their temptations, they look so like the men of this world, that it is hard to distinguish them, and their society is dangerous, or at least very unprofitable and undesirable. Some of us fall into gross mistakes, and lead our friends into error, and hand in hand we forsake the truth. Some of us are melancholy, and sit in darkness ; then we spread a gloom and heaviness over all our conversation, and banish all the joys of earth and heaven : or at best (it may be) and in our sprightly days we fill up all the visiting hour with trifles and impertinences, and there is little of heavenly and divine conversation among us. Poor low grovelling subjects furnish our tongues and entertain our ears, because we are so very imperfect here on earth, in knowledge, in holiness, or in divine joy.

But what a glorious difference is there in the society above, where we may be secure from all mistake and falsehood, from all impertinence and folly in the longest discourse or conference? for every spirit there is so perfect in knowledge, as to be free from error, and has so divine a turn of mind, that nothing relishes but what is holy and heavenly. No quarrels, no complaints are found there to im-bitter our converse, to diminish the pleasure of society, or to draw the heart away from God.

If we would know what the society of heaven is, let us renew the memory of the wisest and holiest, the kindest and the best companions that we were ever acquainted with here on earth; let us recollect the most pleasing hours that we ever enjoyed in their society; let us divest them of all their mistakes and weaknesses, of all their sins and imperfections; and then by faith and hope let us divest ourselves of all our own guilt and follies too: let us fancy ourselves engaged with them in delightful discourse on the most divine and most affecting subjects, and our hearts mutually raising each other near to God, and communicating mutual joys: this is the state of the blessed, this is the conversation of heaven, this, and more than this, shall be our entertainment when we arrive at those happy regions.

This thought would very naturally lead me to the mention of our honoured and departed friend, but I withhold myself a little, and must detain your expectation till I have made a remark or two more.

*Remark III.* Are the spirits of the just, who are departed from earth made perfect in heaven? then they are not the proper subjects for our perpetual sorrows and endless complaints. Let us moderate our grief therefore for that very providence that has fixed them in perfect holiness and joy.

We lament their absence, and our loss indeed is great; but the spirit of christian friendship should teach us to rejoice in their exaltation. Is it no pleasure to think of them as released from all the bonds of infirm nature, from the pains of mortality, and the disquietudes of a sinful world? Is it not better to lift our eyes upward, and view a parent or

a beloved friend adorned with perfect grace and complete in glory, exulting in the fulness of joy near the throne of God, than to behold him labouring under the tiresome disorders of old age, groaning under the anguish and torment of acute distempers, and striving with the troublesome attendants of this sinful and painful state? Do we profess fondness and affection for those that are gone, and shall we not please ourselves a little in their happiness, or at least abate our mourning? Doth not St. Paul tell the Corinthians, *this is what we wish, even your perfection?* 2 Cor. xiii. 9. and should not saints in the lower world, take some satisfaction, when a fellow-saint is arrived at the summit of his own wishes, even perfect holiness and joy on high?

But I correct myself here: nature must have its way, and be indulged a little; let it express its sensible pain at the loss of such endearments. A long separation from those who are so near akin to us in flesh and blood, will touch the heart in a painful place, and awaken the tenderest springs of sorrow. The sluices must be allowed to be held open a little; nature seems to demand it as a debt to love, and grace does not utterly forbid it. When Lazarus died, *Jesus groaned and wept*, John xi. 33, 35.

Yet let not sorrow triumph and reign, and like a flood, break over all its bounds; rather give the stream of it a little diversion into a better channel. Come, let us take the advice which our blessed Saviour gives to the daughters of Jerusalem, who attended him to his cross with tears, Luke xxiii. 28. *Weep not for me, but if ye must weep, do it for yourselves and your children*; because you are still left in the valley of sin and sorrow: while the saints departed

are arrived at the land of peace, and their feet stand upon the mountains of paradise.

Could the voice of those blessed spirits made perfect reach our ears, we should hear them speak in the language of their Lord, “ Weep not for us, but for yourselves ; you are still encompassed with temptations and difficulties, we have surmounted them all : you are wrestling with many errors, and entangled in dark and noisy controversies : we are perfect in knowledge, and see divine mysteries in a divine light : you are labouring in the race ; we are crowned, and have received the prize : you are still striving in the field of battle, and we well remember the toilsome and painful conflict ; we pity you, and call you rather to weep for yourselves than for us ; we have finished the war through divine grace, and are secure in the city of triumph : you are yet travelling through the valley of tears, we are refreshing ourselves in the gardens of pleasure, and on hills of everlasting gladness. Hold on with courage, and faith, and patience ; there are mansions of joy prepared for you also, and we wait your happy arrival.”

*Remark IV.* Are the spirits of just men in heaven made perfect, in the same excellencies and privileges which they possessed on earth ? then “ if our curiosity or our love, has a mind to know what are the circumstances of our pious friends departed, or how they are employed above, let us review what they were here below, and how they employed themselves when they were with us ;” for, as I told you, in this life we are trained up for the life of glory : we shall then be advanced to a glorious and transcendent degree of the same graces ; and there will

be something in the future state of rewards answerable and correspondent to the present state of labour and trial.

This thought necessarily calls our meditations backward a little, to take a short survey of some peculiar characters of our excellent friend departed, that we may learn to rejoice in the present perfection of his graces and glories.



## SECT. VII.

### *The Character of the Deceased.*

WHEN I name Sir JOHN HARTOPP, all that knew him will agree that I name a gentleman, a scholar, and a Christian : and neither of these characters, in the best and most valuable sense of them, could forsake him at his entrance into heaven.

He shone with eminence among the persons of birth and title\* on earth ; while his obliging deportment and his affable temper rendered him easy of access to all his inferiors, and made him the delight of all his friends. Though he knew what was due to his quality in this world, yet he affected none of the grandeurs of life, but daily practised condescension and love, and secured the respect of all without assuming a superior air.

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\* His grandfather, Sir *Edward Hartopp*, was created a Baronet by King *James I.* 1619, which was but a few years after the first institution of that order.

“ Then surely he carried this temper with him to the upper world, where gentleness and goodness reign in the highest perfection; and doubtless he practises now all the same graces of conversation among the blessed spirits there, but in a far superior manner, according to the unknown laws and customs of that region of light and love.”

He had a taste for universal learning: and ingenious arts were his delight from his youth. He pursued knowledge in various forms, and was acquainted with many parts of human science. Mathematical speculations and practices were a favourite study with him in his younger years; and even to his old age, he maintained his acquaintance with the motions of the heavenly bodies, and light and shade whereby time is measured.

“ And may we not suppose that there are entertainments amongst the works of God on high to feast the spirit of such a genius? May they not in that upper region look down and survey the various contrivances of divine wisdom, which created all things in these lower worlds in number, weight, and measure? May not our exalted friend give glory there to his Maker, in the contemplation of the same heavenly bodies, though he dwells in the region where night and shadows are never known, and above the need or use of sun-beams?”

But the book of God was his chief study, and his divinest delight. His Bible lay before him night and day: and he was well acquainted with the writers that explained it best. He was desirous of seeing what the Spirit of God said to men in the original languages. For this end he commenced some acquaintance with Hebrew when he was

more than fifty years old: and that he might be capable of judging of the true sense of any text in the New Testament, he kept his youthful knowledge of the Greek language in some measure even to the period of his life.

“ But earthly languages are of little use in heaven. There are too many defects and ambiguities in them to express the bright, the complete, and the distinct ideas of separate spirits. We may allow our learned friend therefore to be divested of these when he dropt mortality. Now he is out of the body, and caught up to dwell in paradise, where St. Paul made heretofore a short visit, 2 Cor. xii. 2, 4. he hears and he speaks those unspeakable words, it is not possible for a mortal tongue to utter. The things of heaven are not to be expressed in any foreign language.”

Among the various themes of Christian contemplation, he took peculiar pleasure in the doctrines of grace, in the display of the glories of the person of Christ, God in our nature, and the wondrous work of redemption by his cross. He adored him as his Lord and his God: and while he trusted in his righteousness as the great Mediator, and beheld him as his crucified Saviour, he was ever zealous to maintain the honour due to his divine nature and majesty.

“ And we may be sure this is a study in which he is still engaged, and he spends the days of his eternity in the pleasurable contemplation of his glorified Redeemer, and the sacred mysteries of his cross, and his throne, which things the angels desire to pry into.”

His practice in life was agreeable to his Christian principles, for he knew that the grace of God, that

brings salvation to men, teaches them to deny all ungodliness, and to live sober, righteous, and religious lives; that in all things they may adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour.

“ Now that this part of his character is continued and exalted in the region of the blessed spirits, is too evident to need any amplification or proof; for holiness in every part of it is made perfect there, and all under the sweet constraint of love.”

His conversation was pious and learned, ingenious and instructive: he was “ inquisitive into the affairs of the learned world, the progress of arts and sciences, the concerns of the nation, and the interest of the church of Christ. And upon all occasions was as ready to communicate as he was to enquire.” What he knew of the things of God or man, he resolved not to know them only for himself, but for the benefit of all that had the honour of his acquaintance. There are many of his friends that will join with me to confess, how often we have departed from his company refreshed and advanced in some useful knowledge. And I cannot but reckon it among the blessings of heaven, when I review those five years of pleasure and improvement, which I spent in his family in my younger part of life; and I found much instruction myself, where I was called to be an instructor.

“ Nor can I think such enquiries and such communications as are suitable to the affairs of the upper world, are unpractised among the spirits of just men made perfect there; for man is a sociable creature, and enjoys communion with his fellow-saints there, as well as with his Maker and his Saviour. Nor can the spirit of our honoured and

departed friend be a stranger to the pleasures of society amongst his fellow-spirits in those blessed mansions."

His zeal for the welfare of his country, and of the church of Christ in it, carried him out to the most expensive and toilsome services in his younger and his middle age. He employed his time, his spirits, his interest, and his riches for the defence of this poor nation, when forty years ago it was in the utmost danger of popery and ruin.\*

"And doubtless the spirits of the just in heaven are not utterly unacquainted with the affairs of the kingdom of Christ on earth. He rejoices and will rejoice among his fellow-saints when happy tidings of the militant church, or of the religious interests of Great Britain, are brought to the upper world by ministering angels. He waits there for the full accomplishment of all the promises of Christ to his church, when it shall be freed from sins and sorrows, from persecutions and all mixtures of superstition, and shall be presented to the Father a glorious church without spot or wrinkle, in perfect beauty and joy."

His doors were ever open, and his carriage always friendly and courteous to the ministers of the gospel, though they were distinguished among themselves by names of different parties; for he loved all that loved our Lord J sus Christ in sincerity.

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\* He was three times chosen Representative in Parliament for his county of Leicestershire, in those years when a sacred zeal for liberty and religion strove hard to bring in the *Bill of Exclusion*, to prevent the *Duke of York* (afterwards King *James II.*) from inheriting the crown of England.

He chose indeed to bear a part in constant public worship with the Protestant Dissenters, for he thought their practice more agreeable to the rules of the gospel : he joined himself in communion with one of their churches, which was under the pastoral care of the Rev. Dr. John Owen, where he continued an honourable member under successive pastors till the day of his death. Nor was he ashamed to own and support that despised interest, nor to frequent those assemblies, when the spirit of persecution raged highest, in the days of King Charles and King James the Second. He was a present refuge for the oppressed, and the special providence of God secured him and his friends from the fury of the oppressor. He was always a devout and diligent attendant on public ordinances, till the last years of his life, when the infirmities of age growing upon him, confined him to his private retirements.

“ But if age confined him, death gave him a release. He is exalted now to the church in heaven, and has taken his place in that glorious assembly, where he worships among them before the throne :” there he has no need to relieve his memory by the swiftness of his pen, which was his perpetual practice in the church on earth, and by which means he often entertained his family in the evening worship on the Lord’s day with excellent discourses ; some of which he copied from the lips of some of the greatest preachers of the last age : “ There his unbodied spirit is able to sustain the sublimest raptures of devotion, which run through the worshippers in that heavenly state ; though here on earth I have sometimes seen the pious pleasure to

strong for him ; and while he has been reading the things of God to his household, the devotion of his heart has broken through his eyes, has interrupted his voice, and commanded a sacred pause and silence."

He enjoyed an intimate friendship with that great and venerable man Dr. Owen, and this was mutually cultivated with zeal and delight on both sides, till death divided them. The world has already been acquainted, that it is to the pious industry of Sir John Hartopp, that we are indebted for many of those Sermons and Discourses of the Doctor, which have been lately published in Folio. A long and familiar acquaintance enabled him also to furnish many Memoirs, or matters of fact, towards the brief account of the Doctor's life, which is prefixed to that volume, though it was drawn up in the present form with various enlargements, by another hand.

"Now can we suppose two such souls to have been so happily intimate on earth, and may we not imagine they have found each other among the brighter spirits on high? May we not indulge ourselves to believe, that our late honoured friend hath been congratulated upon his arrival by that holy man that assisted to direct and lead him thither?"

Nor is it improbable that he has found other happy souls there, who were numbered among his pious acquaintance on earth. Shall I mention that excellent man Sir Thomas Abney, who was his late forerunner to heaven, and had not finished two months there before Sir John Hartopp's arrival? Happy spirits, may I congratulate your meeting in the celestial regions! But the world and the churches mourn your absence: and the Protestant

Dissenters lament the loss of two of their fairest ornaments and honours.

“And is there not the same reason to believe, that our departed friend hath by this time renewed his sacred endearments with those kindred spirits that were once related to him in some of the nearest bonds of flesh and blood? There they rejoice together in unknown satisfaction, they wait and long for the arrival of those whom they left behind, and for whose immortal welfare they had a solicitous concern in the state of their mortality.”

This thought opens my way to address the posterity, the kindred, and the friends of the deceased, in the fifth remark.

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### SECT. VIII.

#### *An Address to the Friends and Relatives of the Deceased.*

*Remark V.* If the perfection of blessed spirits above consists in a glorious increase of those virtues and graces which were begun below, “let us see to it then, that those graces and those virtues are begun in us here, or they will never be perfected in us hereafter.” If our spirits have nothing of that divine righteousness wrought in them on earth, we can never be admitted into the company of the spirits of the righteous made perfect in heaven.

It is an old saying among divines, but it is a most rational and a certain truth, that grace is glory begun, and glory is but grace perfected. The saints above

have the same divine nature, the same sanctified inclinations, and are engaged in many of the same sacred employments with the saints below, but all in a superior degree, and in a more transcendent manner.

As for you, my friends, who have the happiness and honour to be descended from such parents, or to be nearly related to such saints, you have seen the virtues and graces, the exemplary character and piety of them who are gone before you; you have had many bright and shining examples in your family; you are the children of the blessed of the Lord, and may you for ever be blessed with them! And in order to it, see that you are made like them now, that ye may be followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

This is a proper season to examine yourselves, and call your souls to account in such language as this: "My father, my mother, my honoured and superior kindred, are gone to glory: their graces are perfected; and are not mine begun? What, have I no evidences for heaven yet ready? no exercises of faith, of love, of repentance, of true holiness? Are they arrived at heaven, and am I not yet travelling in the same road?"

They were convinced of sin, and the danger of eternal death, so as to give themselves no rest till they found salvation. Have I ever been convinced of the sin of my nature, and the guilt of my life? Have I beheld myself exposed to the anger of God, and in danger of everlasting misery, so as to cry out with myself, what shall I do to be saved?

They have seen Jesus the Son of God, the all-sufficient Saviour, and have committed their souls

by humble faith into his hands, to obtain pardon for the sake of his atonement, to be justified through his righteousness, to be renewed and made holy by the grace of his Spirit, and to be preserved to eternal glory. Now what have I seen of the excellency, or all-sufficiency, or necessity of Christ as a mediator? Have I been persuaded to trust in him for my acceptance with God, to give my soul up to him as my guide, guard, and ruler, to be formed after his image, and to venture all my immortal concerns with him to be brought safe to heaven? Have I ever received him as my Lord and my Saviour, under those condescending characters and offices which he sustains for a sinner's salvation?

They have believed in him while he was unseen, and they loved him, though they saw him not; they rejoiced in him as their all, and they knew not how to live without him. How is it with my soul in this respect? Do I love Jesus the Lord? Is he the desire of my heart, and the delight of my life?

Though they were kept by the grace of God from the pollutions of the world, and upheld their unblemished character to the last, yet they found sin to be their most dangerous enemy; they have felt it bitter and painful to their souls, and they long groaned under it as their daily burden. What is my grief? what is my chief sorrow? Do I groan in this tabernacle being burdened, because of this inward enemy? And do I long to be rid of it? are my sinful affections like a pain at my heart, and do the workings of sin within me awaken my continual repentance?

They maintained a sacred tenderness of conscience, and were afraid to indulge themselves in

that company, in that practice, and in those liberties of life which have often proved a dangerous snare to souls. Now can I appeal to God, who sees my heart, that I am cautious and watchful against every snare? that I stand afar off from every temptation, and abstain from all appearance of evil?

They took sweet pleasure in retirement, in prayer, and other holy exercises: this was the refreshment of their hearts, and the throne of grace was their refuge under every distress and difficulty. Let me ask my heart, what is my pleasure, my inward delight? Do I find a sweet relish in devotion? And when outward troubles perplex me, do I make the mercy-seat my speedy and constant refuge?

They lived upon their Bible, they counted the gospel their treasure, and the promises and the words of God written there, were more valuable to them than all their outward riches. But what is my life? what is my treasure? what is my hope? Do I count heaven and the gospel my chief inheritance? Do I converse much with my Bible, and find food and support there? Do I look at things unseen and eternal, and feed and rest upon the promised glories of another world, when I meet with disappointments here?

They had a large share of Christian experiences, a rich stock of divine and spiritual observations, by much converse with God and with their own souls. What have I got of this kind for the support of my soul? or are all these strange things to me?"

Believe me, my dear and honoured friends, these are matters of infinite importance; I am sure you will think so one day; and I trust and persuade myself you think them so now. I cannot give

myself leave to imagine that you put these thoughts far from you. Some of you have made it appear that they lie next your heart, and that your souls are deeply engaged in the ways of God and goodness. O that every one of you would give the same comfort and joy to your friends! Be not satisfied with a mere negative holiness, an unspotted character in the eyes of the world; but let the world know that you dare be religious, and profess universal piety in a degenerate age. Let those that honour the memory of your parents, and love your souls, rejoice in your public Christianity. Let them know, that there are the foundations of heavenly glory laid within you all, and the blessed work begun on earth, that shall surely be made perfect among the spirits of the just in heaven.

And methinks I would not have you contented with the lowest seat there; but stir up yourselves to a most unwearied pursuit of holiness in the sublimer degree of it. And thus labouring in the Christian race, contend for some of the brighter prizes, some of the richer crowns of glory. Be not satisfied to sit at a great distance below your parents departed, even in the heavenly country: but strive with a holy ambition that you may come near them, that the whole family together may arrive at some superior degrees of blessedness. And O may divine grace grant me the pleasure to be a witness to your exalted stations, and to worship and rejoice amongst you there! *Amen.*

## THE LIFE

OF

# Dr. Sherlock.

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**T**HE work to which this memoir is prefixed, has been generally attributed to Dr. Thomas Sherlock, who was successively Bishop of Bangor, Salisbury, and London. When any work has attained that celebrity which has been bestowed on *the Trial of the Witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus*, which, as Dr. Leland says, "has been very justly admired for the polite and uncommon turn, as well as the judicious way of treating the subject," it begets a desire in the mind of the reader, to obtain all the information he can respecting the writer. To gratify this desire, is the object of the writer in giving the following account.

Our author was the son of Dr. William Sherlock, for some time master of the Temple, and also a celebrated divine of the Established Church, during the convulsive period of the reign of James II. At the accession of William and Mary to the throne, he refused to take the oaths of allegiance to King William's Government. He was not long however so conscientious, as a circumstance took place which led him to alter his opinion. In these sentiments and conduct, his son, the subject of this memoir, is

said to have greatly resembled his father, which has exposed the history of them both to some pointed satire.

The father's scruples to take the oaths, led him not only to object himself, but he advised a great number of the city clergy to follow his example: but Mrs. Sherlock had no such difficulties. The government gave him time for consideration, which aided by her entreaties, formed a revolution in his mind, and he at length complied. An arch bookseller seeing him soon afterwards handing his wife along St. Paul's Church yard, said, "There goes Dr. Sherlock, with his reasons for taking the oaths at his fingers ends." His apostacy procured him the hatred of the whole Jacobite party, and afforded new matter for the wit of his adversary, South. As William Sherlock did not submit till King William had firmly established his throne, by the battle of the Boyne; so his son Thomas, is said to have owed his conversion from the principles of the Non-jurors to the battle of Preston, which confirmed the throne to George I. On the Sunday succeeding to the battle, he preached a loyal revolution sermon; which occasioned the benchers of the Temple to remark that, "it was a pity it had not been delivered at least the Sunday before." Of this double conversion the following epigram was thought to be characteristic:

As Sherlock the elder,\* with his jure divine,  
Did not comply till the battle of Boyne:  
So Sherlock the younger still made it a question,  
Which side he would take, till the battle of Preston.†

\* See the life of this Divine in Vol. 7th of British Biography.

† Noble's continuation of Granger, Vol. 1, p. 91.

Bishop Sherlock was born in London in 1678, and at an early age was sent to Eton School. Here he laid the foundation of that classical elegance by which his compositions are distinguished. About the year 1693, he was removed to Cambridge, and admitted to Catherine Hall. Here he took his degree in Arts, and soon after he had attained to the canonical age, entered into priest's orders; having previously been elected into a fellowship of the college. He was admitted to the mastership of the Temple on the resignation of his father in 1704. This preferment was of such high importance, that the choice of so young a man was to many, matter of great offence; but the prejudices entertained against him on this account, were effectually removed by a short trial of his abilities. Being duly sensible of the dignity of his office, he was extremely solicitous of improving his talents, which he did with such success, that in the course of a few years, he became one of the most celebrated preachers of the age.\*

He had not been long in this station, before he took the degree of Doctor of Divinity; and in the year 1707, he married Miss Judith Fountaine, a very amiable lady, descended from a good family in Yorkshire. In 1714, he succeeded Sir William Daws in the mastership of Catherine Hall, Cambridge, where he had received his education. Whilst he held this place, he was promoted to the office of Vice Chancellor of the University, which he discharged with the utmost attention and

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\* Funeral Sermon preached by Dr. Nicholls. *Annual Register*, for 1672.

assiduity. It is said that while he continued in the University, he discovered on all occasions, not only very superior abilities, with deep and extensive learning, but also great wisdom, policy, and talents for governing; in allusion to which part of his character, Dr. Bently, during his squabbles at Cambridge, gave him the nick name of Cardinal Alberoni.\*

In 1716, Dr. Sherlock obtained the Deanery of Chichester, and soon after his promotion, he first appeared as an author, being at the head of the famous Hoadlein controversy, which for a considerable time agitated the divines of the Established Church. The occasion of this controversy was a sermon preached before King George I. March 31st, 1717, by Dr. Hoadly, Bishop of Bangor, and afterwards published under the title of *The nature of the Kingdom, or the Church of Christ*. Some of the principles maintained in this sermon, gave great offence to many of the High Church Clergy, and a representation was drawn up by a committee of the lower house of convocation. But before it was so approved as to be made the act of that part of the representation of the church, to be by them presented to the upper house of convocation, the assembly was prorogued by order of the King, nor would his majesty permit them to sit again till all resentment had wholly subsided against Dr. Hoadly.

The interference of his majesty, led the enemies of Dr. Hoadly, to charge him with having fled to this refuge, from fearing the consequences of an

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\* Dr. Charles Moss's charge to the Clergy of the Archdeaconry of Colchester. 1764.

investigation of his principles. This he positively denied, and declared that it was prorogued without his solicitation, or his having any knowledge of the design; "but the King thought proper," says the Bishop, "out of a sincere regard, as I verily believe, to the interest of our constitution in Church and State, to put a stop to the sitting of the convocation." By this event, the principles of Dr. Hoadly were brought fairly to the bar of Scripture and reason, uninfluenced by human authority; the trial was removed from the decision of a majority of voices to that of argument only, "and certainly (says Dr. Hoadly) no *Christian* or *Protestant* can justly and consistently find fault with this."\*

It was on this subject that Dr. Sherlock stepped forward as the champion of the principles of the Non-jurors, and printed many tracts against Dr. Hoadly. The principal of these, was one entitled, *A vindication of the Corporation and Test Acts, in answer to the Bishop of Bangor's reasons for the repeal of them*; to which was added, a Second Part, concerning the Religion of Oaths, 1718, 8vo. This piece, which Bishop Hoadly allowed to be the most plausible, and ingenious defence that, in his opinion, had ever been published, of excluding men from their acknowledged civil rights, upon the account of their differences in religion, or in the circumstances of religion; drew an answer from that celebrated Prelate, to which Dr. Sherlock replied in a small pamphlet entitled, *The true meaning and intention of the Corporation and Test Acts explained, &c.* It is with pleasure we add, that in his latter

\* Preface to Dr. Hoadly's answer to the Representation, &c.

years, he did not at all approve of these writings against Dr. Hoadly, as he told a friend, that "he was a young man when he wrote them;" and he would never have them collected into a volume.\*

Upon the appearance of Mr. Collins's celebrated discourse of *The grounds and reasons of the Christian Religion*, in the year 1724, Dr. Sherlock, though he did not directly enter into the controversy, took an opportunity of delivering his sentiments upon the subject in six discourses, delivered at the Temple Church, in April and May 1724. These discourses were published the next year, under the title of *The use and intent of Prophecy in the several ages of the World*; and he afterwards corrected and enlarged them in several successive editions.

The fourth edition of this work, corrected and enlarged, was published in 1774, to which was added four Dissertations, 1. *Upon the authority of the second Epistle of St. Peter.* 2. *The sense of the antients before Christ, upon the circumstances and consequences of the Fall.* 3. *The Blessing of Judah, Gen. 49.* 4. *Christ's entry into Jerusalem.* In 1749, our author (at that time Bishop of London) published an Appendix to the second dissertation, being a farther enquiry into the Mosaic account of the Fall; to which he prefixed a short advertisement, acquainting his reader, that "it was drawn up some years before, and was intended as an examination of the objections made to the history of the Fall, by the Author of the *Literal Scheme of Prophecy considered*; but that the author being

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\* Biograph. Britan.

dead, he had now considered the objections not as his, but as common to all who call in question, or are offended with, the history of the Fall as it stands recorded by Moses."

In the year 1728, Dr. Sherlock was promoted to the Bishopric of Bangor; in which he succeeded Dr. Hoadly, as he did also in the See of Salisbury in 1734; in both which stations he made so distinguished a figure, that upon the death of Archbishop Potter in the year 1747, the Archbishoprick of Canterbury was offered to him; but being then in an ill state of health, he thought himself unqualified to fill that high station. The next year however he was so much recovered, that he accepted a translation to the See of London, vacant by the death of Bishop Gibson.

Notwithstanding his advancement to such high dignity, Bishop Sherlock continued to hold the Mastership of the Temple, (where he was much beloved and esteemed) till the year 1753, and when his resignation was accepted by his Majesty, he addressed a letter to the Treasurers and Masters of the Bench, gratefully acknowledging his sense of the many favours they had shewn him. This letter is preserved in the *Biographia Britannica*.

It was soon after he was created Bishop of Bangor, that Dr. Sherlock wrote *the Trial of the Witnesses*, which has already passed through many editions. The occasion of its being written we proceed briefly to relate.

In the work entitled a *Discourse of the grounds and reasons of the Christian Religion*, Mr. Collins, the author, had endeavoured to prove that all the Old Testament prophecies were not to be understood

literally but figuratively. Under the pretence of acting the part of a Moderator in this controversy, Mr. Woolston endeavoured to allegorize away the miracles of our Saviour, as Mr. Collins had done the prophecies. This he first attempted in a pamphlet entitled, *A Moderator between an Infidel and an Apostate*; and in two *Supplements* to it; and afterwards more largely in six discourses on the miracles of our Saviour, which were successively published at different times, in the years 1727, 1728, 1729. The design of these discourses was to shew, that the accounts of the great facts recorded in the Gospels, are to be understood wholly in a mystical or allegorical sense; and that taken in the literal and historical sense, they are false, absurd, and fictitious. This attempt he carried on with greater rudeness and insolence than any of the deistical writers who went before him; for in the objections which he makes, in the person of a Jewish Rabbi, against the evangelical story of our Lord's resurrection, he declares it to be a complication of absurdities, inconsistencies, and contradictions. He insinuates, that the guards set by the Roman governor, at the desire of the chief priests, to watch the body of Jesus, suffered themselves to be bribed or intoxicated by the disciples; in which he is more quick sighted than the chief priests and Pharisees, whom it more nearly concerned, who, it is plain, suspected no such thing; in which case, instead of excusing, they would have endeavoured to have got them severely punished. But what he seems to lay the principal stress upon is, a supposed covenant between the chief priests and the disciples of Jesus, that the seal with which the stone of the sepulchre

was sealed, should not be broken till the three days were entirely past; and that therefore the rolling away the stone from the sepulchre, and breaking the seal before the three days were ended, was a breach of that covenant, and a proof of an imposture.

After Mr. Woolston had published his *Moderator*, a prosecution was set on foot against him by the Bishop of London, for having written against Christianity, for which he was tried and found guilty in the court of Kings' bench, before the Right Honourable Sir Robert Raymond, Knt. Lord Chief Justice. Our author, Bishop Sherlock, adopted a more Scriptural and more successful plan to prevent the circulation of his works, and of his opinions, by bringing his arguments to the bar of Scripture and reason, and in a fair and legal trial of the witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus, fully exposed all the illiberal abuse and unfounded aspersions which he had heaped on their characters.

In Mr. Woolston's defence of his discourse, which was dedicated to the Queen, he takes notice of this work, and calls it "a considerable treatise, and an ingenious piece, with which he was much pleased." The sarcastic manner however in which he affects to treat the work, proves that it was so considerable, that he could not solidly answer it, and also that however much he admired its ingenuity, he was not greatly pleased with its arguments.

For three or four years after the translation of our Prelate to the See of London, he was, notwithstanding his age and infirmities, able to apply himself to business; and he made one general visitation of his Diocese in person. But he was soon after

afflicted with a dangerous disorder, from which he recovered with difficulty, and with almost a total loss of the use of his limbs; and his speech failing him soon after, he was obliged to desist from the exercise of his function, and was even deprived of the advantages of a free conversation, as he could not be understood except by those who were constantly about him. His patience and submission to the will of God during his affliction, are thus represented by one of his friends; “Had the same case occurred in the reign of antient stoicism, what triumphs would have been sung, what honour paid to the great masters and schools of science? Why should its true praise and honour be withheld from that true Philosophy, which cometh from above, in which no man was more deeply practised than our truly Christian Prelate, whose happy state of mind, was the pure and genuine effect of it.”

During his affliction, the powers of his mind continued in their full vigour; and under this weak state of body in which he continued for some years, he kept the administration of all affairs in his own hands. In this situation likewise, he revised, corrected, and published in four volumes octavo, his *Discourses preached at the Temple Church*, which are in many respects some of the most exquisite and masterly productions of the kind that are to be found in the English, or perhaps in any other language. The first volume was published in 1754, and was followed by the rest soon after. He died the 18th of January, 1761, in the 84th year of his age, and was interred at Fulham, in a vault made for that purpose; where likewise a monument is erected to his memory, with an inscription drawn

up by Dr. Nicholls, who succeeded him in the Mastership of the Temple.

Bishop Sherlock was a man of the most acute parts, and his ambition is said to have been equal to his capacity; insomuch, that he would have thought it an indignity to have been the second in any character in which he chose to appear. His extraordinary abilities, indeed, were universally acknowledged; and his learning was very extensive. One who was intimately acquainted with our Prelate, says, "God had given him a great and an understanding mind, a quick comprehension, and a solid judgment." These advantages of nature he improved by much industry and application, and in the early part of his life, he read and digested well the antient orators both Greek and Latin, the philosophers, poets, and orators, from which he acquired that correct and elegant stile which appears in all his compositions. His knowledge in Divinity was obtained from the study of the most rational writers of the church both antient and modern; and he was particularly fond of comparing Scripture with Scripture; and especially of illustrating the writings of the Apostles, which he thought wanted to be more studied, and of which we have some specimens in his own discourses. His piety was constant and exemplary, and breathed the true spirit of the gospel. His zeal was warm and fervent, in explaining the great doctrines and duties of Christianity, and in maintaining it, and establishing it upon the most solid foundations. His munificence was large and diffusive. The instances of his public character both in his life time, and at his death, were great and like himself. He gave,

we are told, large sums of money to the corporation of the sons of the clergy, to several of the hospitals, and to the society for propagating the Gospel in foreign parts. The private flow of his bounty to many individuals, was constant and regular, and upon all just occasions, he was ready to stretch forth his hand to the needy and afflicted. He was indeed a person of great candour and humanity, had a tender feeling for distress, and was easily touched with the feeling of others. No one was ever more happy in domestic life, and no man could shew greater gentleness, good-nature, and affection to all around him.\*

It is said that in the latter part of his life he was far from orthodox on some controverted points; nor did he at all approve of the *Athanasian Creed*. It was supposed he died worth 150,000 Pounds! He left his Widow 3000 pounds a year for her life, and 10,000 to dispose of. His lady died in 1764, aged 77 years, and was interred in the same vault with her husband.

Besides the works we have mentioned, Dr. Sherlock was the author of an excellent *Pastoral Letter* in the year 1750, addressed to the Clergy and the inhabitants of London and Westminster, upon occasion of the earthquakes. Of this letter, it is said, there were printed in quarto 5000, in octavo 2000, in duodecimo 3000, besides pirated editions, of which not less than 50,000, were supposed to be sold.\*

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\* Dr. Nicholl's Sermon.

\* Noorthouck's Historical and Classical Dict.

The public have also been presented since the Bishop's death, with another volume of his discourses, preached on several important occasions, and separately printed by their author. In which, says the Editor, "the judicious reader will discover the same energy of sentiment, and purity of diction, the same pathetic and convincing address to the heart, which so eminently distinguishes the rest of this Prelate's discourses."

The Board of Education has the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 15th inst. in relation to the proposed changes in the curriculum of the common schools. The Board has carefully considered the same and has concluded to refer the same to the various departments of the Board for their consideration. It is the policy of the Board to have the curriculum of the common schools prepared by the teachers and approved by the Board. It is the hope of the Board that the various departments will be able to suggest such changes as may be deemed necessary and desirable.

### RESOLUTIONS OF THE BOARD

Resolved, That the Board of Education do hereby recommend to the State Board of Education that the curriculum of the common schools be prepared by the teachers and approved by the Board of Education.

Resolved, That the Board of Education do hereby recommend to the State Board of Education that the State Board of Education be authorized to issue such orders as may be necessary to carry out the policy of the Board of Education in relation to the curriculum of the common schools.

Resolved, That the Board of Education do hereby recommend to the State Board of Education that the State Board of Education be authorized to issue such orders as may be necessary to carry out the policy of the Board of Education in relation to the curriculum of the common schools.

THE TRIAL  
OF THE WITNESSES

OF THE

Resurrection of Christ.

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**WE** were, not long since, some gentlemen of the inns of court together, each to other so well known, that no man's presence was a confinement to any other, from speaking his mind on any subject that happened to arise in conversation. The meeting was without design, and the discourse, as in like cases, various. Among other things we fell upon the subject of **WOOLSTON'S** trial and conviction, which had happened some few days before : that led to a debate how the law stands in such cases ; what punishment it inflicts ; and, in general, whether the law ought at all to interpose in controversies of this kind. We were not agreed in those points. One, who maintained the favourable side to Woolston, discovered a great liking and approbation of his discourses against the miracles of Christ, and seemed to think his arguments unanswerable. To which another replied, I wonder that one of your abilities, and bred to the profession of the law, which teaches

us to consider the nature of evidence, and its proper weight, can be of that opinion; I am sure you would be unwilling to determine a property of five shillings upon such evidence, as you now think material enough to overthrow the miracles of Christ.

It may easily be imagined that this opened a door to much dispute, and determined the conversation for the remainder of the evening to this subject. The dispute ran through almost all the particulars mentioned in Woolston's pieces; but the thread of it was broken by several digressions, and the pursuit of things which were brought accidentally into the discourse. At length one of the company said pleasantly, Gentlemen, you do not argue like lawyers; if I were judge in this cause, I would hold you better to the point. The company took the hint, and cried, they should be glad to have the cause re-heard, and him to be the judge. The gentlemen who had engaged with spirit in a dispute which arose accidentally, seemed very unwilling to be drawn into a formal controversy: and especially the gentleman who argued against Woolston, thought the matter grew too serious for him, and excused himself from undertaking a controversy in religion, of all others the most momentous: but he was told, that the argument should be confined merely to the nature of the evidence, and that might be considered without entering into any such controversy as he would avoid; and to bring the matter within bounds, and under one view, the evidence of Christ's Resurrection, and the exceptions taken to it, should be the only subject of the conference. With much persuasion, he suffered himself to be persuaded, and promised to give the company, and their new-

made judge, a meeting that day fortnight. The judge and the rest of the company were for bringing on the cause a week sooner; but the counsel for Woolston took the matter up, and said, Consider, sir, the gentleman is not to argue out of Littleton, Plowden, or Coke, authors to him well known; but he must have his authorities from Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; and a fortnight is time little enough of all conscience to gain a familiarity with a new acquaintance; and, turning to the gentleman, he said, I will call upon you before the fortnight is out, to see how reverend an appearance you make behind Hammond on the New Testament, a Concordance on one hand, and a folio Bible with references on the other. You shall be welcome, sir, replied the gentleman, and perhaps you may find some company more to your own taste; he is but a poor counsel, who studies on one side of the question only; and therefore I will have your friends Woolston, Tindal, and Collins, to entertain you when you do me the favour of the visit. Upon this we parted in good humour, and all pleased with the appointment made, except the two gentlemen who were to provide the entertainment.

## THE SECOND DAY.

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THE company met at the time appointed : but it happened in this, as in like cases it often does, that some friends to some of the company, who were not of the party the first day, had got notice of the meeting ; and the gentlemen who were to debate the question, found they had a more numerous audience than they expected or desired. He especially, who was to maintain the evidence of the resurrection, began to excuse the necessity he was under of disappointing their expectation, alledging that he was not prepared ; and he had persisted in excusing himself, but that the strangers, who perceived what the case was, offered to withdraw, which the gentleman would by no means consent to : they insisting to go, he said, he would much rather submit himself to their candour, unprepared as he was, than be guilty of so much rudeness, as to force them to leave the company. Upon which one of the company smiling, said, It happens luckily that our number is increased ; when we were last together, we appointed a judge, but we quite forgot a jury ; and now, I think we are good men and true, sufficient to make one. This thought was pursued in several allusions to legal proceedings, which created some mirth, and had this good effect, that it dispersed the solemn air which the mutual compliments upon the difficulty before-mentioned had introduced, and restored the ease and good humour natural to the conversation of gentlemen.

The judge perceiving the disposition of the company, thought it a proper time to begin, and called out, Gentlemen of the jury, take your places; and immediately seated himself at the upper end of the table: the company sat round him, and the judge called upon the counsel for Woolston to begin.

*Mr. A. Counsel for Woolston, addressing himself to the judge, said,*

May it please your lordship; I conceive the gentlemen on the other side ought to begin, and lay his evidence, which he intends to maintain before the court; till that is done, it is to no purpose for me to object. I may perhaps object to something which he will not admit to be any part of his evidence, and therefore, I apprehend, the evidence ought in the first place to be distinctly stated.

*Judge. Mr. B. What say you to that?*

*Mr. B. Counsel on the other side:*

My lord, if the evidence I am to maintain, were to support any new claim, if I were to gain any thing which I am not already possessed of, the gentleman would be in the right; but the evidence is old, and is matter of record, and I have been long in possession of all that I claim under it. If the gentleman has any thing to say to dispossess me, let him produce it; otherwise I have no reason to bring my own title into question. And this I take to be the known method of proceeding in such cases; no man is obliged to produce his title to his possession; it is sufficient if he maintains it when it is called in question.

*Mr. A. Surely, my lord, the gentleman mistakes the case; I can never admit myself to be out of possession of my understanding and reason; and*

since he would put me out of this possession, and compel me to admit things incredible, in virtue of the evidence he maintains, he ought to set forth his claim, or leave the world to be directed by common sense.

*Judge.* Sir, you say right; upon supposition that the truth of the Christian religion were the point in judgment. In that case it would be necessary to produce the evidence for the Christian religion; but the matter now before the court is, whether the objections produced by Mr. Woolston, are of weight to overthrow the evidence of Christ's resurrection. You see then the evidence of the resurrection is supposed to be what it is on both sides, and the thing immediately in judgment, is the value of the objections, and therefore they must be set forth. The court will be bound to take notice of the evidence, which is admitted as a fact on both parts. Go on, *Mr. A.*

*Mr. A.* My lord, I submit to the direction of the court. I cannot but observe that the gentleman on the other side, unwilling as he seems to be to state his evidence, did not forget to lay in his claim to prescription, which is, perhaps in truth, though he has too much skill to own it, the very strength of his cause. I do allow that the gentleman maintains nothing but what his father and grandfather, and his ancestors, beyond time of man's memory, maintained before him: I allow too, that prescription in many cases makes a good title; but it must always be with this condition, that the thing is capable of being prescribed for: and I insist, that the prescription cannot run against reason and common sense. Customs may be pleaded by

prescription; but if upon showing the custom, any thing unreasonable appears in it, the prescription fails; for length of time works nothing towards the establishing any thing that could never have a legal commencement. And if this objection will overthrow all prescriptions for customs; the mischief of which extends perhaps to one poor village only, and affects them in no greater a concern, than their right of common upon a ragged mountain; shall it not much more prevail, when the interest of mankind is concerned, and in no less a point than his happiness in this life, and in all his hopes for futurity? Besides, if prescription must be allowed in this case, how will you deal with it in others? What will you say to the antient Persians, and their fire-altars? Nay, what to the Turks, who have been long enough in possession of their faith to plead——

*Mr. B.* I beg pardon for interrupting the gentleman. But it is to save him trouble. He is going into his favourite common-place, and has brought us from Persia to Turkey already; and if he goes on, I know we must follow him round the globe. To save us from this long journey, I will wave all advantage from the antiquity of the Resurrection, and the general reception the belief of it has found in the world; and am content to consider it as a fact which happened but last year, and was never heard of either by the gentleman's grandfather, or by mine.

*Mr. A.* I should not have taken quite so long a journey as the gentleman imagines, nor, indeed, need any man go so far from home to find instances to the purpose I was upon. But since this advantage is quitted, I am as willing to spare my pains as the

gentleman is desirous that I should. And yet I suspect some art even in this concession, fair and candid as it seems to be. For I am persuaded that one reason, perhaps the main reason, why men believe this History of Jesus is, that they cannot conceive that any one should attempt, much less succeed in such an attempt as this, upon the foundation of mere human cunning and policy; and it is worth the while to go round the globe as the gentleman expresses himself, to see various instances of the like kind, in order to remove this prejudice. But I stand corrected, and will go directly to the point now in judgment.

*Mr. B.* My lord, the gentleman, in justification of his first argument, has entered upon another of a very different kind. I think he is sensible of it, and seeming to yield up one of his popular topics, is indeed artfully getting rid of another; which has made a very good figure in many late writings, but will not bear in any place, where he who maintains it may be asked questions. The mere antiquity of the Resurrection I gave up; for if the evidence was not good at first, it cannot be good now. The gentleman is willing, he says, to spare us his history of antient errors, and intimates, that upon this account he passes over many instances of frauds that were like in circumstances to the case before us. By no means, my lord, let them be passed over. I would not have the main strength of his cause betrayed in complaisance to me. Nothing can be more material than to shew a fraud of this kind, that prevailed universally in the world. Christ Jesus declared himself a prophet, and put the proof of his mission on this, that he should die openly and publicly, and

rise again the third day. This surely was the hardest plot in the world to be managed; and if there be one instance of this kind, or in any degree like it, by all means let it be produced.

*Mr. A.* My lord, there has hardly been an instance of a false religion in the world; but it has also afforded a like instance to this before us. Have they not all pretended to inspiration? Upon what foot did Pythagoras, Numa, and others, set up? Did they not all converse with the gods, and pretend to deliver oracles?

*Mr. B.* This only shows that revelation is by the common consent of mankind the very best foundation of religion, and therefore every impostor pretends to it. But is a man's hiding himself in a cave for some years, and then coming out into the world, to be compared to a man's dying and rising to life again? So far from it, that you and I and every man may do the one, but no man can do the other.

*Mr. A.* Sir, I suppose it will be allowed to be as great a thing to go to heaven and converse with angels, and with God, and to come down to the earth again, as it is to die and rise again. Now this very thing *Mahomet* pretended to do, and all his disciples believe it: can you deny this fact?

*Mr. B.* Deny it, Sir! No. But tell us who went with *Mahomet*? Who were his witnesses? I expect before we have done to hear of the guards set over the sepulchre of Christ, and the seal of the stone: What guard watched *Mahomet* in his going and returning? What seals and credentials had he? He himself pretends to none. His followers pretend to nothing but his own word. We are now

to consider the evidence of Christ's Resurrection, and you think to parallel it by producing a case, for which no one ever pretended there was any evidence. You have *Mahomet's* word; and no man ever told a lie, but you had *his* word for the truth of what he said; and therefore you need not go round the globe to find such instances as these. But this story, it is said, has gained great credit, and is received by many nations. Very well: and how was it received? Was not every man converted to this faith with the sword at his throat? In our case, every witness to the Resurrection, and every believer of it, was hourly exposed to death. In the other case, whoever refused to believe, died; or what was as bad, lived a wretched conquered slave. And will you pretend these cases to be alike? One case indeed there was within our own memory, which in some circumstances came near to the case now before us. The French prophets put the credit of their mission upon the resurrection of Dr. Emmes, and gave public notice of it. If the gentleman pleases to make use of this instance, it is at his service.

*Mr. A.* The instance of Dr. Emmes is so far to the purpose, that it shows to what lengths enthusiasm will carry men. And why might not the same thing happen at Jerusalem which happened but a few years ago in our own country? Matthew, and John, and the rest of them, managed that affair with more dexterity than the French prophets; so that the Resurrection of Jesus gained credit in the world, and the French prophets sunk under their ridiculous pretensions. That is all the difference.

*Mr. B.* Is it so? And a very wide difference;

I promise you. In one case every thing happened that was proper to convince the world of the truth of the Resurrection; in the other, the event manifested the cheat; and upon the view of these circumstances, you think it sufficient to say, with great coolness, that is all the difference. Why, what difference do you expect between truth and falsehood? What distinction—

*Judge.* Gentlemen, you forget that you are in a court, and are falling into dialogue. Courts do not allow of chit-chat. Look ye, the evidence of the Resurrection of Jesus is before the court, recorded by Matthew, Mark, and others. You must take it as it is; you can neither make it better nor worse. These witnesses are accused of giving false evidence. Come to the point; and let us hear what you have to offer, to prove the accusation.

*Mr. B.* Is it your meaning, Sir, that the objections should be stated and argued altogether, and that the answer should be to the whole at once? Or would you have the objections argued singly, and answered separately by themselves.

*Judge.* I think this court may dispense with the strict forms of legal proceedings, and therefore I leave this to the choice of the jury.

*After the jury had consulted together, the Foreman rose up.*

*The Foreman of the Jury.* We desire to hear the objections argued and answered separately. We shall be better able to form a judgment, by hearing the answer while the objection is fresh in our minds.

*Judge.* Gentlemen, you hear the opinion of the Jury. Go on.

*Mr. A.* I am now to disclose to you a scene, of all others the most surprising. 'The Resurrection has been long talked of, and, to the amazement of every one who can think freely, has been believed through all ages of the church.' This general and constant belief creates in most minds a presumption that it was founded on good evidence. In other cases the evidence supports the credit of the history; but here the evidence itself is presumed only upon the credit which the story has gained. I wish the books dispersed against Jesus by the antient Jews had not been lost, for they would have given us a clear insight into this contrivance; but it is happy for us, that the very account given by the pretended witnesses of this fact is sufficient to destroy the credit of it.

The Resurrection was not a thing contrived for its own sake. No! It was undertaken to support great views, and for the sake of great consequences that were to attend it. It will be necessary therefore to lay before you those views, that you may the better judge of this part of the contrivance, when you have the whole scene before you.

The Jews were a weak superstitious people, and, as is common among such people, gave great credit to some traditionary prophecies about their own country. They had, besides, some old books among them, which they esteemed to be writings of certain prophets, who had formerly lived among them, and whose memory they had in great veneration. From such old books and traditions they formed many extravagant expectations: and among

the rest one was, that some time or other a great victorious prince would rise among them, and subdue all their enemies, and make them lords of the world. In Augustus' time they were in a low state, reduced under the Roman yoke; and as they never wanted a deliverer more, so the eagerness of this hope, as it happens to weak minds, turned into a firm expectation that he would soon come. This proved a temptation to some bold, and to some cunning men, to personate the prince so much expected; and 'nothing is more natural and common to promote rebellions, than to ground them on new prophecies, or new interpretations of old ones: prophecies being suited to the vulgar superstition, and operating with the force of religion.' Accordingly, many such impostors rose, pretended to be the victorious prince expected; and they, and the people who followed them, perished in the folly of their attempt.

But Jesus, knowing that victories and triumphs, were not things to be counterfeited; that the people were not to be delivered from the Roman yoke by sleight of hand: and having no hope of being able to cope with the emperor of Rome in good earnest, took another and more successful method to carry on his design. He took upon him to be the prince foretold in the antient prophets; but then he insisted that the true sense of the prophecies had been mistaken; that they related not to the kingdoms of this world, but to the kingdom of heaven; that the Messiah was not to be a conquering prince, but a suffering one; that he was not to come with his horses of war, and chariots of war, but was to be meek and lowly, and riding on an ass. By this

means he got the common and necessary foundation for a new revelation, which is to be built and founded on a precedent revelation.

To carry on this design, he made choice of twelve men of no fortunes or education, and of such understandings as gave no jealousy that they would discover the plot. And what is most wonderful, and shows their ability; whilst the master was preaching the kingdom of heaven, these poor men, not weaned from the prejudices of their country, expected every day that he would declare himself a king, and were quarrelling who would be his first minister. This expectation had a good effect on the service, for it kept them constant to their master.

I must observe farther, that the Jews were under strange apprehensions of supernatural powers; and as their own religion was founded on the belief of certain miracles said to be wrought by their lawgiver Moses; so were they ever running after wonders and miracles, and ready to take up with any stories of this kind. Now as something extraordinary was necessary to support the pretensions of Jesus, he dexterously laid hold on this weakness of the people, and set up to be a wonder-worker. His disciples were well qualified to receive this impression; they saw, or thought they saw, many strange things, and were able to spread the fame and report of them abroad.

This conduct had the desired success. The whole country was alarmed, and full of the news of a great prophet's being come among them. They were too full of their own imagination, to attend to the notion of a kingdom of heaven: here was one mighty in deed and in word; and they concluded he was

the very prince their nation expected. Accordingly they once attempted to set him up for a king; and at another time attended him in triumph to Jerusalem. This natural consequence opens the natural design of the attempt. If things had gone on successfully to the end, it is probable the kingdom of heaven would have been changed into a kingdom of this world. The design indeed failed, by the impatience and over-hastiness of the multitude, which alarmed not only the chief of the Jews, but the Roman governor also.

The case being come to this point, and Jesus seeing that he could not escape being put to death, he declared that the antient prophets had foretold that the Messias should die upon a cross, and that he should rise again on the third day. Here was the foundation laid for the continuing this plot, which otherwise had died with its author. This was his legacy to his followers, which having been well managed by them and their successors, has at last produced a kingdom indeed, a kingdom of priests, who have governed the world for many ages, and have been strong enough to set kings and emperors at defiance. But so it happens, the antient prophets appealed to are still extant; and there being no such prophecies of the death and Resurrection of the Messias, they are a standing evidence against this story. As he expected, so it happened, that he died on a cross, and the prosecuting of this contrivance was left to the management of his disciples and followers. Their part is next to be considered—

*Mr. B.* My lord, since it is your opinion that the objections should be considered singly, and the

gentleman has carried this scheme down to the death of Christ, I think he is come to a proper rest; and that it is agreeable to your intention that I should be admitted to answer.

*Judge.* You say right, sir. Let us hear what you answer to this charge.

*Mr. B.* My lord, I was unwilling to disturb the gentleman by breaking in upon his scheme, otherwise I should have reminded him, that this court sits to examine evidence, and not to be entertained with fine imaginations. You have had a scheme laid before you, but not one bit of evidence to support any part of it; no, not so much as a pretence to any evidence. The gentleman, I remember, was very sorry that the old books of the Jews were lost, which would, as he supposes, have set forth all this matter; and I agree with him that he has much reason to be sorry, considering his great scarcity of proof. And since I have mentioned this, that I may not be to return to it again, I would ask the gentleman now, how he knows there ever were such books? And since if ever there were any, they are lost, how he knows what they contained? I doubt I shall have frequent occasion to ask such questions. It would indeed be a sufficient answer to the whole, to repeat the several suppositions that have been made, and to call for the evidence upon which they stand. This would plainly discover every part of the story to be mere fiction. But since the gentleman seems to have endeavoured to bring under one view the many insinuations which have of late been spread abroad by different hands, and to work the whole into a consistent scheme; I will, if your

patience shall permit, examine this plot, and see to whom the honour of the contrivance belongs.

The gentleman begins with expressing his amazement, 'that the Resurrection has been believed in all ages of the church.' If you ask him, Why? he must answer, Because the account of it is a forgery; for it is no amazement to him, surely, that a true account should be generally well received; so that this remark proceeds indeed from confidence rather than amazement, and comes only to this, that he is sure there was no Resurrection; and I am sure this is no evidence that there was none. Whether he is mistaken in his confidence, or I in mine, the court must judge.

The gentleman's observations, that the general belief of the Resurrection creates a presumption that it stands upon good evidence, and therefore people look no farther, but follow their fathers, as their fathers did their grandfathers before them, is in a great measure true, but it is a truth nothing to his purpose. He allows that the Resurrection has been believed in all ages of the church; that is, from the very time of the Resurrection: what then prevailed with those who first received it? They certainly did not follow the example of their fathers. Here then is the point, how did this fact gain credit in the world at first? Credit it has gained without doubt. If the multitude at present go into this belief through prejudice, example, and for company sake, they do in this case no more, nor otherwise, than they do in all cases. And it cannot be denied, but that the truth may be received through prejudice (as it is called) *i. e.* without examining the proof or merits of the cause, as well as falsehood. What

general truth is there, the merits of which all the world, or the hundredth part has examined? It is smartly said somewhere, *that the priest only continues what the nurse began*: but the life of the remark consists in the quaintness of the antithesis between the nurse and the priest; and owes its support much more to sound than to sense. For is it possible that children should not hear something of the common and popular opinions of their country, whether those opinions be true or false? Do they not learn the common maxims of reason this way? Perhaps every man first learnt from his nurse, that two and two make four; and whenever she divides an apple among her children, she instils into them this prejudice, that the whole is equal to its parts, and all the parts equal to the whole; and yet Sir Isaac Newton, (shame on him) what work has he made, what a building has he erected upon the foundation of this nursery learning? As to religion, there never was a religion, there never will be one, whether true or false, publicly owned in any country, but children have heard, and ever will hear, more or less, of it from those who are placed about them. And if this is, and ever must be the case, whether the religion be true or false; it is highly absurd to lay stress on this observation, when the question is about the truth of any religion; for the observation is indifferent to both sides of the question.

We are now, I think, got through the commonplace learning, which must for ever it seems attend upon questions of this nature; and are coming to the very merits of the cause.

And here the gentleman on the other side thought

proper to begin with an account of the people of the Jews, the people in whose country the fact is laid, and who were originally and in some respects principally concerned in its consequences.

They were, he says, a weak superstitious people, and lived under the influence of certain pretended prophecies and predictions; that upon this ground they had, some time before the appearance of Christ Jesus, conceived great expectations of the coming of a victorious prince, who should deliver them from the Roman yoke, and make them all kings and princes. He goes on then to observe, how liable the people were, in this state of things, to be imposed on, and led into rebellion, by any one who was bold enough to take upon him to personate the prince expected. He observes further, that in fact many such impostors did arise, and deceived multitudes to their ruin and destruction.

I have laid these things together, because I do not intend to dispute these matters with the gentleman. Whether the Jews were a weak and superstitious people, and influenced by false prophecies, or whether they had true prophecies among them, is not material to the present question; it is enough for the gentleman's argument, if I allow the fact to be as he has stated it, that they did expect a victorious prince, that they were upon this account exposed to be practised on by pretenders; and in fact were often so deluded.

This foundation being laid, it was natural to expect, and I believe your lordship and every one present did expect that the gentleman would go on to shew, that Jesus laid hold of this opportunity, struck in with the opinion of the people, and professed

himself to be the prince who was to work their deliverance. But so far it seems is this from being the case, that the charge upon Jesus is, that he took the contrary part, and set up in opposition to all the popular notions and prejudices of his country; that he interpreted the prophecies to another sense and meaning than his countrymen did; and by his expositions took away all hopes of their ever seeing the victorious deliverer so much wanted and expected.

I know not how to bring the gentleman's premises and his conclusion to any agreement, they seem to be at a great variance at present. If it be the likeliest method for an impostor to succeed, to build on the popular opinions, prejudices and prophecies of the people; then surely an impostor cannot possibly take a worse method than to set up in opposition to all the prejudices, and prophecies of the country. Where was the art and cunning then of taking this method? Could any thing be expected from it but hatred, contempt, and persecution? And did Christ in fact meet with any other treatment from the Jews? And yet when he found, as the gentleman allows he did, that he must perish in this attempt, did he change his note? Did he come about, and drop any intimations agreeable to the notions of the people? It is not pretended. This, which in any other case which ever happened, would be taken to be a plain mark of great honesty, or great stupidity, or of both, is in the present case, art, policy, and contrivance.

But it seems Jesus dared not set up to be the victorious prince expected, for victories are not to be counterfeited. I hope it was no crime in him

that he did not assume this false character, and try to abuse the credulity of the people? If he had done so, it certainly would have been a crime; and therefore in this point at least he is innocent. I do not suppose the gentleman imagines that the Jews were well founded in their expectation of a temporal prince; and therefore when Christ opposed this conceit at the manifest hazard of his life, as he certainly had truth on his side, so the presumption is, that it was for the sake of truth, that he exposed himself.

No; he wanted, we are told, the common and necessary foundation for a new revelation, the authority of an old one, to build on. Very well; I will not enquire how common or how necessary this foundation is to a new revelation: for be that case as it will, it is evident that in the method Christ took, he had not, nor could have the supposed advantage of such foundation. For why is this foundation necessary? A friend of the gentleman's shall tell you. 'Because it must be difficult, if not impossible, to introduce among men (who in all civilized countries are bred up in the belief of some revealed religion) a revealed religion wholly new, or such as has no reference to a preceding one; for that would be to combat all men on too many respects, and not to proceed on a sufficient number of principles necessary to be assented to by those on whom the first impressions of a new religion are proposed to be made.' You see now the reason of the necessity of this foundation; it is that the new teacher may have the advantage of old popular opinions, and fix himself upon the prejudices of the people. Had Christ any such advantages? or did he seek any

such? The people expected a victorious prince, he told them they were mistaken; they held as sacred the traditions of the elders, he told them those traditions made the law of God of none effect; they valued themselves for being the peculiar people of God, he told them that people from all quarters of the world should be the people of God, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom; they thought God could be worshipped only at Jerusalem, he told them God might and should be worshipped every where; they were superstitious in observance of the sabbath; he, according to their reckoning, broke it frequently; in a word, their washing of hands and pots; their superstitious distinctions of meats, their prayers in public, their villainies in secret, were all reprov'd, exposed, and condemned by him; and the cry ran strongly against him, that he came to destroy the law and the prophets. And now, sir, what advantage had Christ of your common and necessary foundation? What sufficient number of principles owned by the people did he build on? If he adhered to the old revelation in the true sense, or (which is sufficient to the present argument) in a sense not received by the people, it was in truth the greatest difficulty he had to struggle with; and therefore what could tempt him, but purely a regard to truth, to take upon himself so many difficulties, which might have been avoided could he have been but silent as to the old revelation, and left the people to their imaginations?

To carry on this plot, we are told, that the next thing which Jesus did, was to make choice of proper persons to be his disciples; the gentleman has given

us their character; but, as I suppose, he has more employment for them before he has done, I desire to defer the consideration of their abilities and conduct till I hear what work he has for them to do; I would only observe that thus far this plot differs from all that ever I heard of: impostors generally take advantage of the prejudices of the people; generally too they make choice of cunning dexterous fellows to manage under them; but in this case Jesus opposed all the notions of the people; and made choice of simpletons it seems to conduct his contrivances.

But what design, what real end was carrying on all this while? Why, the gentleman tells us, that the very thing disclaimed, the temporal kingdom, was the real thing aimed at under this disguise; he told the people there was no foundation to expect a temporal deliverer, warned them against all who should set up those pretensions; he declared there was no ground from the antient prophecies to expect such a prince, and yet by these very means he was working his way to an opportunity of declaring himself to be the very prince the people wanted. We are still upon the marvellous; every step opens new wonders. I blame not the gentleman; for what but this can be imagined to give any account of these measures imputed to Christ? Be this never so unlikely, yet this is the only thing that can be said. Had Christ been charged with enthusiasm, it would not have been necessary to assign a reason for his conduct; madness is unaccountable; *ratione modoque tractari non vult*. But when design, cunning, and fraud are made the charge, and carried to such an height, as to suppose him to be a party to the

contrivance of a sham resurrection for himself, it is necessary to say to what end this cunning tended ; it was, we are told, to a kingdom ; and indeed the temptation was little enough, considering that the chief conductor of the plot was to be crucified for his pains. But were the means made use of at all probable to attain the end ? Yes, says the gentleman, that cannot be disputed ; for they had really this effect, the people would have made him king. Very well : Why was he not king then ? Why, it happened unluckily that he would not accept the offer, but withdrew himself from the multitude and lay concealed till they were dispersed. It will be said perhaps that Jesus was a better judge of affairs than the people, and saw that it was not yet time to accept the offer. Be it so ; let us see then what follows.

The government was alarmed, and Jesus was looked on as a person dangerous to the state ; and he had discernment enough to see that his death was determined and inevitable : what does he do then ? Why, to make the best of a bad cause, and to save the benefit of his undertaking to those who were to succeed him, he pretends to prophesy of his death, which he knew could not be avoided : and further, that he should rise again the third day.—Men do not use to play tricks *in articulo Mortis* ; but this plot had nothing common, nothing in the ordinary way. But what if it should appear, that after the foretelling of his death (through despair of his fortunes it is said) he had it in his power to set up for a king once more, and once more refused the opportunity ? Men in despair lay hold on the least help, and never refuse the greatest.

Now the case was really so ; after he had foretold his crucifixion, he came to Jerusalem in the triumphant manner the gentleman mentioned ; the people strewed his way with boughs and flowers, and were all at his devotion ; the Jewish governors lay still for fear of the people. Why was not this opportunity laid hold on to seize the kingdom, or at least to secure himself from the ignominious death he expected ? For whose sake was he contented to die ? For whose sake did he contrive this plot of his Resurrection ? Wife and children he had none ; his nearest relations gave little credit to him ; his disciples were not fit even to be trusted with the secret, nor capable to manage any advantage that could arise from it. However, the gentleman tells us, a kingdom has arisen out of this plot, a kingdom of priests. But when did it arise ? Some hundred years after the death of Christ, in opposition to his will, and almost to the subversion of his religion. And yet we are told this kingdom was the thing he had in view. I am apt to think the gentleman is persuaded that the dominion he complains of is contrary to the spirit of the gospel ; I am sure some of his friends have taken great pains to prove it so. How then can it be charged as the intention of the gospel to introduce it ? Whatever the case was, it cannot surely be suspected that Christ died to make popes and cardinals. The alterations which have happened in the doctrines and practices of churches, since the Christian religion was settled by those who had an authentic commission to settle it, are quite out of the question, when the enquiry is about the truth of the Christian religion. Christ and his apostles did not vouch for

the truth of all that should be taught in the church in future times; nay, they foretold and forewarned the world against such corrupt teachers. It is therefore absurd to challenge the religion of Christ because of the corruptions which have spread among Christians; the gospel has no more concern with them, and ought to be no more charged with them than with the doctrines of the Alcoran.

There is but one observation more, I think, which the gentleman made under this head: Jesus, he says, referred to the authority of antient prophecies to prove that the Messiah was to die and rise again; the antient books referred to are extant, and no such prophecies, he says, are to be found. Now, whether the gentleman can find these prophecies or no, is not material to the present question. It is allowed that Christ foretold his own death and Resurrection; if the Resurrection was managed by fraud, Christ was certainly in the fraud himself, by foretelling the fraud that was to happen; disprove therefore the Resurrection, and we shall have no further occasion for prophecy. On the other side; by foretelling the Resurrection, he certainly put the proof of his mission on the truth of the event. Whether it be the character of the Messiah in the antient prophets or no, that he should die and rise again; without doubt Jesus is not the Messiah, if he did not rise again; for by his own prophecy he made it part of the character of the Messiah. If the event justified the prediction, it is such an evidence as no man of sense and reason can reject. One would naturally think, that the foretelling his Resurrection, and giving such public notice to expect it, that his keenest enemies were fully apprized of it, carried with it the greatest mark

of sincere dealing ; it stands thus far clear of the suspicion of fraud, and had it proceeded from enthusiasm, and a heated imagination, the dead body at least would have rested in the grave, and without further evidence have confuted such pretensions ; and since the dead body was not only carried openly to the grave, but there watched and guarded, and yet could never afterwards be found, never heard of more as a dead body, there must of necessity have been either a real miracle, or a great fraud in this case ; enthusiasm dies with the man, and has no operation on his dead body ; there is therefore here no medium ; you must either admit the miracle or prove the fraud.

*Judge.* *Mr. A.* you are at liberty either to reply to what has been said under this head, or to go on with your cause.

*Mr. A.* My lord, the observations I laid before you were introductory to the main evidence on which the merits of the cause must rest ; the gentleman concluded that here must be a real miracle or a great fraud ; a fraud, he means, to which Jesus in his life-time was a party ; there is, he says, no medium ; I beg his pardon : why might it not be an enthusiasm in the master which occasioned the prediction, and fraud in the servants who put it in execution ?

*Mr. B.* My lord, this is new matter, and not a reply ; the gentleman opened this transaction as a fraud from one end to the other. Now he supposes Christ to have been an honest, poor enthusiast, and the disciples only to be cheats.

*Judge.* Sir, if you go to new matter, the counsel on the other side must be admitted to answer.

*Mr. A.* My lord, I have no such intention; I was observing, that the account I gave of Jesus was only to introduce the evidence that is to be laid before the court; it cannot be expected that I should know all the secret designs of this contrivance, especially considering that we have but short accounts of this affair, and those too conveyed to us through the hands of friends and parties to the plot; in such a case it is enough if we can imagine what the views probably were; and in such case too it must be very easy for a gentleman of parts to raise contrary imaginations, and to argue plausibly from them. But the gentleman has rightly observed, that if the Resurrection be a fraud, there is an end of all pretensions, good or bad, that were to be supported by it; therefore I shall go on to prove this fraud, which is one main part of the cause now to be determined.

I beg leave to remind you, that Jesus in his lifetime foretold his death, and that he should rise again the third day. The first part of his prediction was accomplished; he died upon the cross, and was buried. I will not trouble you with the particulars of his crucifixion, death, and burial; it is a well known story.

*Mr. B.* My lord, I desire to know whether the gentleman charges any fraud upon this part of the history; perhaps he may be of opinion by and by that there was a sleight of hand in the crucifixion, and that Christ only counterfeited death.

*Mr. A.* No, no; have no such fears; he was not crucified by his disciples, but by the Romans and the Jews; and they were in very good earnest. I will prove beyond contradiction that the dead

body was fairly laid in the tomb, and the tomb sealed up; and it will be well for you if you can get it as fairly out again.

*Judge.* Go on with your evidence.

*Mr. A.* My lord, the crucifixion being over, the dead body was conveyed to the sepulchre; and in the general opinion there seemed to be an end of the whole design. But the governors of the Jews, watchful for the safety of the people, called to mind, that Jesus in his life-time had said that he would rise again on the third day. It may at first sight seem strange that they should give any attention to such a prophecy, a prophecy big with confidence and presumption, and which to the common sense of mankind carried its confutation along with it. And 'there is no other nation in the world which would not have slighted such a vain prognostication of a known impostor.' But they had warning to be watchful. It was not long before that the people 'had like to have been fatally deluded and imposed on by him in the pretended resurrection of Lazarus.' They had fully discovered the cheat in the case of Lazarus, and had narrowly escaped the dangerous consequences of it. And though Jesus was dead, yet he had many disciples and followers alive, who were ready enough to combine in any fraud, to verify the prediction of their master. Should they succeed, the rulers foresaw the consequence in this case would be more fatal than those which before they had narrowly escaped. Upon this account they addressed themselves to the Roman governor, told him how the case was, and desired that he would grant them a guard to watch the sepulchre; that the service would not be long, for the prediction

limited the Resurrection to the third day ; and when that was over, the soldiers might be released from the duty. Pilate granted the request, and a guard was set to watch the sepulchre.

This was not all ; the chief priests took another method to prevent all frauds, and it was the best that could possibly be taken ; which was to seal up the door of the sepulchre. To understand to what purpose this caution was used, you need only consider what is intended by sealing up doors, and boxes, or writings ; is it not for the satisfaction of all the parties concerned, that they may be sure things are in the state they left them, when they come and find their seals not injured ? This was the method used by Darius, when Daniel was cast into the lion's den ; he sealed the door of the den ; and for what purpose ? Was it not to satisfy himself and his court that no art had been used to preserve Daniel ? And when he came and saw Daniel safe, and his own seal untouched, he was satisfied ; and indeed if we consider the thing rightly, a seal thus used imports a covenant. If you deliver writings to a person sealed, and he accepts them so, your delivery and his acceptance implies a covenant between you that the writings shall be delivered and the seal whole ; and should the seal be broken, it would be a manifest fraud and breach of trust ; nay, so strongly is this covenant implied, that there needs no special agreement in the case ; it is a compact which men are put under by the law of nations, and the common consent of mankind. When you send a letter sealed to the post-house, you have not indeed a special agreement with all persons through whose hands it passes that it shall

not be opened by any hand but his only to whom it is directed, yet men know themselves to be under this restraint, and that it is unlawful and dishonourable to transgress it.

Since then the sepulchre was sealed; since the seal imported a covenant, consider who were the parties to this covenant; they could be no other than the chief priests on the one side, the apostles on the other; to prove this no special agreement need be shown; on one side there was a concern to see the prediction fulfilled; on the other, to prevent fraud in fulfilling it; the sum of their agreement was naturally this, that the seals should be opened at the time appointed for the Resurrection, that all parties might see and be satisfied whether the dead body was come to life or no.

What now would any reasonable man expect from these circumstances? Do not you expect to hear that the chief priests and the apostles met at the time appointed, opened the seals, and that the matter in dispute was settled beyond all controversy one way or other? But see how it happened; the seals were broken, the body stolen away in the night by the disciples, none of the chief priests present, or summoned to see the seals opened; the guards when examined were forced to confess the truth, though joined with an acknowledgment of their guilt, which made them liable to be punished by Pilate; they confessed that they were asleep, and in the mean time that the body was stolen away by the disciples.

This evidence of the Roman soldiers, and the far stronger evidence arising from the clandestine manner of breaking up the seals, are sufficient proofs of fraud.

But there is another circumstance in the case of equal weight; though the seals did not prevent the cheat entirely, yet they effectually falsified the prediction; according to the prediction, Jesus was to rise on the third day, or after the third day; at this time the chief priests intended to be present, and probably would have been attended by a great multitude; this made it impossible to play any tricks at that time, and therefore the apostles were forced to hasten the plot, and accordingly the Resurrection happened a day before its time; for the body was buried on the Friday, and was gone early in the morning on Sunday.

These are plain facts, facts drawn from the accounts given us by those who are friends to the belief of the Resurrection. The gentleman will not call these imaginations, or complain that I have given him schemes instead of evidence.

*Mr. B.* My lord, I am now to consider that part of the argument upon which the gentleman lays the greatest stress. He has given us his evidence, mere evidence, he says, unmixed, and clear of all schemes and imaginations. In one thing indeed he has been as good as his word; he has proved beyond contradiction that Christ died and was laid in the sepulchre; for without doubt, when the Jews sealed the stone, they took care to see that the body was there, otherwise their precaution was useless. He has proved too, that the prediction of Christ concerning his own Resurrection, was a thing publicly known in all Jerusalem; for he owns that this gave occasion for all the care that was taken to prevent fraud. If this open prediction implies a fraudulent design, the evidence is strong with the gentleman;

but if it shall appear to be, what it really was, the greatest mark that could be given of sincerity and plain dealing in the whole affair, the evidence will be still as strong, but the weight of it will fall on the wrong side for the gentleman's purpose.

In the next place, the gentleman seems to be at a great loss to account for the credit which the chief priests gave to the prediction of the Resurrection, by the care they took to prevent it; he thinks the thing in itself was too extravagant and absurd to deserve any regard; and that no one would have regarded such a prediction in any other time or place. I agree with the gentleman entirely; but then I demand of him a reason why the chief priests were under any concern about this prediction; was it because they had plainly discovered him to be a cheat and an impostor? It is impossible; this reason would have convinced them of the folly and presumption of the prediction; it must therefore necessarily be that they had discovered something in the life and actions of Christ which raised their jealousy, and made them listen to a prophecy in this case, which in any other case they would have despised; and what could this be but the secret conviction they were under by his many miracles of his extraordinary power? This care therefore of the chief priests over his dead helpless body, is a lasting testimony of the mighty works which Jesus did in his life-time; for had the Jews been persuaded that he performed no wonders in his life, I think they would not have been afraid of seeing any done by him after his death.

But the gentleman is of another mind; he says they had discovered a plain cheat in the case of

Lazarus, whom Christ had pretended to raise from the dead, and therefore they took all this care to guard against a like cheat.

I begin now to want evidence; I am forbid to call this imagination, what else to call it I know not; there is not the least intimation given from history that there was any cheat in the case of Lazarus, or that any one suspected a cheat. Lazarus lived in the country after he was raised from the dead, and though his life was secretly and basely sought after, yet nobody had the courage to call him to a trial for his part of the cheat. It may be said perhaps the rulers were terrified; very well, but they were not terrified when they had Christ in their possession, when they brought him to a trial; why did they not then object this cheat to Christ? It would have been much to their purpose; instead of that, they accuse him of a design to pull down their temple, to destroy their law, and of blasphemy; but not one word of any fraud in the case of Lazarus, or any other case.

But not to enter into the merits of this cause, which has in it too many circumstances for your present consideration; let us take the case to be as the gentleman states it, that the cheat in the case of Lazarus was detected; what consequence is to be expected? In all other cases, impostors, once discovered, grow odious and contemptible, and quite incapable of doing further mischief; so little are they regarded, that even when they tell the truth they are neglected. Was it so in this case? No, says the gentleman, the Jews were the more careful that Christ should not cheat them in his own Resurrection. Surely this is a most singular case; when

the people thought him a prophet, the chief priests sought to kill him, and thought his death would put an end to his pretensions; when they and the people had discovered him to be a cheat, then they thought him not safe, even when he was dead, but were afraid he should prove a true prophet, and according to his own prediction, rise again. A needless, a preposterous fear!

In the next place, the gentleman tells us how proper the care was that the chief priests took. I agree perfectly with him; human policy could not invent a more proper method to guard against and prevent all fraud; they delivered the sepulchre, with the dead body in it, to a company of Roman soldiers, who had orders from their officer to watch the sepulchre; their care went further still, they sealed the door of the sepulchre.

Upon this occasion the gentleman has explained the use of seals when applied to such purposes; they imply, he says, a covenant, that the things sealed up shall remain in the condition they are till the parties to the sealing are agreed to open them. I see no reason to enter into the learning about seals, let it be as the gentleman has opened it; what then?

Why then it seems the apostles and chief priests were in a covenant that there should be no Resurrection, at least, no opening of the door till they met together at an appointed time to view and unseal the door.

Your lordship and the court will now consider the probability of this supposition. When Christ was seized and carried to his trial, his disciples fled, and hid themselves for fear of the Jews, out of

a just apprehension that they should, if apprehended, be sacrificed with their master; Peter indeed followed him, but his courage soon failed, and it is well known in what manner he denied him. After the death of Christ, his disciples were so far from being ready to engage for his Resurrection, or to enter into terms and agreements for the manner in which it should be done, that they themselves did not believe it ever would be; they gave over all hopes and thoughts of it; and far from entering into engagements with the chief priests, their whole concern was to keep themselves concealed from them: this is a well known case, and I will not trouble you with particular authorities to prove this truth. Can any man now in his right senses think that the disciples under these circumstances entered into this covenant with the Jews? I believe the gentleman does not think it, and for that reason says, that seals so used import a covenant without a special agreement; be it so, and it must then be allowed that the apostles were no more concerned in these seals than every other man in the country, and no more answerable for them; for the covenant reached to every body as well as to them, since they were under no special contract.

But I beg pardon for spending your time unnecessarily, when the simple plain account of this matter will best answer all these jealousies and suspicions. The Jews it is plain were exceedingly solicitous about this event; for this reason they obtained a guard from Pilate; and when they had, they were still suspicious lest their guards should deceive them, and enter into combination against them. To secure this point, they sealed the door,

and required the guards to deliver up the sepulchre to them sealed as it was ; this is the natural and true account of the matter. Do but consider it in a parallel case : suppose a prince should set a guard at the door of his treasury, and the officer who placed the guard should seal the door, and say to the soldiers, you shall be answerable for the seal if I find it broken ; would not all the world understand the seal to be fixed to guard against the soldiers, who might, though employed to keep off others, be ready enough to pilfer themselves ? This is in all such cases, but a necessary care ; you may place guards, and when you do, all is in their power : *Et quis custodes custodiat ipsos ?*

But it seems that notwithstanding all this care the seals were broken and the body gone ; if you complain of this, sir, demand satisfaction of your guards, they only are responsible for it ; the disciples had no more to do in it than you or I.

The guards, the gentleman says, have confessed the truth, and owned that they were asleep, and that the disciples in the mean time stole away the body ; I wish the guards were in court, I would ask them how they came to be so punctual in relating what happened when they were asleep ? what induced them to believe that the body was stolen at all ? what, that it was stolen by the disciples, since by their own confession they were asleep, and saw nothing, saw nobody ? But since they are not to be had, I would desire to ask the gentleman the same questions, and whether he has any authorities in point to show that ever any man was admitted as an evidence in any court to prove a fact which happened when he was asleep ? I see

the gentleman is uneasy, I will press the matter no further.

As this story has no evidence to support it, so neither has it any probability. The gentleman has given you the character of the disciples, that they were weak, ignorant men, full of the popular prejudices and superstitions of their country, which stuck close to them notwithstanding their long acquaintance with their master. The apostles are not much wronged in this account; and is it likely that such men should engage in so desperate a design, as to steal away the body in opposition to the combined power of the Jews and Romans? What could tempt them to it? What good could the dead body do them? Or if it could have done them any, what hope had they to succeed in their attempt? A dead body is not to be removed by sleight of hand, it requires many hands to move it; besides, the great stone at the mouth of the sepulchre was to be removed, which could not be done silently, or by men walking on tip-toes to prevent discovery; so that if the guards had really been asleep, yet there was no encouragement to go on in this enterprize; for it is hardly possible to suppose, but that rolling away the stone, moving the body, the hurry and confusion in carrying it off, must awaken them.

But supposing the thing practicable, yet the attempt was such as the disciples consistently with their own notions could not undertake. The gentleman says they continued all their master's lifetime to expect to see him a temporal prince; and a friend of the gentleman's has observed, what is equally true, that they had the same expectation

after his death. Consider now their case; their master was dead, and they are to contrive to steal away his body; for what? Did they expect to make a king of the dead body if they could get it into their power? Or did they think if they had it they could raise it to life again? If they trusted so far to their master's prediction as to expect his Resurrection (which I think it is evident they did not) could they yet think the Resurrection depended on their having the dead body? It is in all views absurd. But the gentleman supposes that they meant to carry on the design for themselves in their master's name, if they could but have persuaded the people to believe him risen from the dead; but he does not consider that by this supposition he strips the disciples of every part of their character at once, and presents to us a new set of men, in every respect different from the former; the former disciples were plain, weak men; but these are bold, hardy, cunning, and contriving; the former were full of the superstition of their country, and expected a prince from the authority of their prophets; but these are despisers of the prophets, and of the notions of their countrymen, and are designing to turn these fables to their own advantage; for it cannot be supposed that they believed the prophets, and at the same time thought to accomplish or defeat them by so manifest a cheat, to which they themselves at least were conscious.

But let us take leave of these suppositions, and see how the true evidence in this case stands. Guards were placed and they did their duty; but what are guards and centinels against the power of God? An angel of the Lord opened the sepulchre, the

## THE TRIAL OF

guards saw him, and became like dead men ; this account they gave to the chief priests ; who still persisting in their obstinacy, bribed the guards to tell the contradictory story, of their being asleep, and the body stolen.

I cannot but observe to your lordship, that all these circumstances so much questioned and suspected, were necessary circumstances, supposing the Resurrection to be true ; the seal was broken, the body came out of the sepulchre, the guards were placed in vain to prevent it ; be it so, I desire to know whether the gentleman thinks that the seal put God under covenant : or could prescribe to him a method of performing this great work ? Or whether he thinks the guards were placed to maintain the seal in opposition to the power of God ? If he will maintain neither of these points, then the opening the seals, notwithstanding the guard set upon them, will be an evidence, not of the fraud, but of the power of the Resurrection ; and the guards will have nothing to answer for, but only this, that they were not stronger than God. The seal was a proper check upon the guards, the Jews had no other meaning in it ; they could not be so stupid as to imagine that they could by this contrivance disappoint the designs of providence ; and it is surprising to hear these circumstances made use of to prove the Resurrection to be a fraud, which yet could not but happen supposing the Resurrection to be true.

But there is another circumstance still, which the gentleman reckons very material, and upon which I find great stress is laid ; the Resurrection happened, we are told, a day sooner than the prediction

imported ; the reason assigned for it is, that the execution of the plot at the time appointed was rendered impracticable, because the chief priests, and probably great numbers of the people were prepared to visit the sepulchre at that time ; and therefore the disciples were under a necessity of hastening their plot.

This observation is entirely inconsistent with the supposition upon which the reasoning stands. The gentleman has all along supposed the Resurrection to have been managed by fraud, and not by violence ; and indeed violence, if there had been an opportunity of using it, would have been insignificant ; beating the guards, and removing the dead body by force, would have destroyed all pretence to a Resurrection. Now surely the guards, supposing them not to be enough in number to withstand all violence, were at least sufficient to prevent or to discover fraud ; what occasion then to hasten the plot for fear of numbers meeting at the tomb, since there were numbers always present sufficient to discover any fraud ? the only method that could be used in the case.

Suppose then that we could not give a satisfactory account of the way of reckoning the time from the crucifixion to the Resurrection ; yet this we can say, that the Resurrection happened during the time that the guards had the sepulchre in keeping, and it is impossible to imagine what opportunity this could give to fraud ; had the time been delayed, the guards removed, and then a Resurrection pretended, it might with some colour of reason have been said, why did he not come within his time ? why did he choose to come after his time, when all witnesses,

who had patiently expected the appointed hour, were withdrawn? But now what is to be objected? You think he came too soon; but were not your guards at the door when he came? Did they not see what happened? And what other satisfaction could you have had supposing he had come a day later?

By saying of this, I do not mean to decline the gentleman's objection, which is founded upon a mistake of a way of speaking, common to the Jews and other people; who, when they name any number of days and years, include the first and the last of the days or years to make up the sum. Christ, alluding to his own Resurrection, says, *In three days I will raise it up.* The angels report his prediction thus: *The son of man shall be crucified, and the third day rise again.* Elsewhere it is said, *After three days;* and again, that he was to be in the bowels of the earth *three days and three nights.* These expressions are equivalent to each other, for we always reckon the night into the day when we reckon by so many days. If you agree to do a thing ten days hence, you stipulate for forbearance for the nights as well as days; and therefore reckoning two days, and two days and two nights, are the same thing. That the expression, *after three days,* means inclusive days, is proved by Grotius on Matt. xxvii. 63. and by others. The prediction therefore was, that he would rise on the third day. Now, he was crucified on Friday, and buried; he lay in the grave all Saturday, and rose early on Sunday morning; but the gentleman thinks he ought not to have risen till Monday. Pray try what the use of common language requires to be

understood in a like case. Suppose you were told that your friend sickened on Friday, was let blood on Saturday, and the third day he died ;—what day do you think he died on? If you have any doubt about it, put the question to the first plain man you meet, and he will resolve it. The Jews could have no doubt in this case, for so they practised in one of the highest points of their law ; every male child was to be circumcised on the eighth day. How did they reckon the days? Why, the day of the birth was one, and the day of the circumcision another ; and though a child was born towards the very end of the first day, he was capable of circumcision on any time of the eighth day ; and therefore it is not new nor strange that the third day in our case should be reckoned into the number, though Christ rose at the very beginning of it ; it is more strange to reckon whole years in this manner, and yet this is the constant method observed in Ptolemy's canon, the most valuable piece of antient Chronology, next to the Bible, now extant. If a king lived over the first day of a year, and died the week after, that whole year is reckoned to his reign.

I have now gone through the several objections upon this head ; what credit they may gain in this age I know not ; but it is plain they had no credit when they were first spread abroad ; nay, it is evident that the very persons who set abroad this story of the body being stolen, did not believe it themselves. And not to insist here upon the plain fact, which was that the guards were hired to tell this lie by the chief priests, it will appear from the after-conduct of the chief priests themselves, that they were conscious that the story was false. Not long

after the Resurrection of Christ, the disciples having received new power from above, appeared publicly in Jerusalem, and in the very temple, and testified the Resurrection of Christ, even before those who had murdered him. What now do the chief priests do? They seize upon the apostles, they threaten them, they beat them, they scourge them, and all to stop their mouths, insisting that they should say no more of the matter. But why did they not, when they had the disciples in their power, charge them directly with their notorious cheat in stealing the body, and expose them to the people as impostors? This had been much more to their purpose than all their menaces and ill usage, and would more effectually have undeceived the people; but of this not one word is said; they try to murder them, enter into combinations to assassinate them, prevail with Herod to put one of them to death, but not so much as a charge against them of any fraud in the Resurrection; their orator Tertullus, who could not have missed so fine a topic of declamation, had there been but a suspicion to support it, is quite silent on this head, and is content to flourish on the common-place of sedition and heresy, profaning the temple, and the like, very trifles to his cause, in comparison to the other accusation, had there been any ground to make use of it; and yet as it happens, we are sure the very question of the Resurrection came under debate; for Festus tells king Agrippa, that the Jews had certain questions against Paul, *of one Jesus which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.* After this, Agrippa hears Paul himself, and had he suspected, much less had he been convinced that there was a cheat in the Resurrection,

he would hardly have said to Paul at the end of the conference, *Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.*

But let us see what the council and senate of the children of Israel thought of this matter in the most solemn and serious deliberation they ever had about it: not long after the Resurrection the apostles were taken; the high-priest thought the matter of that weight, that he summoned the council and senate of the children of Israel; the apostles are brought before them, and make their defence; part of their defence is in these words, *The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree.* The defence was indeed a heavy charge upon the senate, and in the warmth of their anger, their first resolution was to slay them all; but Gamaliel, one of the council, stood up, and told them that the matter deserved more consideration, he recounted to them the history of several impostors who had perished, and concluded with respect to the case of the apostles then before them: *If this work be of men, it will come to nought, but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it, lest haply ye be found to fight against God.* The council agreed to this advice, and after some ill treatment the apostles were discharged. I ask now, and let any man of common sense answer: could Gamaliel possibly have given this advice, and supposed that the hand of God might be with the apostles, if he had known that there was a cheat discovered in the Resurrection of Jesus? Could the whole senate have followed this advice, had they believed the discovery of the cheat? Was there not among them one man wise enough to say, how can you suppose God to have any thing to do

in this affair, when the Resurrection of Jesus, upon which all depends, was a notorious cheat, and manifestly proved to be so? I should but lessen the weight of this authority by saying more, and therefore I will rest here, and give way to the gentleman to go on with his accusation.

*Mr. A.* My lord, before I proceed any further, I beg leave to say a few words in reply to what the gentleman has offered on this head.

The gentleman thinks that the detection in the case of Lazarus ought to have made the Jews quite unconcerned in the case of Jesus, and secure as to the event of his own Resurrection. He says very true, supposing their care had been for themselves; but governors have another care upon their hands, the care of their people; and it is not enough for them to guard against being imposed on themselves, they must be watchful to guard the multitude against frauds and deceits; the chief priests were satisfied indeed of the fraud in the case of Lazarus, yet they saw the people deceived by it; and for this reason, and not for their own satisfaction, they used the caution in the case of the Resurrection of Jesus, which I before laid before you; in so doing they are well justified, and the inconsistency charged on the other side, between their opinion of Jesus, and their fear of being imposed on by his pretended Resurrection, is fully answered.

The next observation relates to the seal of the sepulchre. The gentleman thinks the seal was used as a check upon the Roman soldiers; but what reason had the Jews to suspect them? they were not disciples of Jesus, they were servants of the Roman governor, and employed in the service of

the Jews ; and I leave it to the court to judge, whether the Jews set the seal to guard against their friends or their enemies ; but if the seals were really used against the guards, then the breaking of the seals is a proof that the guards were corrupted ; and if so, it is easy to conceive how the body was removed.

As to the disciples, the gentleman observes, that the part allotted them in the management of the Resurrection supposes an unaccountable change in their character ; it will not be long before the gentleman will have occasion for as great a change in their character ; for these weak men you will find soon employed in converting the world, and sent to appear before kings and princes in the name of their master ; soon you will see them grow wise and powerful, and every way qualified for their extensive and important business. The only difference between me and the gentleman on the other side will be found to be this, that I date this change a little earlier than he does ; a small matter surely, to determine the right of this controversy.

The last observation relates to king Agrippa's complaisance to Paul, and Gamaliel's advice. I cannot answer for Agrippa's meaning, but certainly he meant but little ; and if this matter is to be tried by his opinion, we know that he never did turn Christian. As for Gamaliel, it is probable that he saw great numbers of the people engaged zealously in favour of the apostles, and might think it prudent to pass the matter over in silence, and not to come to extremities ; this is a common case in all governments, the multitude and their leaders often escape punishment, not because they do not deserve it, but

because it is not in some circumstances prudent to exact it.

I pass over these things lightly, because the next article contains the great, to us indeed who live at this distance, the only great question ; for whatever reason the Jews had to believe the Resurrection, it is nothing to us, unless the story has been conveyed to us upon such evidence as is sufficient to support the weight laid on it.

My lord, we are now to enter upon the last and main article of this case ; the nature of the evidence upon which the credit of the Resurrection stands. Before I enquire into the qualifications of the particular witnesses whose words we are desired to take in this case ; I would ask, why this evidence, which manifestly relates to the most essential point of Christianity, was not put beyond all exception ? Many of the miracles of Christ are said to be done in the streets, nay, even in the temple, under the observation of all the world ; but the like is not so much as pretended as to this ; nay, we have it upon the confession of Peter, the ringleader of the apostles, that Christ appeared *not unto all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before God*. Why picking and calling of witnesses in this case more than in any other ? Does it not import some suspicion, raise some jealousy that this case would not bear the public light ?

I would ask more particularly, why did not Jesus after his Resurrection appear openly to the chief priests and rulers of the Jews ? Since his commission related to them in an especial manner, why were not his credentials laid before them ? The Resurrection is acknowledged to be the chief proof

of his mission, why then was it concealed from those who were more than all others concerned in the event of his mission? Suppose an ambassador from some foreign prince should come into England, make his public entry through the city, pay and receive visits, and at last refuse to show any letters of credence, or to wait on the king, what would you think of him? Whatever you would think in that case you must think in this, for there is no difference between them.

But we must take the evidence as it is; it was thought proper in this case to have select, chosen witnesses; and we must now consider who they were, and what reason we have to take their word.

The first witness was an angel, or angels; they appeared like men to some women who went early to the sepulchre; if they appeared like men, upon what ground are we to take them for angels? the women saw men, and therefore they can witness only the seeing of men; but I suppose it is the women's judgment, and not their evidence, that we are to follow in this case. Here then we have a story of one apparition to support the credit of another apparition; and the first apparition hath not so much as the evidence of the women to support it, but is grounded on their superstition, ignorance, and fear; every country can afford an hundred instances of this kind; and there is this common to them all, that as learning and common sense prevail in any country, they die away, and are no more heard of.

The next witnesses are the women themselves; the wisest men can hardly guard themselves against the fears of superstition, poor silly women therefore in this case must needs be unexceptionable witnesses,

and fit to be admitted into the number of the chosen witnesses to attest this fact. One part of the account given of them is very rational, that they were surprised and frightened beyond measure; and I leave it to your lordship and the court to judge how well qualified they were to give a just relation of what passed.

After this, Jesus appears to two of his disciples as they were upon a journey; he joins them, and introduces a discourse about himself, and spent much time, till it began to grow dark, in expounding the prophecies relating to the Death and Resurrection of the Messias; all this while the disciples knew him not; but then going into an house to lodge together, at supper he broke bread, and gave it to them; immediately they knew him, immediately he vanished; here then are two witnesses more, but what will you call them? Eye-witnesses? Why, their eyes were open and they had their senses when he reasoned with them, and they knew him not; so far therefore they are witnesses that it was not he; tell us therefore upon what account you reject the evidence of their sense before the breaking of bread, and insist on it afterwards? And why did Jesus vanish as soon as known? which has more of the air of an apparition than of the appearance of a real man restored to life.

Cleopas, who was one of these two disciples, finds out the apostles, to make the report of what had passed to them; no sooner was the story told, but Jesus appears among them; they were all frightened and confounded, and thought they saw a spectre; he rebukes them for infidelity, and their slowness in

believing the prophecies of his Resurrection; and though he refused before to let the women touch him (a circumstance which I ought not to have omitted) yet now he invites the apostles to handle him, to examine his hands and feet, and search the wounds of the cross. But what body was it they examined? the same that came in when the doors were shut, the same that vanished from the two disciples, the same that the women might not touch; in a word, a body quite different from a human body, which we know cannot pass through walls, or appear or disappear at pleasure. What then could their hands or eyes inform them of in this case? Besides, is it credible that God should raise a body imperfectly, with the very wounds in it of which it died? Or if the wounds were such as destroyed the body before, how could a natural body subsist with them afterwards?

There are more appearances of Jesus recorded, but so much of the same kind, so liable to the same difficulties and objections, that I will not trouble your lordship and the court with a distinct enumeration of them; if the gentleman on the other side finds any advantage in any of them more than in these mentioned, I shall have an opportunity to consider them in my reply.

It may seem surprising to you perhaps that a matter of this moment was trusted upon such evidence as this; but it will be still more surprising to consider, that the several nations who received the gospel, and submitted to the faith of this article, had not even this evidence; for what people or nation had the evidence of the angels, the women, or even of all the apostles? so far from it, that every

country had its single apostle, and received the faith upon the credit of his single evidence ; we have followed our ancestors without enquiry, and if you examine the thing to the bottom, our belief was originally built upon the word of one man.

I shall trouble you, sir, but with one observation more, which is this ; that although in common life we act in a thousand instances upon the faith and credit of human testimony, yet the reason for so doing is not the same in the case before us ; in common affairs, where nothing is asserted but what is probable and possible, and according to the usual course of nature, a reasonable degree of evidence ought to determine every man ; for the very probability or possibility of the thing is a support to the evidence, and in such cases we have no doubt but a man's senses qualify him to be a witness ; but when the thing testified is contrary to the order of nature, and, at first sight at least impossible, what evidence can be sufficient to overturn the constant evidence of nature, which she gives us in the constant and regular method of her operations ? If a man tells me he has been in France, I ought to give a reason for not believing him ; but if he tells me he comes from the grave, what reason can he give why I should believe him ? In the case before us, since the body, raised from the grave, differed from common natural bodies, as we have before seen, how can I be assured that the apostles' senses qualified them to judge at all of this body, whether it was the same or not the same which was buried ; they handled the body, which yet could pass through doors and walls ; they saw it, and sometimes knew it, at other times knew it not ; in a word, it seems

to be a case exempt from human evidence. Men have limited senses, and a limited reason; when they act within their limits we may give credit to them, but when they talk of things removed beyond the reach of their senses and reason, we must quit our own if we believe theirs.

*Mr. B.* My lord, in answering the objections under this head, I shall find myself obliged to change the order in which the gentleman thought proper to place them; he began with complaining that Christ did not appear publicly to the Jews after his Resurrection, and especially to the chief priests and rulers, and seemed to argue as if such evidence would have put the matter in question out of all doubt; but he concluded with an observation to prove that no evidence in this case can be sufficient; that a Resurrection is a thing in nature impossible, at least, impossible to be proved to the satisfaction of a rational enquirer. If this be the case, why does he require more evidence, since none can be sufficient? Or to what purpose is it to vindicate the particular evidence of the Resurrection of Christ, so long as this general prejudice, that a Resurrection is incapable of being proved, remains unremoved? I am under a necessity therefore to consider this observation in the first place, that it may not lie as a dead weight upon all I have to offer in support of the evidence of Christ's Resurrection.

The gentleman allows it to be reasonable in many cases to act upon the testimony and credit of others, but he thinks this should be confined to such cases where the thing testified is probable, possible, and according to the usual course of nature. The gentleman does not, I suppose, pretend to know

the extent of all natural possibilities, much less will he suppose them to be generally known; and therefore his meaning must be, that the testimony of witnesses is to be received only in cases which appear to us to be possible; in any other sense we can have no dispute; for mere impossibilities, which can never exist, can never be proved; taking the observation therefore in this sense, the proposition is this; that the testimony of others ought not to be admitted but in such matters as appear probable, at least possible to our conceptions: for instance; a man who lives in a warm climate, and never saw ice, ought upon no evidence to believe that rivers freeze and grow hard in cold countries; for it is improbable, contrary to the usual course of nature, and impossible according to his notion of things; and yet we all know that this is a plain, manifest case, discernible by the senses of men, of which therefore they are qualified to be good witnesses. An hundred such instances might be named, but it is needless; for surely nothing is more apparently absurd, than to make one man's ability in discerning, and his veracity in reporting plain facts, depend upon the skill or ignorance of the hearer. And what has the gentleman said upon this occasion against the Resurrection, more than any man who never saw ice might say against a hundred honest witnesses, who assert that water turns to ice in cold climates?

It is very true that men do not so easily believe, upon testimony of others, things which to them seem improbable or impossible; but the reason is not because the thing itself admits of no evidence, but because the hearer's pre-conceived opinion outweighs the credit of the reporter, and makes his veracity to

be called in question ; for instance, it is natural for a stone to roll down-hill, it is unnatural for it to roll up-hill ; but a stone moving up-hill is as much the object of sense as a stone moving down-hill ; and all men in their senses are as capable of seeing, and judging, and reporting the fact in one case as in the other. Should a man then tell you that he saw a stone go up-hill of its own accord, you might question his veracity, but you could not say the thing admitted no evidence because it was contrary to the law and usual course of nature ; for the law of nature formed to yourself from your own experience and reasoning, is quite independant of the matter of fact which the man testifies ; and whenever you see facts yourself which contradict your notions of the law of nature, you admit the facts because you believe yourself ; when you do not admit like facts upon the evidence of others, it is because you do not believe them, and not because the facts in their own nature exclude all evidence.

Suppose a man should tell you that he was come from the dead, you would be apt to suspect his evidence ; but what would you suspect ? that he was not alive, when you heard him, saw him, felt him, and conversed with him ? You could not suspect this without giving up all your senses, and acting in this case as you act in no other ; here then you would question whether the man had ever been dead ; but would you say that it is incapable of being made plain by human testimony that this or that man died a year ago ? It cannot be said. Evidence in this case is admitted in all courts perpetually.

Consider it the other way. Suppose you saw a

man publicly executed, his body afterwards wounded by the executioner, and carried and laid in the grave; that after this you should be told, that the man was come to life again; what would you suspect in this case? not that the man had never been dead, for that you saw yourself, but you would suspect whether he was now alive: but would you say this case excluded all human testimony, and that men could not possibly discern whether one with whom they conversed familiarly was alive or no? Upon what ground could you say this? A man rising from the grave is an object of sense, and can give the same evidence of his being alive as any other man in the world can give. So that a Resurrection considered only as a fact to be proved by evidence, is a plain case; it requires no greater ability in the witnesses, than that they be able to distinguish between a man dead and a man alive; a point, in which I believe every man living thinks himself a judge.

I do allow that this case, and others of like nature, require more evidence to give them credit than ordinary cases do; you may therefore require more evidence in these than in other cases; but it is absurd to say that such cases admit no evidence, when the things in question are manifestly objects of sense.

I allow further, that the gentleman has rightly stated the difficulty upon the foot of common prejudice, and that it arises from hence that such cases appear to be contrary to the course of nature; but I desire him to consider what this course of nature is; every man, from the lowest countryman to the highest philosopher, frames to himself from his

experience and observation a notion of a course of nature, and is ready to say of every thing reported to him that contradicts his experience, that it is contrary to nature ; but will the gentleman say that every thing is impossible, or even improbable, that contradicts the notion which men frame to themselves of the course of nature ? I think he will not say it ; and if he will, he must say that water can never freeze, for it is absolutely inconsistent with the notion which men have of the course of nature who live in the warm climates ; and hence it appears, that when men talk of the course of nature, they really talk of their own prejudice and imaginations, and that sense and reason are not so much concerned in the case as the gentleman imagines. For I ask, is it from the evidence of sense, or the evidence of reason that people of warm climates think it contrary to nature that water should grow solid and become ice ? As for sense, they see indeed that water with them is always liquid, but none of their senses tell them that it can never grow solid ; as for reason, it can never so inform them, for right reason can never contradict the truth of things. Our senses then inform us rightly what the usual course of things is ; but when we conclude that things cannot be otherwise, we out-run the information of our senses, and the conclusion stands upon prejudice, and not upon reason ; and yet such conclusions form what is generally called the course of nature ; and when men upon proper evidence and information admit things contrary to this pre-supposed course of nature, they do not, as the gentleman expresses it, quit their own sense and reason, but in truth, they quit their own mistakes and prejudices.

“ In the case before us, the case of the Resurrection, the great difficulty arises from the like prejudice. We all know by experience that all men die, and rise no more; therefore we conclude, that for a dead man to rise to life again, is contrary to the course of nature; and certainly it is contrary to the uniform and settled course of things; but if we argue from hence, that it is contrary and repugnant to the real laws of nature, and absolutely impossible on that account, we argue without any foundation to support us, either from our senses or our reason.

“ We cannot learn from our eyes, or feeling, or any other sense, that it is impossible for a dead body to live again; if we learn it at all, it must be from our reason; and yet what one maxim of reason is contradicted by the supposition of a Resurrection? For my own part, when I consider how I live; that all the animal motions necessary to my life are independent of my will; that my heart beats without my consent, and without my direction; that digestion and nutrition are performed by methods to which I am not conscious; that my blood moves in a perpetual round, which is contrary to all known laws of motion, I cannot but think that the preservation of my life, in every moment of it, is as great an act of power as is necessary to raise a dead man to life; and whoever so far reflects upon his own being as to acknowledge that he owes it to a superior power, must needs think that the same power, which gave life to senseless matter at first, and set all the springs and movements a-going at the beginning, can restore to life a dead body; for surely it is not a greater thing to give life to a body once dead than to a body that never was alive.

In the next place must be considered the difficulties which the gentleman has laid before you with regard to the nature of Christ's body after the Resurrection; he has produced some passages which he thinks imply that the body was not a real natural body, but a mere phantom or apparition; and thence concludes, that there being no real object of sense, there can be no evidence in the case.

Presumptions are of no weight against positive evidence, and every account of the Resurrection assures us that the body of Christ was seen, felt, and handled by many persons, who were called upon by Christ so to do, that they might be assured that he had flesh and bones, and was not a mere spectre, as they in their first surprise imagined him to be; it is impossible that they who give this account should mean by any thing they report to imply that he had no real body; it is certain then, that when the gentleman makes use of what they say to this purpose, he uses their sayings contrary to their meaning; for it is not pretended that they say that Christ had not a real human body after the Resurrection; nor is it pretended they had any such thought, except only upon the first surprise of seeing him, and before they had examined him with their eyes and hands; but something they have said, which the gentleman, according to his notions of philosophy, thinks implies that the body was not real. To clear this point therefore, I must lay before you the passages referred to, and consider how justly the gentleman reasons from them.

The first passage relates to Mary Magdalen, who the first time she saw Christ, was going to embrace his feet, as the custom of the country was; Christ

says to her, *Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren, and tell them, &c.* Hence the gentleman concludes that Christ's body was not such an one as would bear the touch; but how does he infer this? Is it from these words, *Touch me not?* It cannot be; for thousands say it every day, without giving the least suspicion that their bodies are not capable of being touched; the conclusion then must be built on these other words, *for I am not yet ascended to my Father.* But what have these words to do with the reality of his body? It might be real or not real for any thing that is here said; there is a difficulty in these words, and it may be hard to give the true sense of them; but there is no difficulty in seeing that they have no relation to the nature of Christ's body, for of his body nothing is said; the natural sense of the place, as I collect by comparing this passage with Matt. xxviii. 9. is this: Mary Magdalen, upon seeing Jesus, fell at his feet, and laid hold of them, and held them, as if she meant never to let them go; Christ said to her, 'touch me not, or hang not about me now, you will have other opportunities of seeing me. for I go not yet to my Father: lose no time then, but go quickly with my message to my brethren.' I am not concerned to support this particular interpretation of the passage, it is sufficient to my purpose to show that the words cannot possibly relate to the nature of Christ's body one way or other.

The next passage relates to Christ's joining two of his disciples upon the road, and conversing with them without being known by them; it grew dark, they pressed him to stay with them that night; he went in with them, broke bread, and blessed it, and

gave it them, and then they knew him, and immediately he disappeared.

The circumstance of disappearing shall be considered under the next head, with other objections of the like kind; at present I shall only examine the other parts of this story, and enquire whether they afford any ground to conclude that the body of Christ was not a real one. Had this piece of history been related of any other person, I think no such suspicion could have arisen; for what is there unnatural or uncommon in this account? Two men meet an acquaintance, whom they thought dead; they converse with him for some time without suspecting who he was; the very persuasion they were under that he was dead contributed greatly to their not knowing him; besides, he appeared in a habit and form different from what he used when he conversed with them; appeared to them on a journey, and walking with them side by side, in which situation no one of the company has a full view of another; afterwards, when they were at supper together, and lights brought in, they plainly discerned who he was. Upon this occasion the gentleman asks what sort of witnesses these are? Eye-witnesses? No; before supper they were eye-witnesses, says the gentleman, that the person whom they saw was not Christ; and then he demands a reason for our rejecting the evidence of their sense when they did not know Christ, and insisting on it when they did.

It is no uncommon thing for men to catch themselves and others by such notable acute questions, and to be led by the sprightliness of their imagination out of the road of truth and common sense. I

beg leave to tell the gentleman a short story, and then to ask him his own question. A certain gentleman who had been some years abroad, happened in his return to England through Paris to meet his own sister there. She not expecting to see him there, nor he to see her, they conversed together with other company at a public house for great part of a day without knowing each other. At last the lady began to show great signs of disorder; her colour came and went, and the eyes of the company were drawn towards her, and then she cried out, *O* my brother! and was hardly held from fainting. Suppose now this lady were to depose upon oath in a court of justice that she saw her brother at Paris, I would ask the gentleman whether he would object to the evidence, and say that she was as good an eye-witness that her brother was not there as that he was, and demand of the court why they rejected the evidence of her senses when she did not know her brother; and were ready to believe it when she did? When the question is answered in this case, I desire only to have the benefit of it in the case now before you. But if you shall be of opinion that there was some extraordinary power used on this occasion, and incline to think that the expression (their eyes were holden) imports as much; then the case will fall under the next article. In which

We are to consider Christ's vanishing out of sight, his coming in and going out when the doors were shut, and such like passages; which, as they fall under one consideration, so I shall speak to them together.

But it is necessary first to see what the apostles affirm distinctly in their accounts of these facts; for

I think more has been said for them than ever they said or intended to say for themselves. In one place it is said, *he vanished out of their sight*, which translation is corrected in the margin of our Bibles thus, *he ceased to be seen of them*. And the original imports no more.

It is said in another place, that the disciples being together, *and the doors shut*, Jesus came and stood in the midst of them; how he came is not said, much less is it said that he came through the door, or the key-hole; and for any thing that is said to the contrary, he might come in at the door, though the disciples saw not the door open, nor him, till he was in the midst of them; but the gentleman thinks these passages prove that the disciples saw no real body, but an apparition. I am afraid that the gentleman, after all his contempt of apparitions, and the superstition on which they are founded, is fallen into the snare himself, and is arguing upon no better principles than the common notions which the vulgar have of apparitions; why else does he imagine these passages to be inconsistent with the reality of Christ's body? Is there no way for a real body to disappear? Try the experiment now, do but put out the candles, we shall all disappear; if a man falls asleep in the day-time all things disappear to him, his senses are all locked up, and yet all things about him continue to be real, and his senses continue perfect; as shutting out all rays of light would make all things disappear, so intercepting the rays of light from any particular body would make that disappear; perhaps something like this was the case, or perhaps something else, of which we know nothing; but be the case

what it will, the gentleman's conclusion is founded on no principle of true philosophy; for it does not follow that a body is not real because I lose sight of it suddenly. I shall be told perhaps that this way of accounting for the passage is as wonderful, and as much out of the common course of things as the other; perhaps it is so, and what then? Surely the gentleman does not expect, that in order to prove the reality of the greatest miracle that ever was, I should show that there was nothing miraculous in it, but that every thing happened according to the ordinary course of things? My only concern is to show, that these passages do not infer that the body of Christ after the Resurrection was no real body. I wonder the gentleman did not carry his argument a little further, and prove that Christ before his death had no real body; for we read that when the multitude would have thrown him down a precipice, he went through the midst of them unseen. Now nothing happened after his Resurrection more unaccountable than this that happened before it; and if the argument be good at all, it will be good to prove that there never was such a man as Jesus in the world. Perhaps the gentleman may think this a little too much to prove; and if he does, I hope he will quit the argument in one case as well as in the other, for difference there is none.

Hitherto we have been called upon to prove the reality of Christ's body, and that it was the same after the Resurrection that it was before; but the next objection complains, that the body was too much the same with that which was buried, for the gentleman thinks that it had the same mortal wounds open and unhealed of which he died; his observation

is grounded upon the words which Christ uses to Thomas, *Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side.* Is it here affirmed that Thomas did actually put his hand into his side, or so much as see his wounds fresh and bleeding? Nothing like it; but it is supposed from the words of Christ; for if he had no wounds, he would not have invited Thomas to probe them. Now the meaning of Christ will best appear by an account of the occasion he had to use this speech. He had appeared to his disciples in the absence of Thomas, and shown them his hands and feet, which still had the marks of his crucifixion: the disciples report this to Thomas; he thought the thing impossible, and expressed his unbelief, as men are apt to do when they are positive in a very extravagant manner: *you talk,* says he, *of the prints of the nails in his hands and feet; for my part, I will never believe this thing, except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side.* Now in the first place, here is nothing said of open wounds, Thomas talks only of putting his finger into the print, that is, the scar of the nails, and of thrusting his hand into his side. And in common speech, to thrust a hand into any one's side, does not signify to thrust it through the side into the bowels. Upon this interpretation of the words, which is a plain and natural one, the gentleman's objection is quite gone. But suppose Thomas to mean what the gentleman means, in that case the words of Christ are manifestly a severe reproach to him for his infidelity; here, says Christ, *are my hands and my side, take the satisfaction you*

require, thrust your fingers into my hand, your hand into my side ; repeating to him his own words, and calling him to his own conditions ; which, to a man beginning to see his extravagance, is of all the rebukes the severest. Such forms of speech are used on many occasions, and are never understood to import that the thing proposed is proper, or always practicable. When the Grecian women reproached their sons with cowardice, and called to them as they were flying from the enemy, to come and hide themselves once more, like children as they were, in their mothers' wombs ; he would have been ridiculous who had asked the question, whether the women really thought that they could take their sons into their wombs again ?

I have now gone through the objections which were necessarily to be removed, before I could state the evidence in this case ; I am sensible I have taken up too much of your time, but I have this to say in my excuse, that objections built on popular notions and prejudices ; are easily conveyed to the mind in few words, and so conveyed make strong impressions ; but whosoever answers the objections, must encounter all the notions to which they are allied, and to which they owe their strength ; and it is well if with many words he can find admittance.

I come now to consider the evidence on which our belief of the Resurrection stands : and here I am stopt again ; a general exception is taken to the evidence, that it is imperfect, unfair ; and a question is asked, why did not Christ appear publicly to all the people, especially to the magistrates ? why were some witnesses culled and chosen out, and others excluded ?

It may be sufficient perhaps to say, that where there are witnesses enough, no judge, no jury complains for want of more; and therefore, if the witnesses we have are sufficient, it is no objection that we have not others, and more. If three credible men attest a will, which are as many as the law requires, would any body ask why all the town were not called to set their hands? But why were these witnesses culled and chosen out? Why? for this reason, that they might be good ones. Does not every wise man choose proper witnesses to his deed and to his will? And does not a good choice of witnesses give strength to every deed? How comes it to pass then that the very thing which shuts out all suspicion in other cases, should in this case only be of all others the most suspicious thing itself?

What reason there is to make any complaints on the behalf of the Jews, may be judged in part from what has already appeared; Christ suffered openly in their sight, and they were so well apprized of his prediction that he should rise again, that they set a guard on his sepulchre, and from these guards they learned the truth; every soldier was to them a witness of the Resurrection of their own chusing; after this they had not one apostle (which the gentleman observes was the case of other people) but all the apostles, and many other witnesses with them, and in their power; the apostles testified the Resurrection to them, not only to the people, but to the elders of Israel assembled in senate; to support their evidence they were enabled to work, and did work miracles openly in the name of Christ; these people therefore have the least reason to complain, and had of all others the fullest evidence, and in

some respects such as none but themselves could have, for they only were keepers of the sepulchre. I believe if the gentleman was to choose an evidence to his own satisfaction in the like case, he would desire no more than to keep the sepulchre with a sufficient number of guards.

But the argument goes further. It is said that Jesus was sent with a special commission to the Jews that he was their Messias : and as his Resurrection was his main credential, he ought to have appeared publicly to the rulers of the Jews after his Resurrection ; that in doing otherwise he acted like an ambassador pretending authority from his prince, but refusing to show his letters of credence.

I was afraid when I suffered myself to be drawn into this argument that I should be led into matters fitter to be decided by men of another profession than by lawyers ; but since there is no help now, I will lay before you what appears to me to be the natural and plain account of this matter, leaving it to others who are better qualified to give a fuller answer to the objection.

It appears to me by the accounts we have of Jesus, that he had two distinct offices ; one, as the Messias particularly promised to the Jews ; another, as he was to be the great high-priest of the world ; with respect to the first office he is called *the apostle of the Hebrews, the minister of the circumcision*, and says himself, *I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel*. Accordingly, when he sent out his apostles in his life-time to preach, he expressly forbids them to go to the Gentiles or Samaritans ; but go, says he, *to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*. Christ continued in the discharge of this

office during the time of his natural life, till he was finally rejected by the Jews; and it is observable, that the last time he spoke to the people, according to St. Matthew's account, he solemnly took leave of them, and closed his commission; he had been long among them publishing glad tidings, but when all his preaching, all his miracles had proved to be in vain, the last thing he did was to denounce the woes they had brought on themselves. The 23d chapter of St. Matthew recites these woes, and at the end of them Christ takes this passionate leave of Jerusalem, 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent to thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.' It is remarkable that this passage, as recorded by St. Matthew and St. Luke twice over, is determined by the circumstances to refer to the near approach of his own death, and the extreme hatred of the Jews to him; and therefore those words, *Ye shall not see me henceforth*, are to be dated from the time of his death, and manifestly point out the end of his particular mission to them. From the making this declaration as it stands in St. Matthew, his discourses are to his disciples; and they chiefly relate to the miserable and wretched condition of the Jews, which was now decreed, and soon to be accomplished; let me now ask, whether in this state of things any farther credentials of Christ's commission to the Jews could be demanded

or expected? He was rejected, his commission was determined, and with it the fate of the nation was determined also; what use then of more credentials? As to appearing to them after his Resurrection, he could not do it consistently with his own prediction, *Ye shall see me no more till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.* The Jews were not in this disposition after the Resurrection, nor are they in it yet.

The Resurrection was the foundation of Christ's new commission, which extended to all the world; then it was he declared that *all power was given unto him in heaven and in earth*; then he gave a new commission to his disciples, not restrained to the house of Israel, but to go and teach all nations. This prerogative the Jews had under this commission, that the gospel was every where first offered to them, but in no other terms than it was offered to the rest of the world. Since then this commission, of which the Resurrection was the foundation, extended to all the world alike; what ground is there to demand special and particular evidence to the Jews? The emperor and the senate of Rome were a much more considerable part of the world than the chief priests and the synagogue; why does not the gentleman object then that Christ did not show himself to Tiberius and his senate? And since all men have an equal right in this case, why may not the same demand be made for every country? nay, for every age? and then the gentleman may bring the question nearer home, and ask, why Christ did not appear in England in king George's reign? There is to my apprehension nothing more unreasonable than to neglect and despise

plain and sufficient evidence before us, and to sit down to imagine what kind of evidence would have pleased us, and then to make the want of such evidence an objection to the truth, which yet if well considered would be found to be well established.

The observation I have made upon the Resurrection of Christ naturally leads to another, which will help to account for the nature of the evidence we have in this great point. As the Resurrection was the opening a new commission, in which all the world had an interest, so the concern naturally was to have a proper evidence to establish this truth, and which should be of equal weight to all; this did not depend upon the satisfaction given to private persons, whether they were magistrates or not magistrates, but upon the conviction of those whose office it was to be to bear testimony to this truth in the world; in this sense the apostles were chosen to be witnesses of the Resurrection, because they were chosen to bear testimony to it in the world, and not because they only were admitted to see Christ after his Resurrection; for the fact is otherwise. The gospel indeed concerned to show the evidence on which the faith of the world was to rest, is very particular in setting forth the ocular demonstration which the apostles had of the Resurrection, and mentions others who saw Christ after his Resurrection only accidentally, and as the thread of the history led to it; but yet it is certain, there were many others who had this satisfaction as well as the apostles. St. Luke tells us, that when Christ appeared to the eleven apostles, there were others with them; who they were, or how many they were, he says not; but it appears in the Acts, when

an apostle was to be chosen in the room of Judas, and the chief qualification required was, that he should be one capable of being a witness of the Resurrection, that there were present a hundred and twenty so qualified. And St. Paul says, that Christ after his rising was seen by five hundred at once, many of whom were living when he appealed to their evidence : so that the gentleman is mistaken when he imagines that a few only were chosen to see Christ after he came from the grave. The truth of the case is, that out of those who saw him, some were chosen to bear testimony to the world, and for that reason had the fullest demonstration of the truth, that they might be the better able to give satisfaction to others ; and what was there in this conduct to complain of ? what to raise any jealousy or suspicion ?

As to the witnesses themselves ; the first the gentleman takes notice of are the angels and the women ; the mention of angels led naturally to apparitions ; and the women were called poor silly women, where there is an end of their evidence. But to speak seriously : will the gentleman pretend to prove that there are no intelligent beings between God and man ? or that they are not ministers of God ? or that they were improperly employed in this great and wonderful work, the Resurrection of Christ ? Till some of these points are disproved we may be at rest ; for the angels were ministers, and not witnesses of the Resurrection. And it is not upon the credit of the poor silly women that we believe angels were concerned, but upon the report of those who wrote the gospels, who deliver it as a

truth known to themselves, and not merely as a report taken from the women.

But for the women, what shall I say? Silly as they were, I hope at least, they had eyes and ears, and could tell what they heard and saw; in this case they tell no more; they report that the body was not in the sepulchre; but so far from reporting the Resurrection, that they did not believe it, and were very anxious to find to what place the body was removed; further, they were not employed; for I think the gentleman in another part observes rightly, that they were not sent to bear testimony to any people: but suppose them to be witnesses, suppose them to be improper ones, yet the evidence of the men surely is not the worse because some women happened to see the same thing which they saw; and if men only must be admitted, of them we have enough to establish this truth.

I will not spend your time in enumerating these witnesses, or in setting forth the demonstration they had of the truth which they report, these things are well known; if you question their sincerity, they lived miserably and died miserably for the sake of this truth; and what greater evidence of sincerity can man give or require; and what is still more, they were not deceived in their expectation by being ill treated; for he who employed them told them beforehand that the world would hate them, and treat them with contempt and cruelty.

But leaving these weighty and well-known circumstances to your own reflection, I beg leave to lay before you another evidence, passed over in silence by the gentleman on the other side. He took notice that a Resurrection was so extraordinary

a thing, that no human evidence could support it; I am not sure that he is not in the right; if twenty men were to come into England with such a report from a distant country, perhaps they might not find twenty more here to believe their story; and I rather think the gentleman may be in the right, because in the present case I see clearly that the credit of the Resurrection of Christ was not trusted to mere human evidence; to what evidence it was trusted we find by his own declaration: *The spirit of truth which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me; and ye also* (speaking to his apostles) *shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.* And therefore though the apostles had conversed with him forty days after his Resurrection, and had received his commission to go teach all nations, yet he expressly forbids them entering upon the work till they should receive powers from above. And St. Peter explains the evidence of the Resurrection in this manner: *We* (the apostles) *are his witnesses of these things, and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them who obey him.*

Now, what were the powers received by the apostles? Were they not the powers of wisdom and courage, by which they were enabled to appear before rulers and princes in the name of Christ? the power of miracles, even of raising the dead to life, by which they convinced the world that God was with them in what they said and did? With respect to this evidence, St. John says, *If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater.* Add to this, that the apostles had a power to communicate these gifts to believers; can you wonder that

then believed the reality of those powers of which they were partakers, and became conscious to themselves? With respect to these communicated powers I suppose St. John speaks, when he says, *He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.* Appealing not to an inward testimony of the spirit, in the sense of some modern enthusiasts, but to the powers of the spirit, which believers received, and which were seen in the effects that followed.

It was objected that the apostles separated themselves to the work of the ministry, and one went into one country, and another to another; and consequently that the belief of the Resurrection was originally received every where upon the testimony of one witness. I will not examine this fact, suppose it to be so; but did this one witness go alone, when he was attended with the powers of heaven? Was not every blind man restored to sight, and every lame man to his feet, a new witness to the truth reported by the first? Besides, when the people of different countries came to compare notes, and found that they had all received the same account of Christ and of his doctrine, then surely the evidence of these distant witnesses thus united, became stronger than if they had told their story together; for twelve men separately examined form a much stronger proof for the truth of any fact than twelve men agreeing together in one story.

If the same thing were to happen in our own time; if one or two were to come into England, and report that a man was raised from the dead, and in consequence of it teach nothing but that we ought to love God and our neighbours; if to confirm

their report they should before our eyes cure the blind, the deaf, the lame, and even raise the dead to life ; if endued with all these powers they should live in poverty and distress, and patiently submit to all that scorn, contempt, and malice could contrive to distress them, and at last sacrifice even their lives in justification of the truth of their report ; if upon enquiry we should find that all the countries in Europe had received the same account, supported by the same miraculous powers, attested in like manner by the sufferings, and confirmed by the blood of the witnesses, I would fain know what any reasonable man would do in this case? would he despise such evidence? I think he would not ; and whoever thinks otherwise, must say, that a Resurrection, though in its own nature possible, is yet such a thing in which we ought not to believe either God or man.

*Judge.* Have you done, sir?

*Mr. B.* Yes, my lord.

*Judge.* Go on *Mr. A.* if you have any thing to say in reply.

*Mr. A.* My lord, I shall trouble you with very little ; the objections and answers under this head I shall leave to the judgment of the court, and beg leave only to make an observation or two upon the last part of the gentleman's argument.

And first, with respect to the sufferings of the apostles and disciples of Jesus, and the argument drawn from thence for the truth of their doctrines and assertions, I beg leave to observe to you, that there is not a false religion or pretence in the world but can produce the same authority, and show many instances of men who have suffered even to death

for the truth of their several professions. If we consult only modern story, we shall find papists suffering for popery ; protestants for their religion ; and among protestants every sect has had its martyrs ; puritans, quakers, fifth-monarchy-men. In Henry the VIIIth's time England saw both popish and protestant martyrs ; in queen Mary's reign the rage fell upon protestants ; in queen Elizabeth's papists and puritans were called sometimes, though rarely, to this trial. In latter times, sometimes churchmen, sometimes dissenters were persecuted ; what must we say then ? All these sufferers had not truth with them, and yet if there be any weight in this argument from suffering, they have all a right to plead it.

But I may be told perhaps, that men by their sufferings, though they do not prove their doctrines to be true, yet prove at least their own sincerity ; as if it were a thing impossible for men to dissemble at the point of death ! Alas ! How many instances, are there of men's denying facts plainly proved, asserting facts plainly disproved, even with the rope about their necks ; must all such pass for innocent sufferers, sincere men ? If not, it must be allowed that a man's word at the point of death is not always to be relied on.

Another observation I would make, is with respect to the evidence of the spirit, on which so much stress is laid. It has hitherto been insisted on that the Resurrection was a matter of fact, and such a fact as was capable and proper to be supported by the evidence of sense ; how comes it about that this evidence, this which is the proper evidence, is given up as insufficient, and a new improper evidence

introduced? Is it not surprising that one great miracle should want a hundred more to prove it? Every miracle is itself an appeal to sense, and therefore admits no evidence but that of sense; and there is no connection between a miracle done this year and last year; it does not follow therefore because Peter cured a lame man (allowing the fact) that therefore Christ rose from the dead.

But allowing the gentleman all he demands, what is it to us? They who had the witness within them did perhaps very well to consult him, and to take his word; but how am I, or others, who have not this witness in us, the better for it? If the first ages of the church saw all the wonders related by the gentleman, and believed, it shows, at least in his opinion, that this strong evidence was necessary to create the belief he requires; why then does he require this belief of us who have not this strong evidence?

*Judge.* Very well. Gentleman of the jury, you have heard the proofs and arguments on both sides, and it is now your part to give a verdict.

*Here the gentlemen whispered together, and the Foreman stood up.*

*Foreman.* My lord, the cause has been long, and consists of several articles, therefore the jury hope you will give them your directions.

*Judge.* No, no; you are very able to judge without my help.

*Mr. A.* My lord, pray consider, you appointed this meeting, and chose your office; *Mr. B.* and I have gone through our parts, and have some right to insist on your doing your part.

*Mr. B.* I must join, sir, in that request.

*Judge.* I have often heard that all honour has a burden-attending it, but I did not suspect it in this office, which I conferred upon myself; but since it must be so, I will recollect and lay before you as well as I can the substance of the debate.

Gentlemen of the jury, the question before you is, whether the witnesses of the Resurrection of Christ are guilty of giving false evidence or no?

Two sorts of objections or accusations are brought against them; one charges fraud and deceit on the transaction itself; the other charges the evidence as forged, and insufficient to support the credit of so extraordinary an event.

There are also three periods of time to be considered.

The first takes in the ministry of Christ, and ends at his death; during this period the fraud is supposed to be contrived.

The second reaches from his death to his Resurrection; during this period the fraud is supposed to be executed.

The third begins from the Resurrection, and takes in the whole ministry of the apostles; and here the evidence they gave the world for this fact is the main consideration.

As to the first period of time, and the fraud charged upon Jesus, I must observe to you, that this charge had no evidence to support it, all the facts reported of Jesus stand in full contradiction to it. To suppose, as the counsel did, that this fraud might possibly appear if we had any Jewish books written at the time, is not to bring proof, but to wish for proof; for, as it was rightly observed on

the other side, how does *Mr. A.* know there were any such books? And since they are lost, how does he know what was in them? Were such books extant, they might probably prove beyond dispute the facts recorded in the gospels.

You were told that the Jews were a very superstitious people, much addicted to prophecy, and particularly that they had a long expectation about the time that Christ appeared, to have a victorious prince rise among them. This is laid as to the ground of suspicion, and in fact many impostors you are told set up upon these notions of the people, and thence it is inferred that Christ built his scheme upon the strength of these popular prejudices; but when this fact came to be examined on the other side, it appeared that Christ was so far from falling in with these notions and abusing the credulity of the people, that it was his main point to correct these prejudices, to oppose these superstitions, and by these very means he fell into disgrace with his countrymen, and suffered as one who in their opinion destroyed the law and the prophets; with respect to temporal power, so far was he from aiming at it, that he refused it when offered; so far from giving any hopes of it to his disciples, that he invited them upon quite different terms, *to take up the cross and follow him*; and it is observable that after he had foretold his death and Resurrection, he continued to admonish his disciples of the evils they were to suffer, to tell them that the world would hate them and abuse them; which surely to common sense has no appearance that he was then contriving a cheat or encouraging his disciples to execute it.

But as ill supported as this charge is, there was

no avoiding it; it was necessity and not choice, which drove the gentleman to it; for since Christ had foretold his Resurrection, if the whole was a cheat, he certainly was conscious of it, and consequently the plot was laid in his own time; and yet the supposing Christ conscious of such a fraud in these circumstances is contrary to all probability; it is very improbable that he or any man should without any temptation contrive a cheat to take place after his death; and if this could be supposed, it is highly improbable, that he should give public notice of it, and thereby put all men on their guard, especially considering there were only a few women, and twelve men of low fortunes and mean education to conduct the plot, and the whole power of the Jews and Romans to oppose it.

*Mr. A.* seemed sensible of these difficulties, and therefore would have varied the charge, and have made Christ an enthusiast, and his disciples only cheats; this was not properly moved, and therefore not debated, for which reason I shall pass it over, with this short observation, that enthusiasm is as contrary to the whole character and conduct of Christ as even fraud is; besides, this imagination, if allowed, goes only to Christ's own part, and leaves the charge of fraud in its full extent upon the management from the time of his death, and therefore is of no use, unless the fraud afterwards be apparent; for if there really was a Resurrection, it will sufficiently answer the charge of enthusiasm.

I pass on then to the second period, to consider what happened between the death and Resurrection of Christ. And here it is agreed that Christ died, and was buried; so far then there was no fraud.

For the better understanding the charge here, we must recollect a material circumstance reported by one of the evangelists, which is this; after Christ was buried, the chief priests and pharisees came to Pilate, the Roman governor, and informed him that this deceiver (meaning Jesus) had in his life-time foretold that he would rise again after three days; that they suspected his disciples would steal away the body, and pretend a Resurrection, and then the last error would be worse than the first; they therefore desire a guard to watch the sepulchre, to prevent all fraud; they had one granted, accordingly they placed a watch on the sepulchre, and sealed up the stone at the mouth of it.

What the event of this case was, the same writer tells; the guards saw the stone removed by angels, and for fear they became as dead men; when they came to the city, they reported to the chief priests what had happened; a council is called, and a resolution taken to bribe the soldiers to say, that the body was stolen while they were asleep, and the council undertook to excuse the soldiers to Pilate for their negligence in falling asleep when they were on duty.

Thus the fact stands in the original record. Now the counsel for Woolston maintains, that the story reported by the soldiers, after they had been bribed by the chief priests, contains the true account of this pretended Resurrection.

The gentleman was sensible of a difficulty in his way to account for the credit which the Jews gave to the prediction of Christ; for if, as he pretends, they knew him to be an impostor, what reason had they to take any notice of his prediction? And

therefore that very caution in this case betrayed their concern, and showed that they were not satisfied that his pretensions were groundless. To obviate this, he says, that they had discovered before one great cheat in the case of Lazarus, and therefore were suspicious of another in this case. He was answered, that the discovery of a cheat in this case before mentioned, ought rather to have set them at ease, and made them quite secure as to the event of the prediction. In reply he says, that the chief priests, however satisfied of the cheat themselves, had found that it prevailed among the people; and to secure the people from being farther imposed on, they used the caution they did.

This is the substance of the argument on both sides.

I must observe to you, that this reasoning from the case of Lazarus has no foundation in history; there is no pretence for saying that the Jews in this whole affair had any particular regard to the raising of Lazarus; and if they had any such just suspicion, why was it not mentioned at the trial of Christ? there was then an opportunity of opening the whole fraud, and undeceiving the people; the Jews had a plain law for punishing a false prophet, and what could be a stronger conviction than such a cheat made manifest? Why then was this advantage lost?

The gentleman builds this observation on these words, *so the last error shall be worse than the first*. But is there here any thing said about Lazarus? No; the words are a proverbial form of speech, and probably were used without relation to any particular case; but if a particular meaning must

be assigned, it is more probable, that the words being used to Pilate, contained a reason applicable to him. Now Pilate had been drawn in to consent to the crucifixion, for fear the Jews should set up Jesus to be their king in opposition to Cæsar; therefore, say the chief priests to him, If once the people believe him to be risen from the dead, the last error will be worse than the first, *i. e.* they will be more inclined and encouraged to rebel against the Romans than ever; this is a natural sense of the words, as they are used to move the Roman governor to allow them a guard; whether Lazarus were dead or alive whether Christ came to destroy the law and the prophets, or to establish or confirm them, was of little moment to Pilate; it is plain he was touched by none of these considerations, and refused to be concerned in the affair of Christ, till he was alarmed with the suggestions of danger to the Roman state; this was the first fear that moved him; must not therefore the second now suggested to him be of the same kind?

The next circumstance to be considered, is that of the seal upon the stone of the sepulchre. The counsel for Woolston supposes an agreement between the Jews and disciples about setting this seal; but for this agreement there is no evidence; nay, to suppose it, contradicts the whole series of the history, as the gentleman on the other side observed; I will not enter into the particulars of this debate, for it is needless; the plain natural account given of this matter shuts out all other suppositions. *Mr B.* observed to you, that the Jews having a guard set the seal to prevent any combination among the guards to deceive them; which seems a plain and

satisfactory account. The council for W. replies, Let the use of the seals be what they will, it is plain they were broken; and if they were used as a check upon the Roman soldiers, then probably they consented to the fraud; and then it is easily understood how the body was removed.

I must observe to you here, that this suspicion agrees neither with the account given by the evangelist, nor with the story set about by the Jews; so that it is utterly unsupported by any evidence.

Nor has it any probability in it; for what could move Pilate and the Roman soldiers to propagate such a cheat? He had crucified Christ for no other reason, but for fear the people should revolt from the Romans; perhaps too he consented to place a guard upon the sepulchre, to put an end to the people's hope in Jesus; and is it likely at last that he was consenting to a cheat, to make the people believe him risen from the dead? The thing of all others which he was obliged, as his apprehensions were, to prevent.

The next circumstance insisted on as a proof of the fraud is, that Jesus rose before the time he had appointed. *Mr. A.* supposes that the disciples hastened the plot, for fear of falling in with multitudes, who waited only for the appointed time to be at the sepulchre, and to see with their own eyes. He was answered, that the disciples were not, could not be concerned, or be present at moving the body; that they were dispersed, and lay concealed for fear of the Jews; that hastening the plot was of no use, for the Resurrection happened whilst the guards were at the sepulchre, who were probably enough

to prevent violence, certainly enough to discover it if any were used.

This difficulty then rests merely upon the reckoning of the time. Christ died on Friday, rose early on Sunday; the question is, whether this was rising the third day according to the prediction? I will refer the authorities made use of in this case to your memory, and add only one observation, to show that it was indeed the third day according as the people of the country reckoned. When Christ talked with the two disciples who knew him not, they gave him an account of his own crucifixion, and their disappointment; and tell him, *To-day is the third day since these things were done.* Now this conversation was on the very day of the Resurrection, and the disciples thought of nothing less than answering an objection against the Resurrection, which as yet they did not believe; they recount only a matter of fact, and reckon the time according to the usage of their country, and call the day of the Resurrection the third day from the crucifixion; which is a plain evidence in what manner the Jews reckoned in this and like cases.

As the objections in this case are founded upon the story reported by the Jews and the Roman soldiers, *Mr. B.* in his answer endeavoured to show from some historical passages that the Jews themselves did not believe the story.

His first argument was, that the Jews never questioned the disciples for this cheat, and the share they had in it when they had them in their power; and yet who sees not that it was very much to their purpose so to do? To this there is no reply.

The second argument was from the treatment St. Paul had from king Agrippa, and his saying to St. Paul, *Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian*, a speech which he reckons could not be made by a prince to one concerned in carrying on a known cheat. To this the gentleman replies, that Agrippa never did become a Christian, and that no great stress is to be laid upon his complaisance to his prisoner; but allowing that there was something of humanity and civility in the expression, yet such civility could hardly be paid to a known impostor. There is a propriety even in civility; a prince may be civil to a rebel, but he will hardly compliment him for his loyalty; he may be civil to a poor sectary, but if he knows him to be a cheat, he will scarcely compliment him with hopes that he will be of his party.

The third argument was from the advice given by Gamaliel to the council of the Jews, to let the apostles alone, *for fear they themselves should be found to fight against God*. A supposition which the gentleman thinks absolutely inconsistent with his or the council's being persuaded that the apostles were guilty of any fraud in managing the Resurrection of Christ.

The gentleman replies, that Gamaliel's advice respected only the numbers of people deceived, and was a declaration of his opinion, that it was not prudent to come to extremities till the people were in a better temper. This deserves consideration.

*First*, I observe, that Gamaliel's words are express; *lest ye be found to fight against God*; which reason respects God, and not the people; and the supposition is, that the hand of God might possibly

be in this work ; a saying which could not have come from him, or have been received by the council, if they had believed the Resurrection to have been a cheat.

*Secondly,* It is remarkable that the miracles wrought by the apostles after the death of Christ, those especially which occasioned the calling this council, had a much greater effect upon the Jews than even the miracles of Christ himself; they held out against all the wonders of Christ, and were perpetually plotting his death, not doubting but that would put an end to their trouble; but when, after his death, they saw the same powers continue with the apostles, they saw no end of the affair, but began to think in earnest there might be more in it than they were willing to believe; and upon the report made to them of the apostles' works, they make serious reflection, and doubted whereunto this would grow; and though in their anger and vexation of heart they thought of desperate remedies, and were for killing the apostles also, yet they hearkened willingly to Gamaliel's advice, which at another time might have been dangerous to the adviser; so that it appears from the history that the whole council had the same doubt that Gamaliel had, that possibly the hand of God might be in this thing; and could the Jews, if they had manifestly discovered the cheat of the Resurrection a little time before, have entertained such a suspicion?

The last period commences at the Resurrection, and takes in the evidence upon which the credit of this fact stands.

The counsel for Woolston, among other difficulties; started one, which if well grounded, excludes

all evidence out of this case. The Resurrection being a thing out of the course of nature, he thinks the testimony of nature, held forth to us in her constant method of working, a stronger evidence against the possibility of a Resurrection, than any human evidence can be for the reality of one.

In answer to this, it is said on the other side.

*First*, That a Resurrection is a thing to be judged of by men's senses; and this cannot be doubted. We all know when a man is dead; and should he come to life again, we might judge whether he was alive or no by the very same means by which we judge those about us to be living men.

*Secondly*, That the notion of a Resurrection contradicts no one principle of right reason, interferes with no law of nature; and that whoever admits that God gave man life at first, cannot possibly doubt of his power to restore it when lost.

*Thirdly*, That appealing to the settled course of nature, is referring the matter in dispute not to rules or maxims of reason and true philosophy, but to the prejudices and mistakes of men, which are various and infinite, and differ sometimes according to the climate men live in; because men form a notion of nature from what they see; and therefore in cold countries all men judge it to be according to the course of nature for water to freeze, in warm countries they judge it to be unnatural; consequently, that it is not enough to prove any thing to be contrary to the laws of nature, to say that it is usually or constantly to our observation otherwise; and therefore though men in the ordinary course die, and do not rise again (which is certainly a prejudice against the belief of a Resurrection) yet is

it not an argument against the possibility of a Resurrection.

Another objection was against the reality of the body of Christ after it came from the grave. These objections are founded upon such passages as report his appearing or disappearing to the eyes of his disciples at pleasure; his coming in among them when the doors were shut; his forbidding some to touch him, his inviting others to do it; his having the very wounds whereof he died fresh and open in his body, and the like; hence the counsel concluded that it was no real body which was sometimes visible, sometimes invisible; sometimes capable of being touched, sometimes incapable.

On the other side it was answered, that many of these objections are founded on a mistaken sense of the passages referred to; particularly of the passage in which Christ is thought to forbid Mary Magdalen to touch him; of another, in which he calls to Thomas to examine his wounds; and probably of a third, relating to Christ's conversation with his disciples on the road, without being known by them.

As to other passages which relate his appearing and disappearing, and coming in when the doors were shut, it is said that no conclusion can be drawn from them against the reality of Christ's body; that these things might happen many ways, and yet the body be real, which is the only point to which the present objection extends; that there might be in this, and probably was, something miraculous, but nothing more wonderful than what happened on another occasion in his life-time, where the gentle-

man who makes the objection allows him to have had a real body.

I mention these things but briefly, just to bring the course of the argument to your remembrance.

The next objection is taken from hence, that Christ did not appear publicly to the people, and particularly to the chief priests and rulers of the Jews; it is said that his commission related to them in an especial manner, and that it appears strange that the main proof of his mission, the Resurrection, should not be laid before them, but that witnesses should be picked and culled to see this mighty wonder; this is the force of the objection.

To which it was answered, *First*, that the particular commission to the Jews expired at the death of Christ, and therefore the Jews had on this account no claim for any particular evidence; and it is insisted that Christ before his death declared the Jews should not see him till they were better disposed to receive him.

*Secondly*, That as the whole world had a concern in the Resurrection of Christ, it was necessary to prepare a proper evidence for the whole world; which was not to be done by any particular satisfaction given to the people of the Jews, or their rulers.

*Thirdly*, That as to the chosen witnesses, it is a mistake to think that they were chosen as the only persons to see Christ after the Resurrection; and that in truth many others did see him; but that the witnesses were chosen as proper persons to bear testimony to all people; an office to which many others who did see Christ were not particularly commissioned; that making choice of proper and

credible witnesses, was so far from being a ground of just suspicion, that it is in all cases the most proper way to exclude suspicion.

The next objection is pointed against the evidence of the angels and the women. It is said that history reports that the women saw young men at the sepulchre; that they were advanced into angels merely through the fear and superstition of the women; that at the best this is but a story of an apparition, a thing in times of ignorance much talked of, but in the days of knowledge never heard of.

In answer to this it is said, that the angels are not properly reckoned among the witnesses of the Resurrection, they were not in the number of the chosen witnesses, or sent to bear testimony in the world; that they were indeed ministers of God, appointed to attend the Resurrection; that God has such ministers cannot be reasonably doubted, nor can it be objected that they were improperly employed, or below their dignity in attending on the Resurrection of Christ; that we believe them to be angels, not on the report of the women, but upon the credit of the evangelist who affirms it; that what is said of apparitions on this occasion may pass for wit and ridicule, but yields no reason or argument.

The objection to the women was I think; only that they were women, which was strengthened by calling them silly women.

It was answered, that women have eyes and ears as well as men, and can tell what they see and hear; and it happened in this case that the women were so far from being credulous, that they believed not the angels, and hardly believed their own report;

however, that the women are none of the chosen witnesses; and if they were, the evidence of the men cannot be set aside because women saw what they saw.

This is the substance of the objections and answers.

The counsel for the apostles insisted further, that they gave the greatest assurance to the world that possibly could be given of their sincere dealing, by suffering all kind of hardship, and at last death itself, in confirmation of the truth of the evidence.

The counsel for Woolston, in reply to this, told you, that all religions, whether true or false, have had their martyrs; that no opinion, however absurd, can be named but some have been content to die for it; and then concluded, that suffering is no evidence of the truth of the opinions for which men suffer.

To clear this matter to you, I must observe how this case stands. You have heard often in the course of this argument, that the apostles were witnesses chosen to bear testimony to the Resurrection, and for that reason had the fullest evidence themselves of the truth of it, not merely by seeing Christ once or twice after his death, but by frequent conversations with him for forty days together before his ascension; that this was their proper business, appears plainly from history, where we find, that to ordain an apostle was the same thing as *ordaining one to be a witness of the Resurrection*. If you look further to the preaching of the apostles, you will find this was the great article insisted on. And St. Paul knew the weight of this article, and the necessity of teaching it when he said, *If Christ be not risen*

*our faith is vain.* You see then that the thing which the apostles testified, and the thing for which they suffered, was the truth of the Resurrection, which is a mere matter of fact.

Consider now how the objection stands. The counsel for Woolston tells you that it is common for men to die for false opinions, and he tells you nothing but the truth; but even in these cases their suffering is an evidence of their sincerity, and it would be very hard to charge men who die for the doctrine they profess, with insincerity in the profession; mistaken they may be, but every mistaken man is not a cheat. Now if you will allow the suffering of the apostles to prove their sincerity, which you cannot well disallow, and consider that they died for the truth of a matter of fact which they had seen themselves, you will perceive how strong the evidence is in this case. In doctrines and matters of opinion men mistake perpetually, and it is no reason for me to take up with another man's opinion, because I am persuaded he is sincere in it; but when a man reports to me an uncommon fact, yet such a one as in its own nature is a plain object of sense, if I believe him not, it is not because I suspect his eyes, or his sense of feeling, but merely because I suspect his sincerity; for if I was to see the same thing myself, I should believe myself; and therefore my suspicion does not arise from the inability of human senses to judge in the case, but from a doubt of the sincerity of the reporter; and since voluntary suffering for the truth is at least a proof of sincerity, the sufferings of the apostles for the truth of the Resurrection is a full and unexceptionable proof.

The counsel for Woolston was sensible of this difference and therefore he added, that there are many instances of men's suffering and dying in an obstinate denial of the truth of facts plainly proved. Can the gentleman give me any instances of persons who died willingly in attestation of a false fact? We have had in England some weak enough to die for the pope's supremacy; but do you think a man could be found to die in proof of the pope's being actually on the throne of England.

Now the apostles died in asserting the truth of Christ's Resurrection: it was always in their power to quit their evidence and save their lives. Others have denied facts or asserted facts in hopes of saving their lives when they were under sentence of death, but these men attested a fact at the expence of their lives, which they might have saved by denying the truth; so that there is this material difference; criminals deny the truth in hopes of saving their lives, the apostles willingly parted with their lives rather than deny the truth.

We are come now to the last, and indeed the most weighty consideration.

The counsel for the apostles having in the course of the argument allowed, that more evidence is required to support the credit of the Resurrection, it being a very extraordinary event, than is necessary in common cases; in the latter part of his defence he sets forth the extraordinary evidence upon which this fact stands; this is the evidence of the spirit; the spirit of wisdom and power, which was given to the apostles, to enable them to confirm their testimony by signs and wonders, and mighty works.

The counsel for Woolston, in his reply, made two objections to this evidence.

The first was this : that the resurrection having all along been pleaded to be a matter of fact and an object of sense, to recur to miracles for the proof of it, is to take it out of its proper evidence, the evidence of sense, and to rest it upon a proof which cannot be applied to it ; for seeing one miracle, he says, is no evidence that another miracle was wrought before it ; as healing a sick man is no evidence that a dead man was raised to life.

To clear this difficulty, you must consider by what train of reasoning miracles come to be nothing unless this only, that there is a cause equal to the producing the effect we see: Suppose you should see a man raise one from the dead, and he should go away and say nothing to you, you would not find that any fact or any proposition was proved or disproved by this miracle ; but should he declare to you in the name of him by whose power the miracle was wrought, that image-worship was unlawful, you would then be possessed of a proof against image-worship. But how? Not because the miracle proves any thing as to the point itself, but because the man's declaration is authorized by him who wrought the miracle in confirmation of his doctrine ; and therefore miracles are directly a proof of the authority of persons, and not of the truth of things.

To apply this to the present case. If the apostles had wrought miracles, and said nothing of the Resurrection, the miracles would have proved nothing about the Resurrection one way or other ; but when as eye-witnesses they attested the truth of the Resurrection, and wrought miracles to confirm their authority, the miracles did not directly prove the Resurrection, but they confirmed and established beyond all suspicion the proper evidence, the evi-

dence of eye-witnesses ; so that here is no change of the evidence from proper to improper, the fact still rests upon the evidence of sense, confirmed and strengthened by the authority of the spirit.

The second objection was, that this evidence, however good it may be in its kind, is yet nothing to us ; it was well, the gentleman says, for those who had it ; but what is that to us who have it not ?

To adjust this difficulty, I must observe to you, that the evidence now under consideration was not a private evidence of the Spirit, or any inward light, like to that which the Quakers in our time pretend to, but an evidence appearing in the manifest and visible works of the Spirit ; and this evidence was capable of being transmitted, and actually had been transmitted so us upon unquestionable authority ; and to allow the evidence to have been good in the first ages, and not in this, seems to me to be a contradiction to the rules of reasoning ; for if we see enough to judge that the first ages had reason to believe, we must needs see at the same time that it is reasonable for us also to believe ; as the present question only relates to the nature of the evidence, it was not necessary to produce from history the instances to show in how plentiful a manner this evidence was granted to the church ; whoever wants this satisfaction, may easily have it.

Gentlemen of the Jury, I have laid before you the substance of what has been said on both sides, you are now to consider of it, and to give your verdict.

*The Jury consulted together, and the Foreman rose up.*

*Foreman.* My lord, we are ready to give our verdict.

*Judge.* Are you all agreed? *Jury.* Yes.

*Judge.* Who shall speak for you?

*Jury.* Our Foreman.

*Judge.* What say you? Are the apostles guilty of giving false evidence in the case of the Resurrection of Jesus, or not guilty?

*Foreman.* Not guilty.

*Judge.* Very well. And now, gentlemen I resign my commission, and am your humble servant.

The company rose up, and were beginning to make their compliments to the judge and the Jury, but were interrupted by a gentleman, who went up to the judge and offered him a fee. What is this? says the judge. A fee, sir, said the gentleman. A fee to a judge is a bribe, said the judge. True, sir, said the gentleman; but you have resigned your commission, and will not be the first judge who has come from the bench to the bar without any diminution of honour. Now Lazarus's case is to come on next, and this fee is to retain you on his side. There followed a confused noise of all speaking together, to persuade the judge to take the fee; but as the trial had lasted longer than I expected, and I had lapsed the time of an appointment for business, I was forced to slip away; and whether the judge was prevailed upon to undertake the cause of Lazarus or no, I cannot say.

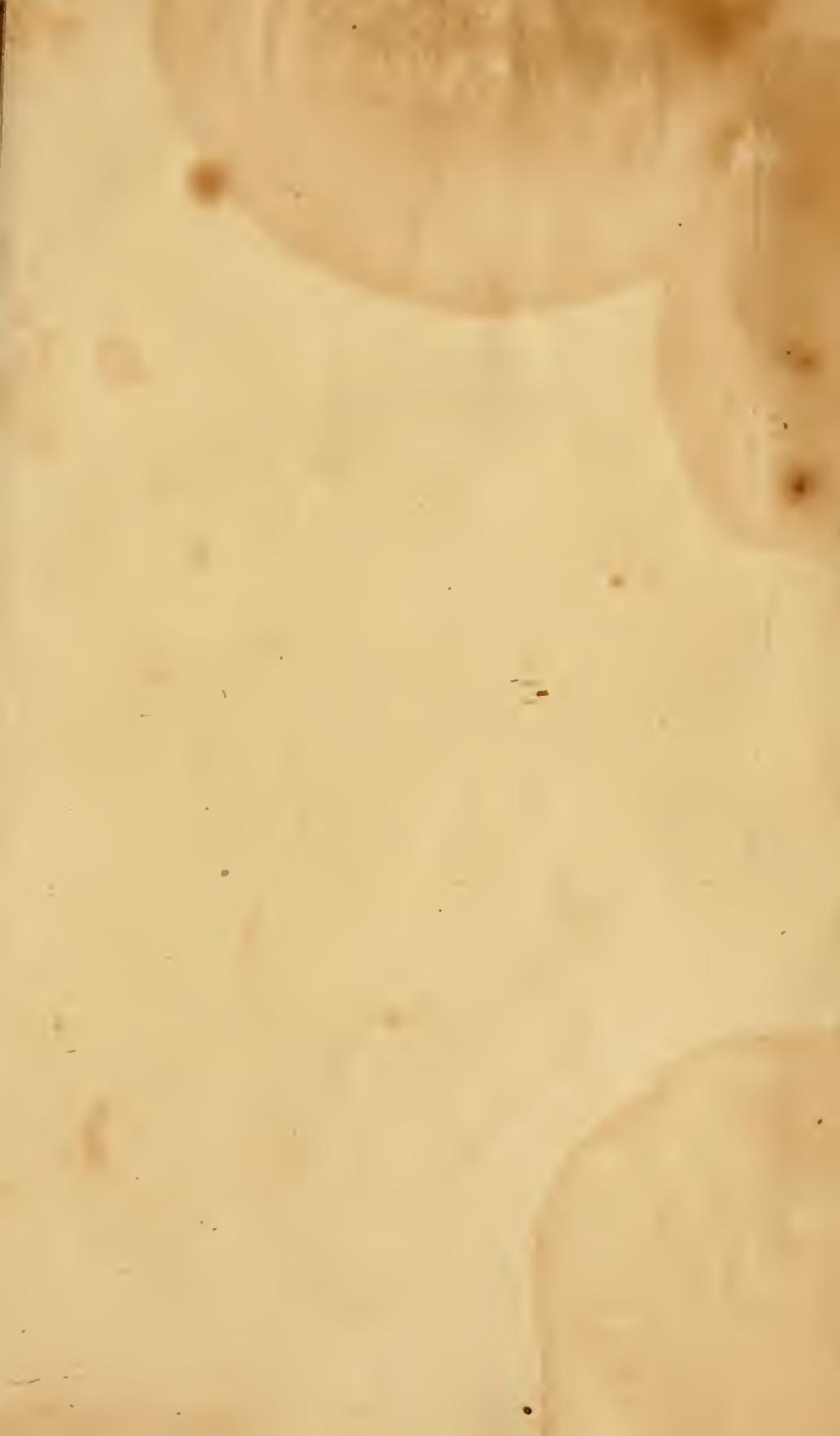
*FINIS.*

DIRECTIONS TO THE BINDER.

|                        |         |               |     |
|------------------------|---------|---------------|-----|
| Great Assize,          | to face | printed Title |     |
| The Crucifixion        | -       | -             | 203 |
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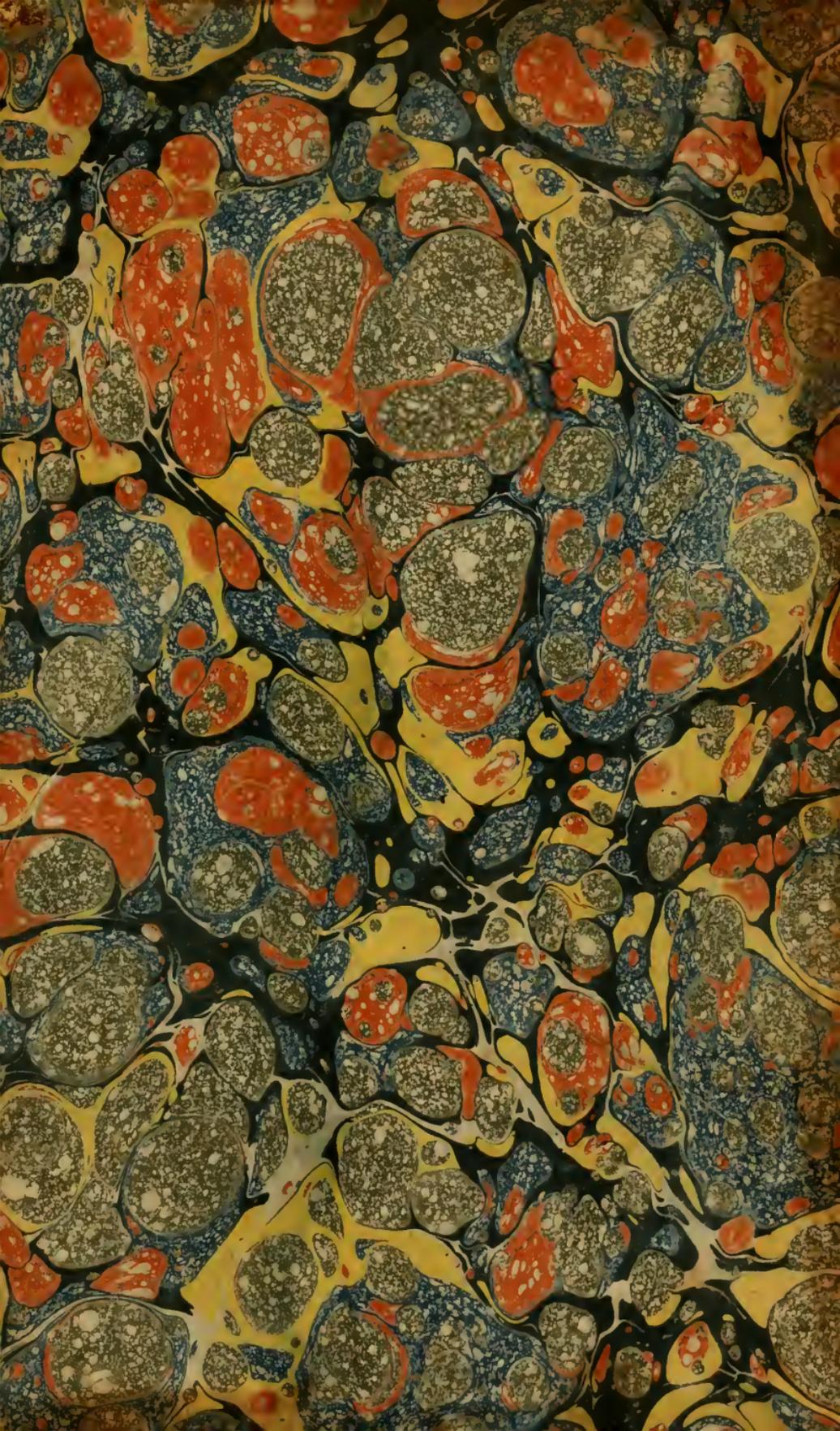


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